Muslim Pilgrimage in Europe

In spite of Islam’s long history in Europe and the growing number of Muslims resident in Europe, little research exists on Muslim pilgrimage in Europe. This collection of eleven chapters is the first systematic attempt to fill this lacuna in an emerging research field.

Placing the pilgrims’ practices and experiences centre stage, scholars from history, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, and art history examine historical and contemporary hajj and non-hajj pilgrimages to sites outside and within Europe. Sources include online travelogues, ethnographic data, biographic information, and material and performative culture. The interlocutors are European-born Muslims, converts to Islam, and Muslim migrants to Europe in addition to people who identify themselves with other faiths. Most interlocutors reside in Albania, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Italy, France, the Netherlands, Great Britain, and Norway.

The book identifies four courses of developments: Muslims resident in Europe continue to travel to Mecca and Medina, and to visit shrine sites located elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. Secondly, there is a revival of pilgrimage to old pilgrimage sites in South-eastern Europe. Thirdly, new Muslim pilgrimage sites and practices are being established in Western Europe. Fourthly, Muslims visit long-established Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe. These practices point to processes of continuity, revitalization, and innovation in the practice of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe. Linked to changing sectarian, political, and economic circumstances, pilgrimage sites are dynamic places of intra-religious as well as interreligious conflict and collaboration, while pilgrimage experiences in multiple ways also transform the individual and affect the home community.

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and Richard J. Natvig
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Introduction

Ingvild Flasketrud and Richard J. Natvig

In the last decades there has been increasing interest in pilgrimage and pilgrimage-like travelling both in practical terms, as shown in a growing number of pilgrims and religious tourists worldwide, and in the expanding academic literature devoted to the phenomenon. Islam has a long history in several regions included in today’s geopolitical definition of Europe, such as the Iberian Peninsula, Russia, Poland, the Baltics, Finland, the Balkans, and Greece, the earliest presence dating back to the eighth century, while the number of Muslim residents in recent decades has increased in Western Europe owing to immigration and conversion. Nevertheless, little research exists on Muslim pilgrimage practices in Europe and European Muslims’ visits to pilgrimage sites outside Europe. Instead, attention is given mainly to time-honoured Christian pilgrimage shrines and traditions, for example, in Spain, Italy, France, Portugal, and Bosnia-Hercegovina, as well as more recently New Age-related pilgrimage sites, such as Stonehenge and Glastonbury in Great Britain (see, e.g., Margry 2008). The present collection of eleven chapters is the first systematic attempt to address this lacuna, with scholars from history, anthropology, religious studies, sociology, and art history examining historical and contemporary hajj and non-hajj pilgrimage to sites within and outside Europe.

The chapters we present are based on papers discussed at a workshop hosted at the University of Bergen in October 2013. Addressing an understudied but emerging research field, the workshop was intended to bring together scholars working on various topical issues and with different theoretical approaches. The call for papers, therefore, framed pilgrimage in a broad context, and we invited papers to examine pilgrimage from Europe to pilgrimage sites outside Europe, pilgrimage within Europe, and travel to pilgrimage sites in Europe from outside. In adopting this approach, we capitalized on Coleman and Eade’s suggestion to widen the theoretical location of the study of ‘sacred travel’ to acknowledge ‘motion’ as being constitutive of many pilgrimages (2004, 3). In introducing ‘motion’ as a new way of framing pilgrimage, Coleman and Eade present a critique of the notion inspired by Eliade (1958) and Turner and Turner (1978) that a ‘holy place’ is marked off from the profane space surrounding it and thus can be defined as something ‘exceptional’. Whereas this notion of exceptionality corresponds to what is sometimes encountered in certain religious discourses, Coleman and Eade argue...
Ingvild Flaskerud and Richard J. Natvig

that comparative social studies suggest instead that the pilgrimage site provides a ritual space for the expression of perceptions and meanings which the pilgrims themselves bring to it. As such, the social space of pilgrimage is constantly constructed and shifts according to who is visiting (Coleman and Eade 2004, 6–10).

A theoretical perspective taking ‘motion’ as its point of departure, we argue, could be broadened to discuss what pilgrims take from pilgrimage, materially as well as conceptually and emotionally, and how this process affects the pilgrims’ life at home and their home community (see also Kenny 2007; McLoughlin 2009; DeHanas 2013). Hence, we invited participants to consider examining the return from pilgrimage. Furthermore, we encouraged contributors to connect pilgrimage to ongoing social, political, and cultural processes in addition to pilgrims’ motivations and preparations for pilgrimage and their return. Despite such theoretical underpinnings in our call for papers, the authors contributing to this volume have not been asked to approach Muslim pilgrimage in Europe from any explicit theoretical perspective. Since the late 1980s the study of pilgrimage, in particular from an anthropological perspective, has moved from earlier preoccupations with building universal theories and relating new research to predefined universal models of explanation to acknowledging the value of adopting eclectic and non-reductive approaches. This development is discussed as well as developed by Eade and Sallnow (2013, originally published 1991), Coleman and Eade (2004), and Eade and Albera (2015). Quite aware that the term ‘pilgrimage’ in itself serves as a context for gathering together, connecting, and reconstituting data,4 we have, however, left it to the authors in this volume to build the empirical and theoretical context in which to discuss Muslim pilgrimage in Europe.

The rich sample of sources investigated includes online travelogues, biographical information, archival material, ethnographic observations of ritual performance and pilgrimage practices, material culture, and interviews. The interlocutors are European-born Muslims, converts to Islam, as well as Muslim migrants to Europe and those who identify themselves with other faiths. They reside mainly in Greece, Albania, Bosnia, Italy, France, the Netherlands, the UK, and Norway. With regard to Muslims’ pilgrimage practices, we identity four courses of development. Muslims resident in Europe continue to travel to long-established pilgrimage sites outside Europe, particularly to perform hajj and umra in Mecca, and pay visits (ziyarat) to shrine sites located elsewhere in the Middle East and North Africa. Secondly, there has been a revival of pilgrimage practices at old Muslim pilgrimage sites in the south-eastern region of Europe. Thirdly, new Muslim pilgrimage sites and practices have emerged in Western Europe. And, fourthly, Muslims are expressing an interest in visiting long-established Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe. These practices point to simultaneous processes of continuity, revitalization, and innovation in the practice of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe.

**Muslim pilgrimage**

Before engaging more closely with the developments in the practice of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe indicated, it is worth calling attention to the caution that
Eade and Albera have made against using the English term ‘pilgrimage’ as a universal category, since the term is ‘shaped by a specific linguistic culture’ (Eade and Albera 2015, 13). The term ‘pilgrimage’ is derived from Latin *peregrinum*, whose supposed origination in *per* (‘through’) and *ager* (‘field’) conveys the idea of wandering over a distance. In the sense that ‘pilgrimage’ has come to denote some sort of travel activity based on religious motivation to a site held to be of extraordinary significance, Muslim pilgrimage comprises a variety of physical and mental journeys to diverse destinations. The largest Muslim pilgrimage in terms of number of participants is hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Hajj is considered one of the five fundamental activities in Islam (*al-arkan al-khamsa*) and is regulated by Islamic law, *sharia*. Attracting Muslims from all over the world, the annual number of participants, since 2013, has been around two million. In addition, there is the umra, the ‘lesser’ pilgrimage to Mecca, which may take place at any time of the year and is not obligatory. The term *ziyara* (Arabic ‘visitation’, plural: *ziyarat*), when used in connection with a religious journey, refers to visiting a shrine that hosts the tomb of a deceased saint or a relic; travel to the abode of a living saint; or visits to natural sites, such as the location of a tree, rock, or spring, which have gained reputations for being associated with extraordinary powers.

The contrasts between hajj, umra, and *ziyara* should not be overemphasized. Many hajj and umra pilgrims visit the Prophet Muhammad’s grave mosque and the Baqi cemetery in Medina, where several members of the Prophet’s family and some of his supporters are buried. Moreover, hajj pilgrims travelling overland often visit regional and local shrines on their way to Mecca as part of their personal spiritual preparation (Papas et al. 2012). *Ziyara* is therefore common among Muslims belonging to various Muslim denominations, including Sunnis, Shias, Alevi, and Alawis. It should be noted that the practice of visiting local holy sites is often referred to in local vernacular terminology. In Bosnia, for example, visiting shrines is often referred to as ‘going to the *dova*’, and in Albania it is mentioned as attending the ‘*festa*’.

A third category is what we may call pilgrimage ‘by proxy’, which includes a number of practices. A person may undertake hajj, umra, or *ziyara* on behalf of another person unable to do so either because of ill health or because the person died before being able to make the journey (Donnan 1995, 76). Local shrines, moreover, may serve as alternative destinations to sites located further away. For example, many shrines across Central Asia, North and West Africa, as well as South-east Europe, are regarded as analogous in status and function to the sanctuaries in Mecca and Medina (see, e.g., Algar 2012, 116; Henig 2012; Zarcone 2012, 251–52). Visits to these shrines sometimes substitute hajj pilgrimage and sometimes complement it. In some places Muslims build ‘proxy shrines’. In India, Twelver Shias build and visit smaller copies or proxy shrines of the great Shia shrines located in Iraq (see Allen 2012). In Iran, imaginary, temporary proxy shrines made out of votive gifts (such as colourful fabrics) are erected in pious households (Flaskerud 2003, 2010, 177–98, 2013). In both cases, the proxy shrine offers people, often with fewer financial resources, the possibility to undertake a pilgrimage by proxy to sites located close to home. The ‘mental pilgrimage’,...
instead, implicates a journey of the mind, performed through a prayer.\textsuperscript{9} To conclude, in our Digital Age it is also possible to perform a ‘virtual pilgrimage’ on the Internet.\textsuperscript{10}

In this volume, we use ‘pilgrimage’ as a generic term for religiously motivated travels and visits to sites held to be of extraordinary significance. These travels include hajj and umra (Buitelaar, Flaskerud, Karić, and Slight) and various forms of \textit{ziyara} (Flaskerud, Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, Pusceddu, Piraino, Morgahi, and Pénicaud). In addition, we can observe, Muslims in Europe travel to events which are not of ‘extraordinary’ significance, such as conventions, conferences, and parades. These journeys, however, are given a religious significance and therefore seen as ‘pilgrimage’ (see Piraino and Pénicaud in this volume).

In recent years the interface between religious and non-religious travel has emerged as a new topic for scholarly examination. Pilgrimage is analyzed as a form of tourism, whereas tourism is said to play the role of a substitute for religious or ‘sacred’ travel (Stausberg 2011, 55–8).\textsuperscript{11} Attending festivals associated with some form of cultural authenticity has been compared with that of making a pilgrimage (Titon 1999, 115–39), whereas the return of migrant workers to local festivals has been described as ‘secular pilgrimage’ (Li 2014, 113–33). As Raudvere demonstrates in this volume, visits to memorial sites referring to wars, victories, and losses, embedded in the urban landscape, may sometimes take the form of pilgrimage-like travel, although a less organized kind of travel connected to everyday movements in the city. In fact, as Schnell and Pali (2013, 888) note, people who are not explicitly religious often think, act and feel religiously in implicit ways by employing modes of expression typical for explicit religion, such as myth, ritual, and experiences of transcending the profane.

So how do we define pilgrimage as ‘religious’ travel? In a short review of peoples’ religious intentions, motives, and reasons for travelling, Stausberg distinguishes pilgrimage from that of seeking education and training; spiritual self-discovery, growth, healing, and other this- or other-worldly benefits; and retreats, holidaying, and mission; purchasing religious objects, attending rituals, feasts and festivals; and seminars, conferences, and visiting religious authorities (2011, 14). This distinction among various categories of travel can be analytically useful. However, as many studies in this volume suggest, pilgrimage may also involve seeking education and training, healing, and other this- or other-worldly benefits (Bringa and Henig and Kuehn), spiritual self-discovery and growth (Buitelaar, Karić, Slight, Morgahi, and Piraino), retreat (Piraino and Morgahi); going on holiday (Pusceddu and Piraino); purchasing religious objects (Flaskerud); attending festivals (Bringa and Henig and Kuehn), seminars, and conferences (Morgahi, Piraino and Pénicaud); and visiting religious authorities (Morgahi, Piraino, and Pénicaud). Pilgrimage understood as a religiously motivated travel may thus incorporate diverse motives and reasons.

Given the fact that the destinations for many of these journeys are shrine tombs, a few words need to be said about the practice of turning tombs into pilgrimage sites in Islam. The practice has been contested since the early times of the Islamic era but is widespread, historically and geographically (Leisten 1990; Nakash 1993; Halevi 2011). Hajj as a historical phenomenon was initiated although not
finalized by the Prophet Muhammad (McCorriston 2011). Hadiths differ, however, over whether he recognized the practice of visiting graves (Beranek and Tupek 2009). The ambiguity with regard to the Prophet’s opinion in the matter is important because he is perceived as an emblematic figure in Islam (Schimmel 1985). His conduct is a model on which Muslims can build their own behaviour, whereas authorized reports about his actions are important sources to Islamic jurisprudence, *fiqh* (Amanat and Griffel 2007). Despite the ambiguity that prevails with regard to the Prophet’s opinion on grave visitation, historical records show that grave visitation seems to have developed among Muslims in Muhammad’s lifetime (d. 632). In 628–629, for example, a mosque was constructed over the grave of one of the Prophet’s companions (Taylor 1992, 4). Acts of commemoration were later performed at graves of prominent holy personages located in Medina, including the Prophet and his close relatives and companions (Peters 1994). Following Muslim expansion, *ziyara* to saints’ tombs was practised among Muslims in, for example, Egypt and Syria (Taylor 1992; Meri 2002; Talmon-Heller 2007).

These local forms of pilgrimage were challenged in the late ninth century by *ulama* associated with the Hanbali School (named after Ibn Hanbal, 780–855) (Laoust 1960; Beranek and Tupek 2009). An instructive illustration of the contestations surrounding *ziyara* in the early history of Islam is the fact that Ibn Hanbal’s caution against the practice did not prevent his own tomb, located at the Baghad cemetery of martyrs, from becoming associated with stories of miracles and, for a long time, venerated as marking the grave of a saint. In 1326, Ibn Taymiyya (1263–1328), a significant interpreter of Ibn Hanbal, was imprisoned in Damascus on account of a *fatwa* he had issued seventeen years earlier ruling against the popular visitation of tombs of saints and prophets (Laoust 1971; Murad 1979, 23). Both Egyptian and Syrian scholars wrote tracts against Ibn Taymiyya’s views on the matter (Shoshan 1993, 69), whereas Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058–1111) wrote in defence of *ziyara* (Meri et al. 2002).

Since the late eighteenth century, puritan Sunni perspectives inspired by the Hanbali School and the thinking of Muhammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–1792) have defined grave visitation to be an ‘innovation’, *bid‘a*, and claimed the practice will lead to polytheism, *shirk*. As a result, during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Wahhabi supporters demolished tombs in the Arabian Peninsula and attacked Twelver Shia shrines in Najaf and Karbala in today’s Iraq (Nakash 1995, 156). Among the cemeteries that were attacked was al-Baqi cemetery in Medina, where graves and mausoleums were demolished, first by the Wahhabis and later by the Saudi king (Wensinck 1960, 958). Today, the site is a walled ground scattered by small heaps of sand, each marked by a simple stone indicating the anonymous grave of important men and women in Islamic history. The current layout and strict Saudi monitoring of pilgrim behaviour make it difficult to conduct a commemoration cult on the site (Flaskerud 2013). The destruction of tombs continues into our time, with Saudi Arabia in 1998 demolishing the grave of the Prophet’s mother in the al-Abwa village and in 2002 destroying the mosque and tomb of Imam al-Sadiq (d. 765) in Medina (Beranek and Tupek 2009, 4). The most devastating blast to shrines in the Middle East in the last couple of years has come
from the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS).\textsuperscript{13} Islamic, Christian, and Yezidi shrines, in addition to pre-Islamic sites, are systematically destroyed in attempts to erase from the surface of the Earth any signs of, what they perceive as, non-Islamic belief. In this case, the demolition of shrines is also part of a strategy to permanently drive certain Muslim and non-Muslim groups out of the region. As these more recent examples demonstrate, the demolition of tombs and shrines is not simply motivated by theological positions but is often combined with political motives. The practice is not new. When the Shia Imams in the ninth century institutionalized the practice of \textit{ziyara} to the grave of Imam Husayn (d. 680) in Karbala and the site began attracting large numbers of pilgrims, the Abbasid caliph al-Mutawakkil, representing the Sunni branch of Islam, in 850 destroyed the tomb (Nakash 1993, 167). In our time, al-Qaida’s Wahhabi-inspired attacks on two Shia mausoleums in Samarra in 2002 marked the beginning of a sectarian war between Shias and Sunnis in Iraq (Luizard 2012, 146). When pilgrimage sites and practices become political targets, they may develop into symbols of resistance. In Iraq, Shia rituals and festivals have been used as demonstrations of strength by attending pilgrims from Iran, Afghanistan, Bahrain, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and Malaysia (Luizard 2012, 147). Given the popularity of \textit{ziyara} among Muslims in Asia, Africa, and Europe, among Shias as well as Sunnis, the significance of hostile attitudes to \textit{ziyara} must after all be described as limited.

This does not imply that \textit{ziyara} practices are not regulated by orthodox discourses. According to the Twelver Shia point of view, for example, visiting saints’ shrines to ask for their intercession with God is recommended by Islamic law (Nakash 1995, 155–6). The legality of the practice is, however, conditional. People are reminded that saints do not grant requests themselves but function as mediators. As such, shrines are understood to be sites where devotees may enter into a reciprocal relationship with God and his saintly representatives (Amir-Moezzi 2011, 375–7). Owing to the perceived necessity to regulate \textit{ziyara} practices, shrine rituals have over time become formalized and consolidated through the dissemination of religious scholarly authorized guides and manuals. Pilgrims, Shias as well as Sunnis, may therefore consult pilgrimage manuals on how to behave in front of a saint’s tomb to benefit from the merits, \textit{fada’il}, of the place (Nakash 1995, 156; Padwick 1997; Talib 2000, 68–77; Meri et al. 2002). Nevertheless, although many places are regulated by institutions defining their orthodoxy and orthopraxy, additional local customs often develop.

The dynamics of authorizing pilgrimage to a saint’s grave in Islam is quite different from the canonization of saints in Catholicism. The latter has to be authorized by the pope, after thorough examination and recommendation by local bishops, a tribunal, and theologians in Rome (see also McKevitt 2013, 77–97). In the Orthodox Church, the process of canonization is slightly less formal. Sometimes saints come to be popularly venerated and are canonized by the synod of bishops within a particular autocephalous church. There are no such formal processes for the canonization of saints in Islam. Rather, a person’s ‘sanctification’ is founded on consensus evolving among the devotees. As pilgrimage practices begin to emerge, they often become formalized through directives formulated by
the religious scholars and sometimes appropriated by political powers who then try to regulate the practice. Conversely, should political authorities command the demolition of the architectural structure at a pilgrimage site, unofficial visits may nevertheless continue. For example, although the grave site of the Prophet Muhammad’s mother was demolished by Saudi Arabian authorities in 1998, a new informal cult is evolving with people marking the grave by adding stones, fabrics, and flowers. The cult has taken on a global collective character as pictures and films of the practices are posted on the Internet.

**Muslim pilgrimage in Europe – an emerging field**

The study of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe is an emerging field of research. So far, attention has been devoted mainly to the performance of hajj, with more systematic research projects recently being developed. Hajj has been approached from a number of perspectives. One line of approach is to apply it as a lens through which to examine policies adopted by European nations towards Islam and Muslims during the era of colonial expansion (see, e.g., Ryad 2016). This approach requires a broader understanding of ‘Europe’ than we have applied here, including the Portuguese territories in India (1505–1961), the Spanish Protectorate in Northern Morocco (1912–1956), and territories in Africa and Asia controlled by the British Empire (late seventeenth century until the mid-twentieth century), by France (in West and North Africa and the Levant from the mid-seventeenth century until the mid-twentieth century), and by the Netherlands (Indonesia early 1600s to 1949).

The focus on colonial policies through the lens of hajj has provided new insights into changing European perceptions of Islam and relations with Muslim communities. On the one hand, European empires sought to facilitate religious needs, such as improving and securing hajj routes while, on the other hand, employing controls for health-related and political reasons. The mobility of large groups of people generated measures to prevent the possible spread of epidemics in the homelands, whereas concerns about pilgrims being exposed to political propaganda produced strategies to monitor hajj and control anti-colonial sentiments. Studies of hajj performed by Muslims in Eastern and Southern Europe have been concerned with the relationship between the state and Muslim subjects and the states’ involvement in hajj. The Russian Empire’s attitude to hajj, like other European empires in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, was intertwined with domestic and international issues. Hajj was, to various degrees, facilitated by the authorities, whereas policies were directed at promoting imperial agendas, and returning pilgrims were perceived as posing potential threats to national political stability (Brower 1996; Kane 2015). The hajj of the Tartar Muslims was also used as a lens to examine the relations between Poland-Lithuania and the Ottoman leadership during the sixteenth century (Połczyński 2015). These studies are mainly concerned with the global extent and impact of the hajj, in particular its social impact and its possibility for creating new religious, political, social, and cultural contact zones between Muslim regions and other parts of the world.
The study of hajj has also involved examining the stories of individual pilgrims, both those born Muslim as well as converts. These studies often dwell on the interests, perspectives, and habits of the pilgrims in the encounter with fellow believers who often belong to other cultural and social backgrounds (see, e.g., Ryad 2016). Emerging from the fields of diaspora and minority studies are publications discussing West European Muslims’ pilgrimage participation (see, e.g., McLoughlin 2009, 2013; DeHanas 2013). Whereas the experience of performing hajj is central in these studies, their theoretical interest in the everyday opens new avenues for examining the impact of the hajj experience on everyday life at home and translocal ways of belonging.

Less attention has been given to non-hajj pilgrimage to locations on the European continent and beyond, a topic which obviously could be developed further. The study of local pilgrimage (ziyara) along hajj routes departing from Belarus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, and Poland since the thirteenth century indicate, for example, that the pilgrims were mainly affiliated with Sufi groups and travelled to Sufi centres in the wider Eurasian region, including the Ottoman and Persian Empires, Siberia, and beyond (Norris 2009). In Bulgaria, after the fall of communism, there has been a revival of old pilgrimage sites with Christian sites attracting those adhering to ‘Eastern Orthodox Christianity, Sunni Islam, heterodox Islam, non-practicing Christians and Muslims’ (Karamihova 2016, 162), and there is also some evidence that Bulgarian Christians are visiting Muslim tekke. The status of these tekke is not, however, uniform. Some are restored as popular sites for large pilgrimage festivals or as local shrines associated with less organized activities, whereas others are given the official status of ‘cultural monuments’ associated with museums.

With regard to the revival of old Muslim pilgrimage sites across the Balkans after the fall of socialism in the early 1990s, two opposing perspectives have been put forward. One discusses pilgrimage sites as arenas for the propagation of interethnic and interreligious nationalism, competition, and conflict separation (Bax 1995; Hayden 2002). The other argues that there is ample evidence for pilgrimage sites promoting interreligious cooperation and dialogue as well as ethnic integration (Belaj and Martić 2014). The study of pilgrimage in Albania, which is also pursued in this volume, instead focuses on migrants’ journeys to sacred places in connection with processes of place and homemaking (Bon 2014). Muslim pilgrimage in Greece remains an understudied field. Furthermore, whereas the situation under the Ottomans has attracted some interest, more research is needed on contemporary pilgrimage. As already indicated, in South-east Europe, similar to North Africa and the Near East, there is a long tradition of Muslims and Christians going on pilgrimage to the same shrine. The issue is more systematically addressed in a volume edited by Albera and Couroucli (2012), which discusses interactions and encounters among Muslims, Christians, and sometimes Jews at pilgrimage sites in Western Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia-Hercegovina, Bulgaria, and France. Reemerging as contested spaces, these pilgrimage sites both help cement religious differences and function as shared and mixed sites for Muslims and Christians.
European Muslims’ non-hajj pilgrimage to sites outside Europe is addressed by Moufahim (2013), who travelled with and studied a group of Belgian Muslim women on pilgrimage to Twelver Shia shrines in Syria and Iraq. Also worth mentioning is Evers-Rosander’s study of proxy pilgrimage to sites in Africa. Many Muslims from North and West Africa living in Europe, she observes, have not engaged in building local shrines in Europe but instead support shrines in their countries of origin through remittances (Evers-Rosander 2004, 69–90). The lack of opportunities for observers of Islam to make pilgrimages to sites outside of Europe is sometimes compensated for by the opportunity to meet ‘living saints’ or Sufi Shaykhs who travel to see their followers in Europe (Soares 2004, 913–27). These transnational Muslim leaders, travelling between Africa, Europe, and North America, play an important role in helping redefine how to be Muslim away from ‘home’.

Apart from the body of publications we have referred to, increased awareness and recognition of European Muslims’ religious life is evident in the staging of several exhibitions on hajj pilgrimage. The first was curated at the British Museum in London in 2012–2013, followed by a modified show at the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden in 2013–2014. In 2014, Leeds University organized a travelling exhibition which told the story of ‘British Muslim Experiences of the Hajj’, supplemented by an online exhibition. Moreover, the Musée des civilisations de l’Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) in Marseilles curated in 2015 the travelling exhibition Shared Sacred Places, which focused more broadly on sacred places shared by the different religions in the region.

**Our volume**

The present collection represents the first attempt to provide a comparative assessment of the diversity of Muslim pilgrimage sites in Europe and the variety in pilgrimage practices outlined here. We hope our publication will inspire others to pursue the topic further.

The first four substantive chapters focus on the relationship that Muslims living in Europe have with historic Muslim pilgrimage sites outside Europe, particularly in the Middle East. In Chapter One, Buitelaar examines the experiences of contemporary Dutch Muslims of migrant background conveyed through hajj and umra self-narratives to discuss the significance of pilgrimage to Mecca for European Muslims. Observing a desire among younger Muslims to perform hajj for spiritual and personal growth, Buitelaar suggests that an Islamic discourse of ethical self-formation is merged with a modern liberal discourse on self-identity. The stories they tell of their pilgrimage experiences, she argues, illustrate that the habitus and identifications of people can be informed by various cultural discourses simultaneously. Moreover, the experiences can be empowering by making West European pilgrims feel better equipped to participate as ‘good’ Muslims in a predominantly non-Muslim, modern, and global environment.

In the next chapter, Flakerud explores how the mosque becomes an important arena for mediating pilgrimage within a migrant community. Based on field
research in an Oslo mosque, she argues that pilgrimage may be mediated and ‘set in motion’ through pilgrims’ sharing of autobiographical hajj and non-hajj pilgrimage stories in the references to pilgrimage in public speeches, in the sharing of gifts from shrine sites, and in the gifting of pilgrimage. Through such techniques, pilgrimage sites are remembered and imagined as sacred and special places that individuals nourish a desire to visit, whereas the constructed memory is also useful in helping pilgrims plan for future pilgrimages.

In Chapter Three, Karić examines contemporary pilgrimage to Mecca through online hajj narratives published by young people in the Bosniak diaspora. Complex relationships among race, ritual, and privilege during pilgrimage are discussed based on the experiences of non-convert, white European Muslims. The pilgrims, Karić observes, profess various and often competing identities which represent loyalty to an ethnic community, a nation-state, and to religion within the framework of a national (Bosnian) identity. Modern Bosniak hajj literature operates with an insider-outsider orientation with regard to Muslim belonging in Europe, which is relevant to contemporary debates about the role of Islam in Europe.

Such mixed experiences of hajj are also observed in Chapter Four. Here, Slight calls attention to the historical study of British converts to Islam undertaking pilgrimage to Mecca. The three cases he explores are from the interwar period, a time of political change in the Middle East. Based on the study of travelogues and other texts written by the pilgrims, Slight points out the various trajectories of otherness they experienced, based on race, social class, gender, and Western identity, while at the same time experiencing some sense of communitas with fellow pilgrims.

In the next four chapters, the authors examine the revival of old pilgrimage practices in South-eastern Europe, with particular attention to Bosnia and Albania. In Chapter Five, Bringa and Henig challenge the assumed links often made between the revival of communal religious practices and nationalism following the war of independence in Bosnia (1992–1995). Two pilgrimage sites in Central Bosnia are compared – the first is the Kariči pilgrimage, organized to commemorate Hajdar Dedo Karić, who according to oral history, brought Islam to the Balkan Peninsula and was an Islamic scholar and Sufi who performed miracles, whereas the second is the pilgrimage to the famous Ajvatovica Rock in Prusac, which commemorates the miracle of Ajvaz Dedo, who is thought to have played a major role in the Islamization of the local population during the Ottoman conquest (1463). Bringa and Henig argue that pilgrimage is not simply a space where Bosnian Muslim identity is being negotiated. Connecting the two pilgrimages to the Bosnian Muslim tradition of organizing pilgrimages to sacred places in nature, seen as spaces where prayers, blessings, and merit earning are exchanged, they suggest that pilgrimage is significant to people’s everyday lives.

Expanding on the Bosnian case Kuehn, Chapter Six, focuses more specifically on the Ajvatovica pilgrimage. She identifies the memorial of political events associated with ethno-religious identity as a central aspect of the revival of the pilgrimage. In particular, she points to its iconographic interpretation with a view to its symbolic and religious value as well as its significance for the cultural identity and political imagination of the Bosnian people. In the process, the pilgrimage
acts as a repository that conserves some of the multilayered aspects of traditional knowledge of Bosnian heritage, while at the same time providing a platform for ways to (re)conceptualize, (re)present, and (re)negotiate the past.

Memory politics and negotiations of identity linked with post-war Bosnian civil society are put in a broader perspective by Raudvere in Chapter Seven. Through the study of four ‘secular’ commemorative visits connected to everyday movements in Sarajevo, she examines the construction of public memory spaces intended to function across ethno-religious borders. These memorial sites represent attempts to use aesthetics in a manner that goes beyond conventional war memorials or other places of memorialization. Yet, although their form and design suggest attempts to rethink the necessity of revisiting the past, in the aftermath of harsh conflicts, the monochrome narratives tend to remain and affect those who feel welcome to approach the war memorials.

In Chapter Eight, the focus shifts to the role of pilgrimage in the religious revival that took place in Albania after the collapse of the socialist republic in 1998. Here, Pusceddu examines two revitalized annual pilgrimage festivals, or ‘festa’, performed in Southern Albania close to the Greek border. Revived during the early 1990s, a festival held at the mausoleum or mekam of the local Bektashi dervish Elmazi in the village Gjonç is visited by local Muslims and Muslim labour migrants to Greece, Italy, Northern Europe, and Turkey as well as some local Christians. The other festival, held at a Halveti mekam near Glinë, commemorates Sheh Mustafa Kalastra (Baba Azizi) and is associated with spiritual strength (vakëf). It attracts Halveti and Bektashi Sufis and other Muslims. Framing the discussion around structural transformations in the economy related to migration and border politics, Pusceddu discusses how the revival of pilgrimage is entangled with the everyday economic, political, and social processes affecting people in the region.

The last three chapters trace and discuss examples of the establishment of new Muslim pilgrimages in Europe, including the invention of new Muslim traditions, the continuation and transfer of old Muslim pilgrimage practices from outside Europe, and the interest shown by Muslims in old Christian pilgrimage sites. In Chapter Nine, Piraino examines the pilgrimage practices of Sufi groups which have originated outside Europe but established themselves in Europe during the last few decades. Drawing on ethnographic research among Alawiyya, Budshishiyya, Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya, and Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya groups located in France and Italy, he identifies new pilgrimage activities in the current European context. Most significantly, people are primarily motivated by a desire to visit the residences of living saints in Europe and North Africa rather than undertaking the more conventional visits to the grave of a dead saint. Sometimes these journeys are combined with more conventional visits to tombs of Muslim holy people, but they can also include visits to non-Muslim sites, such as the shrine of St. Francis in Assisi. Sufis sometimes also perceive their participation in annual parades dedicated to interfaith and intercultural collaboration as pilgrimage. In addition, Piraino demonstrates that Sufi pilgrimage practices in Europe can attract ‘fellow travellers’, that is, people who sympathize with but do not share Sufi doctrines.
In Chapter Ten, Morgahi examines the foundation of a new Naqshbandi Sufi shrine in the UK and its affiliated annual pilgrimage. The shrine is dedicated to the late Sheikh Hazrat Sahib (Abdul Wahab Siddiqi, d. 1994) and located at the Hijaz College near Nuneaton (east of Birmingham). Morgahi discusses how new forms of pilgrimage are recreated in the diaspora setting as part of a renewal of traditional forms of South Asian Islam and connects the renewal of the ritual ‘urs’ to de-territorialization, re-territorialization, and the sacralization of space. He argues that the Hijaz College shows how devotional Islam can ‘reinvent’ itself in the diaspora and become an instrument for religious renewal and social adaptation.

Pénicaud pursues related topics when he examines in Chapter Eleven whether pilgrimage can facilitate interreligious dialogue and social cohesion in the current context of Muslim migration to France. First, he traces the origin and development of the annual Christian-Muslim pilgrimage at the originally Catholic shrine dedicated to the ‘Seven Sleepers of Ephesus’, located in Brittany, France. The event was initiated in 1954 with the intention of creating a venue for Christian-Muslim reconciliation, but today, Pénicaud concludes, the pilgrimage has several aspects – it functions as a ‘pardon’ and an occasion for interreligious dialogue but is also influenced by heterogeneity, ambiguity, Islamophobia, and distrust. Nevertheless, he sees a potential for change as young Muslims, born and raised in France, become interested in attending the events.

In the next section we read across the studies to discuss possible explanations for the growth of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe and then examine some of the social dynamics characterizing Muslim pilgrimage in Europe.

**The growth of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe**

The number of visitors to traditional Christian pilgrimage sites in Europe has increased in the last decades, although it is difficult to estimate even approximately how many people visit the sites on an annual basis. Furthermore, although we still have limited knowledge about Muslims visiting locations within as well as outside Europe, the studies presented in this volume suggest there has been a growth in pilgrimage among European Muslims over the last decades. Their participation in hajj and umra to Mecca and Medina is increasing, as is ziyara to shrines located elsewhere in the Middle East. There has been a revival of visits to old Muslim pilgrimage sites in Europe, while new sites and practices have also emerged. Moreover, Muslims visit non-Muslim pilgrimage sites and non-Muslims visit Muslim sites. Consequently, there seems to be a growth in the number of Muslim pilgrimage sites in Europe and an increase in the quantity of pilgrims to sites in Europe as well as outside. The sites visited by Muslim pilgrims are more diverse.

This development is not a uniquely Muslim or European phenomenon but forms part of a worldwide tendency. The growth in pilgrimage worldwide, Reader suggests, can be explained by a number of factors, such as improved infrastructure, political transformations, religious development and change, and increased diversification in peoples’ motivations for taking up the journey (Reader 2007).
In paying close attention to such factors, we can provide some explanations for the growth in Muslim pilgrims in Europe but also point out some current regional differences across the continent.

The growth in Muslim pilgrimage in Europe is closely linked to two sociopolitical developments in Europe: the settling down of Muslim migrant communities in Western Europe since the 1960s and the revival of Islam after social reconstruction across parts of Eastern Europe from the 1990s. These two developments have led to new configurations of Islam in Europe. An increasing number of residents identify themselves as Muslim, whereas new transnational networks established between Muslims across Europe and between Muslims living in Europe and outside facilitate interaction and the exchange of ideas (Bowen 2004). As a result, we witness the emergence of a more religiously pluralistic Europe (Aslan et al. 2016).

These general developments do, however, take on specific expressions in different geographical regions, and when discussing the vicissitudes of Muslim pilgrimage across Europe, it is therefore useful to distinguish between Eastern and Western Europe. Following the collapse of the communist/socialist era, during which many pilgrimage sites established during the Ottoman era (from the middle of the fourteenth century until 1912) were destroyed or abandoned, new opportunities for religious expressions emerged for people living in Eastern Europe. Bosnia and Albania, for example, have experienced a revival of both Muslim and Christian pilgrimage practices and sites (Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, and Pusceddu). Macro-level changes have influenced how people engage with pilgrimage as a sociopolitical praxis. In the social reconstruction of post-Bosnia, pilgrimage has become entangled with formations of ethnic, religious, and national identity politics, sometimes cementing politics of differentiation and sometimes evading such discourses altogether (Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, and Raudvere). In Albania, pilgrimage is sometimes linked to the economy and patterns of labour-migration, as well as to local initiatives to promote interreligious and intra-religious contact (Pusceddu).

In contrast, the growth in Muslim pilgrimage practices in Western Europe is linked mainly to patterns of immigration. Sufi organizations, originating from outside Europe, have been instrumental in establishing new Muslim pilgrimage destinations. These include temporary as well as permanent residences of living Sufi shaykhs (Piraino) and the establishment of new shrines built at the tomb of deceased local shaykhs (Morgahi). Pilgrimage has also become in various ways an occasion for dealing with the new Muslim presence in Western Europe. Hence, in France an old Christian pilgrimage site has been transformed into a joint Muslim-Christian pilgrimage location in an attempt to find ways to integrate Muslim citizens (Pénicaud), whereas for Muslims with immigrant backgrounds all over Europe, local pilgrimage can be a strategy for building a home in a new country and continent (Morgahi and Pénicaud).

Despite these regional differences, we can point to one common tendency between Eastern and Western Europe, namely that Muslims visit historic Christian pilgrimage sites (Bringa and Henig, Pusceddu, Piraino, and Pénicaud). Christian visits to Muslim sites seem, at the moment, to take place only in the East.
Sometimes such practices are spontaneous and motivated by faith; at other times, the visits are intended to promote interfaith and intercultural collaboration.

Apart from regionally specific religio-political factors, contemporary pilgrimage growth can be explained by structural factors, such as improvements in the opportunities for travel, better health and medical care, and economic progress. These factors have made pilgrimage accessible to more European Muslims (Buitelaar, Karić, Slight, and Flaskerud) while also contributing to the growth in pilgrimage worldwide (Reader 2007, 216–22). At the same time, the development of new possibilities for visiting pilgrimage sites closer to home has made pilgrimage more feasible (Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, Pusceddu, Piraino, Morgahi, and Pénicaud). Another factor, which should not be ignored, is the power of mediation. The promotion of pilgrimage by local and national religious authorities is probably vital to European Muslims’ pilgrimage practices, although the pilgrims’ own stories about the pilgrimage experiences are also a strong motivating factor (Flaskerud), as is the popular media’s broadcasting of pilgrimage events as cultural festivals (Bringa and Henig, and Kuehn).

Patronage or political and financial support is another vital precondition for the growth in pilgrimage in Europe. The issue is not consistently discussed by our authors, but we observe that in Bosnia and Albania, the presence of political as well as religious dignitaries is prevalent and has lent some legitimacy and authority to the revival of pilgrimage and probably some funding. In Western Europe, local Muslim pilgrimage practices do not receive significant attention from political figures or parties, and the funding seems to be based on donations and small funds. The issue of political and economic patronage is, however, something that needs further investigation.

In relation to peoples’ personal motives for visiting pilgrimage sites, Reader has observed that conventional motivations, such as the possibility of encountering the spiritual and the miraculous on a personal level, are often supplemented or replaced by the search for national and cultural identity as a reaction to globalizing tendencies (Reader 2007, 216–22). The motive is often centred less on faith or the organized religious tradition with which the pilgrimage they undertake is associated than on attempts to find wider meaning as well as a way to deal with personal problems. The studies presented in our volume cannot provide conclusive explanations about European Muslims’ motivations to undertake pilgrimage. We can, however, confirm that pilgrimage at a personal level is motivated by a number of factors and that several issues are often combined when people decide to set out. Many European Muslims engage in pilgrimage in search of self-development, although needs related to faith, as well as the search for religious education and knowledge, seem to be important reasons (Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, Piraino, Morgahi, and Pénicaud). These motivations are also associated with hajj in that pilgrims intend to get in touch with their religious heritage and to benefit from its spiritual and educational value (Buitelaar, Flaskerud, Karić, and Slight).

Some of the studies, however, describe motivations that are not commonly associated with pilgrimage, in particular, local community building and civic engagement. These studies point to new connections made between traditional religious
Introduction

pilgrimage and activities that are not traditionally viewed as pilgrimage, such as participation in parades and conferences (Pusceddu, Morgahi, and Piraino). In Bosnia, the connection between traditional and new pilgrimage is explored in a different manner. Whereas new public (secular) permanent and temporary memory spaces in some ways draw on traditional pilgrimage aesthetics, these sites are carefully designed to elude religious identification (Raudvere).

Social dynamics in Muslim pilgrimage in Europe

As indicated, the growth in Muslim pilgrimage in Europe in recent decades is connected to macro-level factors, such as sociopolitical developments, and micro level factors, that is, personal motivations. Clearly, Muslim pilgrimage is characterized by contrasting features. How are pluralism, contestation, collective identity building, individual pursuit of knowledge and faith, and the needs of people from different faiths accommodated at the events? We will address this question by turning our attention to the social dynamics at pilgrimage sites and the organization of the events, that is, the meso-level.

Formalized and non-formalized pilgrimage

The manner of organizing pilgrimage seems crucial when it comes to attracting people to pilgrimage, accommodating those who seek to participate, as well as developing the pilgrimage over time. We outline two tendencies – ‘formalized’ and ‘non-formalized’ types of organization. Muslim pilgrimage events taking place in Europe are often organized around festival-like programmes which are repeated every year. Programmes formalized over time create patterns that regulate and structure the pilgrimage events, secure their durability, and inspire their growth while also making the pilgrimage flexible, dynamic, and open to change (Bringa and Henig, Kuehn, Pusceddu, Piraino, Morgahi, and Pénicaud). For example, the pilgrimages taking place at Ajvatovica and Karići in Bosnia, Gjonç and Glinë in Albania, the Hijaz lodge in the UK, and the Seven Sleepers shrine in France all take place over a period of two to three days. During this period, time is allocated to what we may call ‘conventional’ pilgrimage rituals, such as visits to the saint’s shrine to present supplications and invocations. In addition, people participate in or observe activities which seek to accommodate people with different interests as well as combining diverse purposes. At Ajvatovica, as Bringa and Henig and Kuehn describe, the pilgrimage programmes accommodate various styles of prayers which attract different groups of people. Similarly, a procession brings together diverse groups of people who display symbols that communicate various religious, cultural, and national messages. This polyphony is enhanced by the fact that speeches held by religious dignitaries and politicians are both acclaimed and contested among the audience. Nevertheless, entertainment offered by famous artists and the serving of a collective meal create an inclusive social atmosphere among those present.

The annual urs programme, that is, the Sufi saint’s death anniversary, at the Hijaz College, is inspired by the South Asian roots of this diaspora community,
where commemorations of the death anniversary of Sufi saints have evolved into large festivals. In Britain the urs programme continues to include visits to the shrine site, a public gathering with prayers and speeches, jalasa, by religious scholars, and the performance of spiritual songs, qawwali. However, although adapted to meet the needs of residents in the UK, the urs also offers workshops that combine spiritual knowledge with self-development and seek to introduce the youth, in particular, to traditional religious knowledge. The three-day programme at the Seven Sleepers shrine in France, on the other hand, reflects the overall goal of the annual gathering, which is to be an arena for Christian-Muslim interreligious dialogue in a multicultural society. Consequently, the event opens with a seminar about interreligious dialogue, which is followed by two days of religious rituals. Although not all activities can be understood as interreligious, the programme is designed to let people observe and get to know each other’s liturgy and rituals. The programme has evolved over the years and is, in its present form, complex. It aspires to meet the needs of various Christian and Muslim groups, mixed Christian-Muslim couples, and people from other religious backgrounds, albeit not always successfully. Hence, participation in the pilgrimage offers a formalized opportunity to take civic responsibility through promoting peaceful coexistence among groups in society.

The association between pilgrimage and civic responsibility in European Muslim pilgrimage is also developing in less official ways, especially through the non-formalized pilgrimage frames practised by Sufi groups and individuals. Central to Sufi pilgrimage is the importance given to travelling in the pursuit of knowledge and cultivating spiritual growth. In France and Italy, ‘pilgrimage-like’ travels include the Sufi participation in annual parades dedicated to interfaith and intercultural collaboration and the promotion of peace (Piraino). Here, pilgrimage becomes a form of civic engagement in which modernity and spirituality go hand in hand with personal development. Muslim pilgrimage-like journeys are used as a platform for civic engagement and can be located within a wider process where young Muslims in Europe are seeking ways to practise what Frisina calls ‘ordinary citizenship’, which involves engaging with the social realm and undertaking voluntary work (Frisina 2006, 80–4). Although these kinds of links between pilgrimage and social activism have been discussed in pilgrimage studies, they have not been analyzed until now within the Muslim context.

Whereas the establishment of formalized programmes seems to be important for the contemporary growth in pilgrimage, non-formalized practices have played an important role in securing the survival of pilgrimage sites and practices across South-east Europe since the fall of the Ottoman Empire. The landscape in this part of Europe may be described as ‘sacred’ in that a wide range of tombs, rocks, caves, water springs, hills, and trees are sought out by individuals and groups of friends and family (Bringa and Henig, and Kuehn). The prayers performed at these sites and contributions to their upkeep have traditionally provided opportunities to seek individual blessings and well-being as well as securing the community’s livelihood through the protection of crops and herds. These practices continue today often as an alternative to more formalized pilgrimage events.
Notions of unity – communitas and umma revisited

Inspired by Turner’s introduction of the notion of communitas, pilgrimage studies have been inclined to cultivate the idea that some form of unity is established among people during pilgrimage. Turner spoke of three types of communitas, although it is the first, existential communitas, which is best developed theoretically and has become most influential. Existential communitas refers to a spontaneous feeling of interrelatedness among pilgrims. The sensation of unity supposedly developing among ritual participants is held to transcend differences operating between them in their everyday lives, for example, hierarchical social roles. As such, communitas is characterized by anti-structure. The feeling of communitas is, however, only temporary and structure is re-established after the ritual. Communitas should therefore not be confused with ‘community’, a term that refers to an organized, socially structured group of people.

In the study of Muslim pilgrimage, reference is often made to the Arabic term umma, which denotes various notions of collective identity, such as nation, people, and community (Cowan 1994). In particular, participating in hajj is often described as generating a feeling of being part of a global umma, a sensation that, unlike communitas, extends the period of the ritual. This conceptualization is supported by Muslims’ self-understanding about being part of an umma nurtured outside ritual contexts. Hence, Pakistani diasporic communities in the UK, for example, perceive of themselves as members of a transnational moral religious community (Werbner 2002, 12). People’s sense of being part of this community sometimes overrides their identification with a specific nation, and this feeling can be perceived by politicians and the media as a threat, in particular when associated with political Islam. It has, for example raised questions related to national security by European governments (Laurence 2012, 140, 106).

There are obvious structural differences between the concepts of communitas and umma despite the feelings of transcending difference among Muslims. Communitas is always temporary, whereas the sense of being part of an umma can be long-standing. However, the spontaneous sensation of existential communitas, experienced by some pilgrims during hajj, may enhance the feeling of being part of the umma and vice versa (Buitelaar and Slight).

The communitas model has been criticized for not sufficiently taking into consideration contestations among pilgrims and groups of pilgrims (Eade and Sallnow 1991, 5). The same could be said about the use of umma as an explanatory model. As studies in our volume suggest, some pilgrims are aware of the ways in which social status, gender, race, and ethnicity set them apart from others during hajj (Buitelaar, Karić, and Slight). Moreover, some pilgrims experience ‘otherness’ when they are subject to harassment because of their class, race, gender, or religious denomination (Buitelaar, Flakerud, and Slight). One conclusion to be drawn here is that the feelings of communitas or umma during hajj may intersect with other occasions where some pilgrims neither experience communitas nor feel part of an umma.

The ways in which Turner’s three types of communitas may be set against each other during pilgrimage is illustrated in Pénicaud’s study of the Seven Sleeper’s
Ingvild Flaskerud and Richard J. Natvig

pilgrimage. The Christian and Muslim organizers introduced the idea of facilitating the possibility for people from different religions to live together through the pilgrimage experience (ideological communitas), an idea which was carefully promoted through the pilgrimage design and programme (normative communitas). However, the experience of existential communitas during pilgrimage was jeopardized by, on the one hand, competition among individual pilgrims and groups of pilgrims and, on the other hand, the failure of the organizers to integrate in the design (normative communitas) the intended ideas (ideological communitas). For example, despite good intentions concerning hospitality, peace, and coexistence, Islamic ritual traditions were not welcomed by some non-Muslims.

An entirely different approach to existential communitas is proposed by Piraino, who suggests the experience of communitas is not necessarily the result of participation in pilgrimage. Based on his study of Sufi pilgrimages, he argues that spontaneous communitas was not restricted to the liminal state of pilgrimage, as Turner argues, but began prior to any ritual through the appearance of an ecumenical desire to seek knowledge and experience sacred dreams or inner mystical experiences.

The studies by Pénicaud and Piraino represent both an empirical and a theoretical shift away from associating Muslim pilgrimage with notions of a global Muslim umma towards seeing pilgrimage as an opportunity to or motivation for connecting with people outside that particular religious frame. Hajj experiences can also generate these kinds of social moves. Buitelaar, on the other hand, discusses how mixed feelings of communitas and conflict during hajj after the pilgrim’s homecoming can motivate the creation of a new Muslim identity in which the pilgrim consciously associates with the larger plural society in which he or she lives instead of with (only) the global umma.

Our critical reflections on the use of communitas and umma as explanatory models for social and identity dynamics connected with pilgrimage are not intended to dismiss their validity as analytical concepts. Rather, we encourage the exploration of the many ways the experience of unity (or not) and conceptions of unity (or not) are played out in pilgrimage and connected to and influence other social processes.

Dynamics of inclusion and exclusion

Whether pilgrimage practices are formalized or non-formalized, and whether the pilgrims experience communitas or feel part of an umma or not, European Muslim pilgrimage destinations are, to various degrees, sites of encounters among Muslims of different religious denomination, among Muslims and non-Muslims, with so-called fellow travellers, among lay believers, religious dignitaries, and politicians, among men and women, and among different ethnic groups and social classes. In observing that the pilgrimages are heterogeneous, multi-vocal, and conflictual, as well as integrational, it is worthwhile exploring the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion played out in the pilgrimages we introduce in this volume. ‘Inclusion’ and ‘exclusion’ are typically used as analytical concepts to
examine the involvement by migrants in Europe in the education system, labour market, civil society, crime and politics, immigration policies, public discourses, cultural practices and attitudes (see, e.g., Miles and Thranhardt 1995; Fangen et al. 2010; Fangen et al. 2012). Social exclusion, Fangen explains, has been perceived as implying a sense of difference, being denied access to resources, and being excommunicated, ignored, or expelled, although a more recent and dynamic perspective proposes that exclusion from one arena at the same time is followed by inclusion in another arena (Fangen et al. 2010, 137). This approach is also relevant to pilgrimage studies since the practices in which European Muslims engage are associated with the unifying notions of communitas and umma and seek to establish dialogue, integration, the rebuilding of society, as well as civic engagement despite the ambiguities inherent in these processes. This is a topic which needs more research, especially with regard to how agency is practised and how inclusive and exclusive tendencies are (re)defined.

In the studies presented in this volume, there are examples of practices obviously intended to be exclusive. Denying women access to certain aspects of ritual performance during pilgrimage is one example, although such practices have been challenged and in some cases changed to accommodate women’s spiritual needs (Kuehn and Piraino). A less straightforward example is when practices intended to create an inclusive pilgrimage unintentionally produce tendencies towards exclusion. At the Seven Sleepers pilgrimage, new rites designed to make Muslims feel included were added to the programme. One of these involved presenting pilgrims with dates and milk (which according to the Qur’an is Heaven’s food) after the recitation of the Qur’anic chapter ‘The Cave’. However, the new rites also made some non-Muslims feel excluded and nourished a concern about the site losing its Christian identity. The pilgrimage to the Hijaz shrine in the UK, on the other hand, introduced a combination of religious and secular education to attract young Muslims who were looking for ways to integrate Muslim, Pakistani, and British identities. In specifically addressing young people, the innovation carved a space for religious renewal and social adaptation without conflicting with those aspects of the ritual’s identity which included other pilgrims.

However, when feeling excluded in one area, pilgrims sometimes find ways to be included in other areas. The control of the pilgrimage’s choreography and the merging of religion and politics at Ajvatovica contributed to some potential pilgrims being ostracized, but many found ways to compensate. One option was to perform pilgrimage at other times of the year, outside of the controlled tradition, and link the visit with historic, sacred journeys involving the veneration of sacred sites, such as tombs, caves, water springs, hills, and trees, which had been performed in private during the socialist era.

In the sociopolitical context of Bosnia, religious pilgrimage practices were also framed in the politics of inclusion and exclusion. Religious symbols had become part of competing nationalisms which fed ethnic antagonisms and, ultimately, a war. On the other hand, participation in the annual, larger pilgrimage became a vehicle for remembrance as well as the celebration of survival. Raudvere’s study helps us locate the strategies of inclusion and exclusion within a broader political
context, where public memorial monuments have been erected all over Bosnia in remembrance of human losses. Many have been controversial from the beginning with regard to who are commemorated as simply ‘victims of war’ and who are ‘national victims’. Not even public memory spaces intended to function across ethno-religious borders are definitely inclusive. In Bosnia, then, inclusion and exclusion operate along the dividing lines between nationalist politics, memory politics, official religion, personal piety, and non-religion.

In Albania, the politicization of official Islam instead turns pilgrimage into an alternative religious practice, although as Puseveddu demonstrates, pilgrimage illustrates the ambiguities associated with inclusion and exclusion. Whereas the official festival in Glinë was attended by Orthodox Christians in the spirit of tolerance and brotherhood between Muslims and Christians, some migrants working across the Greek border, who had converted to Christianity, were questioned about their religious motives for participating in the pilgrimage. Adopting an analytical focus on strategies of inclusion and exclusion can therefore tell us something about how the politics of pilgrimages interrelates with critique and even resistance.

**Individualization and institutionalization**

Adherence to religion and the participation in religious practices in late modernity has been described as characterized by detraditionalization, individualism, and pluralism, where belief is built around new combinations of spiritual input and symbols from disparate frameworks of meaning (Beckford 1992, 11–23). This is a situation where institutions are losing control over the individual. Studies of Muslims in Europe suggest that the current generation of young Muslims are generating eclectic and individualized versions of Islamic belief and practices by selectively adopting elements of Islamic teaching (see, e.g., Cesari 2009). Yet at the same time there is ample evidence concerning the institutionalization of Islam in Europe (Werbner 2002; Laurence 2012; Göle 2013). These parallel processes of individualization and institutionalization are integrated and interact in pilgrimage. The comprehensive accounts of the staging of and participation in pilgrimage events presented by our authors suggest that institutionalized pilgrimage, as well as organized events in the civil society, attract people to pilgrimage, accommodate those who seek to participate, and encourage the development of pilgrimage. At the same time, pilgrimage offers ample opportunity for individualization (Buitelaar, Karić, Bringga and Henig, Piraino, Morgahi, and Pénicaud). For example, Sufis in Europe travelling in search of knowledge represent the continuation of time-honoured Sufi institutionalized traditions, such as networks of study and boarding facilities. Nevertheless, the individual and eclectic approach to guidance and inspiration provide ample space for the formation of personalized belief and pilgrimage practices. Moreover, whereas young people perform hajj in search of spiritual growth and education, their exploration takes place within the framework of a long-established and carefully monitored institution. The institutionalization of pilgrimage, we suggest, is therefore central to the authentication of a particular pilgrimage as is the individuals’ experience of spiritual encounters or growth.
Introduction

21

Concluding remarks

When the idea of ‘Europe’ as a cultural identity marker became important in the construction of a shared identity following the European integration between the 1970s and 1980s, the evolving discourse invoked ideas about community, cohesion, and unity that marginalized Islam. The idea of a ‘European identity’ was based on a distinctive cultural entity united by shared values founded on the heritage of classical Graeco-Roman civilization, Christianity, and the ideas of the Enlightenment, science, reason, progress, and democracy (Stråth 2002, 388), and Islam was constructed as the ‘other’ (Bader 2007). Instead, the revival of historic Muslim pilgrimage practices in Europe, the transfer to Europe of heritage practices from outside, and the establishment of new practices are shaped in a socio-political climate interconnecting local, regional, national, and global dynamics. European Muslims’ pilgrimage practices and discourses are part of diverse webs of interests that link discourses on religious authority, popular belief and everyday needs, political and economic interests, and personal and social development, performed across and beyond religious boundaries, and shaping Europe’s sacred landscape, while connecting to the wider European social history. Contemporary Muslim pilgrimage practice in Europe is certainly a multifaceted phenomenon which needs more research whereas, as Slight reminds us, there is still not much known about the history of European Muslims’ pilgrimage practices.

Notes

1 Reader 2007; Collins-Kreiner 2010; Raj and Morpeth 2007; Coleman and Eade 2004; Jansen and Notermans 2012; Albera and Couroucli 2009; Oviedo et al. 2014, to mention only a few.
2 We are grateful to the Department of Archaeology, History, Cultural Studies and Religion, University of Bergen, for hosting and funding the workshop.
3 By ‘Europe’ we refer to the geopolitical entity which today is regarded as the ‘European Continent’, separated from Asia by the Ural River, the Caspian Sea, and the Black Sea, thus placing Western Russia and the western parts of Turkey in Europe. To the south, Europe is separated from Africa by the Mediterranean Sea, except for Spain’s two autonomous cities, Ceuta and Melilla, and some other minor territories.
4 For a discussion of contextualization as a form of discursive strategy, see Dilley 1999.
5 The other four are the verbal testimony of the unicity of God (shahada), the five daily prayers (salat), fasting (sawm) in the month of Ramadan, and religious tax (zakat).
6 The term ‘saint’ is adopted from Latin sanctus. Referring to a person attributed with extraordinary knowledge and powers due to his or her favourable nearness to the divine, the equivalent idea is in the Muslim world applied to, for example, Sufi sheikhs, Twelver Shia Imams, and their immediate descendants, Imamzadeh.
7 The relics circulating are typically objects which can be connected to important people in Islam’s history, such as a piece of Fatima’s shawl (Allen 2012, 73), the mantle of the Prophet Muhammad (Meri 2002, 203), and his footprint (Hasan 1993). Also objects connected to important events, such as the battle at Karbala in 680, are turned into relics (Allen 2012). Buildings designed to house relics are relatively common, and they become pilgrimage destinations; see also Talmon-Heller 2007.
8 See, for example, Ayaz 2012, 96; Procházka-Eisl and Procházka 2010; Zarcone 2005.
9 For example, performing the prayer ziyarat namah, which is part of the liturgy developed for the pilgrimage to Imam Husayn’s shrine at Karbala, is, according to Imam
al-Sadiq (d. 765), equivalent to making the journey to Karbala as well as to performing the hajj when these journeys prove impossible to undertake (Talib 2000, 69). See also http://ziaraat.org/articles/iraq-guide.php.

For example, Twelver Shias report they make a virtual pilgrimage to the tomb of Imam Reza in Mashhad, Iran, by connecting to www.aqrazilvi.org. For a discussion of virtual pilgrimages on the Internet, see MacWilliams 2002.

In addition, concepts developed from pilgrimage studies, such as communitas and liminal transitions, have been used to theorize non-religious travel, such as tourism. For a discussion, see Stausberg 2011, 21–3.

The Wahhabis follow the school of Ibn Hanbal as interpreted by Ibn Taymiyya (Ende 2002).

For an illustrated overview of shrines that have been damaged, see, for example, https://ballandalus.wordpress.com/2014/08/05/the-islamic-states-isis-destruction-of-shrines-in-historical-perspective/.

For examples, the Safavid attempt to formalize Shia ritual practices in Iran prompted Mullah Muhammad Baqir Majlesi (d. 1699) to write manuals in Persian for the performance of ziyara, which was important in promoting visitations to the saints’ shrines at a popular level. See Momen 1985, 120.


At the Universities of Groningen and Amsterdam, a project was launched in January 2015; on modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca, see Buitelaar, this volume.

The anthology is based on papers presented at the conference Europe and Hajj in the Age of Empires: Muslim Pilgrimage Prior to the Influx of Muslim Migration in the West, convened at the University of Leiden in 2013.

For the study of similar topics with regard to hajj pilgrimages departing from Asia, see, for example, Mishra 2011.

For a general introduction to Islam in the Baltic countries, see Larsson 2009.

For a study of local pilgrimage (ziyara) along hajj routes through Central Asia, see Papas et al. 2012.


For a study on Christianity and Islam under the Ottomans, see Hasluck 1929. For a study on Ottoman traces in Greece, see Lowry 2009.

Albera and Couroucli 2012, viz. in Western Macedonia (Glenn Bowman), Albania (Gilles de Rapper), Bosnia-Hercegovina (Bojan Baskar), and Bulgaria (Galina Valtchinowa). See also Dionigi Albera on a Marian sanctuary in Nîmes, south of France (Albera 2012).


Curated by Seán McLoughlin (https://arts.leeds.ac.uk/hajj/community/).

Curated by Seán McLoughlin and Jo Merrygold (http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/hajj/exhibition/).


For example, the Alliance of Religions and Conservation reports that in 2011, the figures for pilgrimage attendance at Santiago de Compostela in Spain was 1.5 million pilgrims, whereas in the Pilgrims Office in Santiago report for 2010, the number was 272,412 and in 2013: 215,880 pilgrims (Alliance of Religions and Conservation: www.arcworld.org/downloads/ARC%20pilgrimage%20statistics%20155m%2011-12-19.pdf; Pilgrims office in Santiago: www.caminodesantiago.me/2013-statistics-for-the-camino-de-santiago/, both URLs accessed 21 February 2017).

In recent decades, according to the Pew Research Center, the Muslim share of the population throughout Europe grew about 1 percentage point a decade, from 4% in 1990 to 6%
in 2010. This pattern is expected to continue through 2030, when Muslims are projected to make up 8% of Europe’s population (www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/07/19/5-facts-about-the-muslim-population-in-europe/, accessed 21 February 2017).

31 Eade, in outlining the revival of Christian pilgrimage in Europe, makes a distinction between Northern and Southern Europe (Eade 2016, 106). The reformation is seen as a crucial differentiating factor since pilgrimage cults disappeared in the Protestant areas of Northern Europe, while it survived in Catholic-majority countries. Pilgrimage revival in the northern and western parts of Europe is predominantly a twentieth-century phenomenon, whereas the revival of pilgrimage in northern Germany can partly be explained in terms of Catholic migration.

32 The decay of pilgrimage sites started, however, already by the exodus of the Muslim population from the Balkans after establishment of nation-states during the first decades of the twentieth century. The process was sustained when socialist and communist governments in Yugoslavia and Albania, as well as in Eastern Europe, for example, the Soviet Union and Bulgaria, pursued politics of forced homogenization of the population and banned citizens from practising and participating in public religious practices such as pilgrimage.

33 We here draw partly on ways of thinking about the institutional evolution of religion, as conceptualized by Abrutyn 2015.

34 See also Boissevain 2016.

35 For a discussion of travel in Islam in the pursuit of knowledge, see also Eickelman and Piscatori 1990.

36 For a discussion of pilgrimage as non-violent political protest, see Butigan 2003. For an example of how environmental activism, manifested in the protection of National Parks in the US, is compared with pilgrimage, see Ross-Bryant 2013.

37 The concept was originally developed by Turner based on his studies on Ndembu rituals in Zambia and later adopted by him and Edith Turner to the study of Christian pilgrimage practices (Turner and Turner 1978).

38 The second is normative communitas, an institutionalized form of communitas that is the product of co-option by groups within the social structure, and the third is ideological communitas, which amounts to the discourses, exhortations, and utopian models that often provide the basis and impetus for normative communitas (Turner 1969, 131–40).

39 For a discussion of the idea that institutional pilgrimage should be less ‘authentic’, see Fedele and Isnart 2015.

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1 Moved by Mecca

The meanings of the hajj for present-day Dutch Muslims

Marjo Buitelaar

Introduction

In 2013 the National Museum of Ethnology in Leiden, the Netherlands, hosted an exhibition on the hajj, the pilgrimage to Mecca that all Muslims should perform once in their lives if they are able. Much attention was paid to the personal memories of pilgrims from the Netherlands, for example by exhibiting hajj-related souvenirs accompanied by personal stories of their owners. Also, video-clips were displayed in which Dutch Muslims shared their dreams, expectations, and experiences of the hajj. The sequence of displayed objects followed the steps that pilgrims undertake during the hajj: exhibits relating to preparations and the journey to Mecca were followed by objects and photographs pertaining to the actual hajj rites and the return home. On entering the main room, a mahmal or ceremonial hajj procession palanquin in the centre of the room immediately caught one’s attention. Like the kiswa, the textile covering the Ka‘ba in the courtyard of the great mosque in Mecca, the covering of the mahmal was richly embroidered with quotations from Islamic Holy Scriptures. While not exactly imitating the rite of circumambulating the Ka‘ba, the circular arrangement of display-cases around the mahmal echoed the movements of pilgrims in Mecca, thus stimulating the imagination of visitors.

On one of my visits to the exhibition, I was accompanied by a Turkish-Dutch woman in her late forties whom I had recently interviewed about her hajj experience. At the end of our interview sessions, I had given her the catalogue of the exhibition as a token of my gratitude. She had been quite surprised: an exhibition on the hajj in the Netherlands, where so many people have negative attitudes towards Islam, she could not have imagined that to be possible! She was very curious to see the exhibition, so we decided to visit it together.

Walking through the museum and studying the exhibits a few weeks later triggered strong emotions in my companion; again she stated that she was impressed that a Dutch museum should pay attention to what she referred to as ‘the beauty of Islam’. It also touched her to see so many Dutch visitors showing a keen interest in the exhibits. Most of all, it was the memories of her own two visits to Mecca that moved her. After eagerly scrutinizing the objects in the show-cases with hajj-souvenirs she looked up with tears in her eyes and commented: ‘Being here, it all
comes back to me: the people, the atmosphere . . . it’s difficult to put in words what the hajj does to you, but here I feel it all over again.’

During another visit to the exhibition I came across a group of four excited Muslim teenage girls in the ladies’ washroom. One of the girls started to sing religious anasheed or chants. Her beautiful voice reverberated through the washroom. The eyes of her admiring friends filled with tears. A staff member of the museum later told me that she and her colleagues often observed Muslim visitors who were moved to tears or spontaneously began reciting religious texts.

The hajj exhibition obviously struck a chord in Muslim visitors. An unprecedented large number of Muslim visitors visited the exhibition, a success for which it was awarded a museum prize. In this contribution I will reflect on why representations of the hajj attracted so many Muslims to the exhibition and triggered strong emotional responses in some of them. These reflections are based on preliminary research for a research project concerning modern articulations of pilgrimage to Mecca which was launched during January 2015. I will first describe the various rites that make up the hajj, and then address the issue how homemaking in a globalized world may inform the ways that these rites speak to present-day Dutch Muslims from migrant backgrounds.

The hajj rites: walking in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammed

Religious feelings and meanings are not only produced through authoritative narratives but also via particular sensory regimes and bodily techniques. Performing the various rites that make up the hajj ritual allows Muslims to physically re-enact critical sacred dramas in Islamic historiography, thus revitalizing and expanding their embodied religious knowledge and identification as Muslims. Mecca is the holiest city on earth for Muslims and many consider it their ‘spiritual home’. The hajj is one of the ‘five pillars’ or ritual duties that Muslims should perform. Of these religious obligations, the hajj is the most demanding in physical, spiritual and financial terms. Even the very wealthy, who can stay in elite hotels while in Mecca, will have to leave their hotels and join the crowds. Particularly participation in the rites that take place outside the city of Mecca is very demanding. The hajj obligation is lifted for people who do not have the means or physical condition, for those who would have to leave behind family members who need their daily care, and for women who have no legal male guardian to accompany them (Martin 2005, 7154). Making the journey is costly; a simple hajj package tour from the Netherlands, for example, costs approximately 5,000 euros. For many the hajj performance is, therefore, out of reach. A more recent additional obstacle to performing the pilgrimage is the quota-system that has been introduced to curb casualties caused by overcrowding. Muslim majority countries are allotted one visa per thousand inhabitants, often distributed through a lottery system. There has been an enormous increase in applications over the last few decades, so that success rate in obtaining a visa are generally low. I have been told sad stories about people whose applications had been turned down several times and who
died before being able to perform the hajj. The restrictive hajj quota system partly accounts for the increasing popularity of the umra, the ‘smaller’ or voluntary pilgrimage to Mecca that can be performed any time of the year. It is ‘smaller’ in the sense of only consisting of rites that are performed in the city of Mecca itself, while during the hajj, as we will see, pilgrims also visit other places in the region. As yet, no structural quota system has been implemented for the umra.

In the pre-Islamic era Mecca was already a pilgrimage centre that attracted many pilgrims for an annual ritual to pay tribute to various (tribal) gods. According to the tradition it was the Prophet Muhammad who Islamicized this ritual by cleansing the Ka’ba of idols, adapting the pilgrimage rites and moving the date of the pilgrimage to the twelfth month of the Islamic calendar (Dhu al-hijja). Literally stepping in the footsteps of the Prophet Muhammad during the hajj has an enormous emotional impact on Muslims. The pilgrimage is also related to other role models in Islamic historiography. According to the scriptures, for example, the Ka’ba, also known as Bayt Allah, the House of God, was erected by the prophet Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ismail. The imprint on a stone near the Ka’ba is believed to be a footprint of Abraham, the so-called maqam Ibrahim. The presence of objects and stories about the various hajj sites makes the Islamic past tangible for pilgrims, allowing them the sensation of being close to their religious forebears and feel God’s sacred presence.

The Ka’ba is said to be built on the site of a primordial temple where Adam performed his first prayers after his expulsion from Paradise (Martin 2005, 7155). Set in one of its corners is the Black Stone which, according to Islamic historiography, fell from Heaven to show Adam where to build the first place for worship on earth. The stone is believed to have turned black because of people’s sins. It is said to have gotten lost in the Great Flood survived by Noah’s Ark, until Abraham found it again and embedded it in the Ka’ba. According to a prophetic tradition, touching the Black Stone is an expiation for sins.

Following the sequence of rites that the Prophet Muhammed performed during his last pilgrimage to Mecca, hajj pilgrims visit several sites in the Mecca region. Whether arriving over land, sea or by airplane, they stop at one of the miqat or locations marking the boundary of the sacred area that surrounds Mecca to enter the state of ihram or consecration by performing the ritual ablution and changing into pilgrimage clothes. Male pilgrims wear two white, seamless sheets that they drape around the waist and their left shoulder. Most save their ihram clothes to be buried in them. Women may dress as they find proper, as long as they cover their heads and wear clothes that hide the contours of their bodies. Face veils are not allowed during the hajj. At the miqat pilgrims announce their arrival to God by reciting the ‘Talbiya’ prayer which begins with: Labbayka Allahumma labbayk (‘Here I am O Lord at Thy service’). They continue to pronounce the talbiya and du’a or supplication prayers until reaching the Ka’ba. From an anthropological point of view, these rites can be viewed as bodily practices that stimulate the pilgrims to leave behind their daily concerns and focus exclusively on worshipping God.

Ideally, pilgrims head straight to the big mosque in Mecca to salute the Ka’ba. One’s first sighting of this famous building is generally described as an overwhelming experience. Talking about their first encounter with the Ka’ba, most
pilgrims report trembling and being moved to tears. My companion to the hajj exhibition described her first confrontation with the Ka’ba as follows: ‘I went totally blank, I was overtaken by emotion, I nearly lost consciousness, they had to catch me to prevent me from falling.’ To intensify the strong emotional effect of seeing the Ka’ba for the first time, many hajj guides encourage first time pilgrims to keep their eyes closed and hold on to a fellow pilgrim until they reach the Ka’ba. The novices are then told to open their eyes and take in the view. This is, in fact, what my companion did on her first visit to Mecca. She recalled how the sudden confrontation with the grandeur of the Ka’ba had overwhelmed her to the extent of making her forget to pronounce the names of relatives and friends whose wellbeing she had intended to pray for; it took her a while to get back to her senses and do what she had intended to do first thing upon standing in front of the Ka’ba.

The sevenfold, anticlockwise circumambulation or tawaf is the first hajj rite after entering the ihram. Most people perform the tawaf several times during their stay in Mecca, but only the first one is compulsory. After having concluded it pilgrims move to a corridor alongside the big mosque square that connects the hillocks Safa and Marwa. It is here that they perform the sa’i or ‘running’ in commemoration of the search for water by Abraham’s second wife Hagar for her baby Ismail. By running, as in the case of men, or walking, as women do, pilgrims commemorate Hagar’s ordeal and her trust in God to save her and her baby Ismail as they wandered through the desert.

The rites of the first day of the hajj are concluded with drinking water from the Zamzam spring, which Hagar is said to have discovered when, after a seventh round of searching, she returned to where she had left Ismail and saw water well up under his heel. Zamzam water is the most coveted souvenir from Mecca, and most pilgrims carry home a jerry can of Zamzam water to share with visitors who visit their homes to congratulate them upon having fulfilled the hajj. Many pilgrims save some Zamzam water to consume at special occasions, such as weddings or in the case of illness. After drinking Zamzam water the pilgrims leave Mecca to spend the night in the tent camps of Mina, situated to the south-east of the city.

The second day of the pilgrimage is the start of the official part of the hajj, or hajj proper. The most important rite is then performed: the wuquf or standing from early afternoon to sunset on Mount Arafat and its surrounding plane twelve miles east from Mecca. Those who fail to perform this rite correctly, must do the hajj again in another year. During the long hours of the wuquf, pilgrims commemorate the sermon that the Prophet Muhammad delivered on this site during his last hajj in 632 CE, the year of his death. They spend the afternoon reading the Qur’an and praying for forgiveness for their sins and the wellbeing of their close ones. For most, like seeing the Ka’ba for the first time, the wuquf has an enormous emotional impact; it is conceived of as a kind of ‘dress rehearsal’ for Judgement Day, and therefore closely related to existential issues.

The five preliminary interviews carried out for the research project among Dutch Muslims so far seem to indicate that performing the hajj in the company of what nowadays comes close to three million other pilgrims affects people in various ways. My companion to the hajj exhibition focused mostly on the positive
aspects of her hajj experience. She emphasized how impressive it was to see Mount Arafat completely covered with people in white garb performing prayers or reading the Qur’an. A younger, more highly educated woman of Turkish descent was more critical: she complained how difficult it had been not to be distracted by loud pilgrims who acted as if Mount Arafat were a picnic site. She also stated to be shocked by the amount of garbage left behind when, in the evening, the crowd had moved on to a place called Muzdalifa.

At Muzdalifa pilgrims collect pebbles for the next day’s stoning rite in Mina. They throw the pebbles at three pillars representing Satan, who is said to have tried to persuade Abraham three times not to obey God’s command to sacrifice his son Ismail. The stoning rite is largely interpreted as symbolizing the repudiation of evil. Like most rites, the sensation of throwing of pebbles lends itself to interpretations along lines of various registers of meaning, such as a moral register in which the rite is understood in terms of fighting one’s own evil thoughts and deeds. Alternatively or additionally, the stoning rite can be framed in political terms where the three pillars come to represent political enemies (cf. Fischer and Abedi 1990).

The stoning rite is followed by the Feast of the Sacrifice or Eid al-adha, during which pilgrims sacrifice an animal, usually a sheep, to commemorate Abraham’s willingness to comply with God’s request to sacrifice his son Ismail, and to commemorate God’s mercy who supplied a ram to replace Ismail as an offer. Recently, the Saudi government has introduced a new procedure to process the slaughtering of nearly three million animals: in return for a certificate stating that they fulfilled their ritual obligation, pilgrims pay to have the sacrifice carried out elsewhere.

The sacrificial rite marks the conclusion of the hajj proper. Pilgrims then cut their hair, thus physically marking the transformation they have undergone. Many men have their heads and beards shaved, others restrict themselves to symbolically cutting off a lock of hair, similar to what is prescribed for female pilgrims. After the hair clipping pilgrims may take off their ihram clothing if they wish and return to Mecca for a final sevenfold circumambulation of the Ka’ba. Others repeat the stoning rite before returning to Mecca.

Although visiting the grave of the Prophet Muhammad in the city of Medina is not part of the hajj ritual, most package tours include a trip to Medina before or after the hajj. For many pilgrims, visiting the mosque where the Prophet Muhammad is buried is a very emotional experience and one of the spiritual highlights of their journey. The practice, however, does not go uncontested: followers of the very strict sunni wahhabi movement, the official religious doctrine in Saudi Arabia, are very ambivalent about it. The Prophet Muhammad may be the most important role model in Islam, but they consider venerating him at his grave bid’a, a reprehensible innovation that contradicts the oneness of God. For most Muslims, however, visiting the grave of the Prophet Muhammad has enormous spiritual value (cf. Werbner 2003).

Summing up the various rites that make up the hajj, it can be concluded that the pilgrimage is an extremely powerful ‘sensational form’: a relatively fixed, authorized mode of invoking and organizing access to the transcendental (Meijer 2012). Islamic cosmology is translated through the kinaesthetic appropriation of
the Meccan landscape; pilgrims incorporate the moral lessons behind the stories related to the various hajj sites through bodily and mental exercises rather than through disembodied belief (cf. Mitchell 2001). This ‘sensational power’ of the hajj provides a first answer to the question what it is that triggers such emotional responses in Muslims who visited the hajj exhibition: these responses are related to a longing for Mecca as the place where proximity to God, the Prophet Muhammad and other Islamic role models can be experienced in a most direct way.

A general feature of rituals that include commemoration of the past is that claims to continuity play a significant role in shaping relations and boundaries between past and present and between external and internal communities (Connerton 1989, 48). A second factor that contributes to the appeal of Mecca for Muslims, then, is that the flow of pilgrims circumambulating the Ka'ba is the most powerful symbol of the ideal of the umma: the global Muslim community created by the Prophet Muhammad. While the unity of the umma has always been of great significance for Muslims, in the next section I will argue that it has gained more salience in today’s era of globalization, particularly for European Muslims with migration backgrounds.

The hajj and homecoming

That so many Muslims visited the Dutch hajj exhibition illustrates the popularity of Mecca. Indeed, decorating one’s home with images of the Ka'ba has a long history (cf. Porter 2015). The presence of such images in both private and public Muslim spaces has increased tremendously with the introduction of photography and, more recently, the new media. Mecca features on Muslim television stations on a near daily basis, for instance. I would argue that the increasing popularity of Ka'ba representations is not due to modern technology only. Societies across the globe have undergone transitions to liberal capitalist economies and western educational systems that have strongly affected local power structures and social relations. As a result, new life styles and consumption patterns have emerged in which the growing flow of information, capital and labour are juxtaposed with and integrated into ‘local’ cultural dynamics (Appadurai 1996). Among other things, this has created new trends in religious marketing and consumption (cf. Boubekeur and Roy 2012; Starrett 1995).

As a result, the hajj is now a strongly marketed commodity. A very successful example is ‘Mecca-Cola’, which is marketed as a Muslim alternative to Coca-Cola and distributed in at least sixty-four countries. The Mecca-Cola company pledges to donate twenty per cent of its profits to Muslim charity organizations (Wikipedia 2015). Mecca is also praised in Muslim hip-hop songs (Ackfeldt 2012). In other words: the pilgrimage to Mecca enjoys increasing popularity and has become ‘cool’, specifically among European Muslims who participate in transnational youth cultures.

Since the 1950s, the annual participation in the hajj has grown from one million to close to three million pilgrims (Bianchi 2004). One obvious reason for this is that air travel has transformed travelling to Mecca from a long, arduous journey into a
quick, comfortable trip. Also, new categories of pilgrims have emerged due to the worldwide growth of a relatively well-to-do, educated middle class. The cosmopolitan life styles and consumption adopted by this new ‘bourgeoisie’ are reflected in religious attitudes and practices (cf. Aziz 2001; Buitelaar and Saad 2010).

Until recently, performing hajj was predominantly conceived of as an act of obedience carried out by older Muslims to fulfil the ‘last’ of their religious duties in the hope of forgiveness for their sins before dying. Also, the piety required to perform the hajj and subsequently adopt a life style characterized by high moral principles was closely associated with the reflexivity and wisdom that are considered to come with late adulthood (Debevec 2012). Younger Muslims, however, no longer wish to postpone the hajj until old age, but choose to enjoy the immediate benefits for spiritual and personal growth (Bianchi 2013, 35). A survey among Pakistani pilgrims, for example, indicated that whereas older pilgrims expressed their motivation to perform the hajj primarily in terms of the final sacrifice for one’s love for God, young pilgrims emphasized spiritual growth and education (Haq and Jackson 2009).

Young Muslims who have performed the hajj generally do not wish to be addressed as al-Hajji. One reason for this is the strong connotation of the honorific title with old age. Moreover, many object to its reference to the high social status that is traditionally ascribed to people who have completed the hajj. Increasingly, piety is viewed as a strictly personal issue between God and oneself (McLoughlin 2015). Also, in many Muslim communities a high religious reputation no longer translates neatly into a high status position in other domains of social life (cf. Scupin 1982).

The individualization and privatization of religiosity also comes to the fore in the fact that particularly among young West-European Muslims, preceding one’s parents in performing the hajj is much less frowned upon than a few decades ago, when doing so was considered a sign of disrespect. Muslims I have spoken to over the last few years often take the view that everyone should decide for themselves when they are ‘ready’ to undertake the pilgrimage.

Global interconnectedness has also had an impact on the sense of belonging of many people. Former conceptions of identity and belonging have become less evident as a result of the enormous influx of new information and products and rapidly changing habits and social structures (Bauman 2001). Religion can play an important role in coping with the existential anxiety that may result from this: It supplies people with concrete temporal and spatial anchor points for personal and collective narratives that link the past, present and future. It also provides a rich repertoire of stories, symbols and practices that can be used to construct a shared identity (cf. Kinnvall 2004). At the same time, the global compression of time and space has allowed the growth of transnational senses of belonging. Most Muslims today know where and how fellow believers live elsewhere in the world, and many participate in transnational networks through migration flows. Both the weakening of self-evident senses of belonging and the development of transnational senses of belonging have contributed to a global upsurge of interest in ‘authenticity’ and the cultivation of locality. Among others, this comes to
the fore in an increase in cultural or religious heritage tourism (cf. Park 2014; Stausberg 2011). Particularly for West European Muslims with migration backgrounds Mecca is an obvious travel destination if one wants to get in closer touch with one’s religious heritage; many of the hajj rites include commemorations of events in Islamic historiography related to the emergence of the umma. Indeed, in addition to the spiritual educational value of the hajj, younger generations of Muslims appear to emphasize its meaning as a symbol of the unity of Muslims more strongly than Muslims from older generations (Haq and Jackson 2009).

It is against the background of the various ways that globalization has affected the life worlds of people, that the re-enactment through pilgrimage of narratives and practices expressing continuity with a glorious Islamic history can gain extra salience for present-day West European Muslims; it provides them with anchor points where they can formulate answers to existential questions about being and belonging in the modern world.

These recent trends in hajj meanings and practices resonate in the video clips at the hajj exhibition where Dutch Muslims shared their hajj stories. In one video-clip, for example, a young adult businessman of Turkish descent explained that the idea of going on hajj arose when he was suffering the first signs of a burn-out. He hoped that performing the hajj would help him reconnect to what really matters in life. Looking back on how his journey to Mecca had affected him, the man concluded that he felt calmer and had found a new balance in his life. In three of the five preliminary interviews that were conducted for the pilot-phase of our hajj research so far, my interlocutors similarly framed decisions to visit Mecca in terms of needing a ‘time-out’ or longing to ‘re-energize’ or ‘get back in touch’ with themselves. Only one of them stated that she had questioned whether her piety was strong enough to be ‘ready’ for the hajj.

This should not be interpreted as indicating that my interlocutors take the meaning of the hajj as a religious obligation lightly: performing hajj to fulfil one’s duties to God probably literally goes without saying for most pilgrims. Indeed, gratitude for having been able to fulfil this religious obligation was mentioned by all interlocutors later on during the interviews. I would contend that combining the wish to fulfil one’s ritual obligations with other personal needs illustrates that in an era of intensified globalization, the ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu 1977) of people is informed by various cultural discourses simultaneously (cf. Schielke 2012; Hafez 2011). Emphasizing the spiritual and educational benefits of the pilgrimage to Mecca for personal growth reflects a modern liberal discourse of self-enhancement. Particularly western Muslims have been brought up in societies where self-identity is conceived of as a ‘project’ and where one is expected to craft one’s own life trajectory (Giddens 1991). This might well explain why for younger generations a conception of the hajj as the ‘crowning spiritual achievement’ (Bianchi 2004, 39) in old age is gradually being replaced by a view according to which piety is not only reconfirmed, but moreover, realized through hajj performance.

In line with Saba Mahmood’s argument about the meaning of the salat or daily prayers as a conscious bodily exercise to train oneself in adopting virtuous dispositions (cf. Mahmood 2005), hajj performance can be seen as an embodied,
disciplinary act of ethical self-formation. Mahmood’s argument can also explain the ‘routinization’ of hajj performance observed by Omar Saghi among younger generations of French Muslims (Saghi 2010, 177). Repetitive hajj performance can be interpreted as a technique to incorporate the pious dispositions that make people feel better equipped to live as ‘good’ Muslims in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. As such, an Islamic discourse of ethical self-formation and a modern liberal discourse on self-identity as a ‘project’ are closely intertwined in the endeavours of young West European Muslims to develop a pious self through performing the hajj.

Also, West European Muslims live in societies where holiday travel is virtually considered a basic human need, and most migrant families visit their countries of origin regularly. This makes the moral and aesthetic dimensions of their stories about weighing travel options particularly informative concerning the relationship between religiosity, social identification and self-identity. Specifically for younger generation Muslims from migration backgrounds, feelings of belonging to the various communities they identify with are complex and often ambiguous. Visiting the country of origin to stay in touch with one’s ‘roots’ can be satisfying and frustrating at the same time when experiences of exclusion as ‘the Muslim other’ in the country of residence are replaced by being excluded as ‘the rich European’ in the country of origin (cf. Buitelaar and Stock 2010; DeHanas 2013). For the descendants of migrants, then, holiday travelling is always a matter of positioning, whether they visit to the country of origin, stay in the country of residence, or choose alternative holiday destinations.

Weighing travel options was the dominant theme in a video-clip exhibited at the hajj exhibition in which a well-known Dutch woman of Moroccan descent in her mid-thirties shared her hajj experiences. Since I have not been granted access to the transcript of her story, what follows is a translation of the notes I took:

My husband and I were planning a holiday trip. We had decided to visit a Muslim country, because we like visiting local mosques. Besides, visiting a Muslim country is convenient in terms of not having to worry whether the food is halal. So my husband suggested: ‘maybe we could go on umra’. And I was like: ‘OK . . . but then why not go all the way and do the hajj?’ So then we figured: ‘Well, why ever not?’ And that’s exactly what we did. We didn’t tell anybody, we just went. It really was a huge experience, immensely impressive and unforgettable!

The topic of religious tourism features prominently in this account: the couple focused on Muslim countries since they like visiting local mosques. Particularly interesting is the phrase ‘We didn’t tell anybody’: it illustrates the trend of individualization and privatization of religiosity mentioned earlier. Not informing one’s relatives and friends about plans to perform the hajj even goes against an established preparatory hajj rite to visit relatives, friends, colleagues and neighbours to bid them farewell and ask for forgiveness for any way one may have harmed them (Roff 1995). Furthermore, by quoting the rhetorical question ‘why ever not?’ the
narrator underlines the spontaneous, if not light-hearted character of the couple’s decision to visit Mecca.

We will, of course, never know whether the decision to perform the hajj was as unpremeditated as the story suggests. It cannot be ruled out that the narrator intended to ‘normalize’ the pilgrimage for an audience of mostly non-Muslim, secularized museum visitors by de-emphasizing its religious character and framing it in terms of a cultural practice they can identify with. On the other hand, it is not very likely that she would risk presenting her niyya or (religious) intention to perform the hajj in a way that fellow believers might frown upon; she is one of the ‘Meiden van Halal’ (The Girls of Halal), three sisters who have gained great popularity among Muslim and non-Muslim Dutch citizens alike as self-proclaimed ‘cultural ambassadors’ for Islam. I therefore surmise that the woman’s hajj story is not out of step with the practices of other Muslims in the Netherlands.

For West European Muslims with migration backgrounds who feel that they neither fully belong to their country of origin nor to their country of residence, envisaging Mecca as an imaginary spiritual homeland or future ‘Islamic utopia’ where only being Muslim counts and ‘where you can be yourself and safe’, as a Dutch female Muslim motivated her longing to perform hajj on the internet, can have a strong appeal and empowering effects.

The hajj as an empowering homecoming journey features prominently in the story of a woman who participated in a longitudinal research project on the narrative construction of identity by highly educated Dutch women of Moroccan descent. At the time of the first round of interviews in 1998, Farida, as I have called her in previous publications, was thirty years old and struggling with her sense of belonging. Feeling neither ‘truly’ at home in the Netherlands nor in Morocco, she had found what she called a ‘safe haven’ in Islam. Nevertheless, her stories about her everyday life betrayed a strong sense of despondency that came with living in what she experienced as a hostile Dutch environment. When I visited Farida again in 2008, she told me that her life had changed a lot over the years. Indeed, the tone in her stories had changed significantly; bitterness was replaced by enthusiasm, despondency by activism. According to Farida, much of this was the result of her hajj experience. This is her story:

It [the decision to visit Mecca] came about spontaneously really. The Christmas holidays were coming and we wanted a break, some sun, and then my husband organized it as a surprise holiday. He said: ‘This will be the most wonderful journey of your life’. I was hesitant at first; I wasn’t sure whether I was ready, about having to continue to wear a headscarf afterwards for example. But my husband said: ‘We’ll see what happens then. If Allah wants this to happen, it will, if He doesn’t, it won’t’.

It [the umra] was such a beautiful experience: actually taking the same route as our Prophet: seeing it, experiencing it, feeling it. It’s not as though it has made me more religious, I already was, but it has intensified my religious feelings.

Upon return I took off my headscarf and cut my hair short. But it did not feel good, it kept gnawing at me. . . .
The urge to complete my religious duties grew stronger. First my sister went, and then again to perform the hajj in the name of our [deceased] mother. Then my aunt went. When she returned, I formulated the niyya [intention] to go the following year. But my husband fell ill, so I’d have to go alone, and I wasn’t sure whether my hajj would be accepted by God if I went without my mahram [male guardian]. But I found this travel agency that organizes trips for women who travel alone and the imam said that would be in line with the regulations.

It [the hajj] was an incredibly festive experience, such a blissful feeling. We were a Dutch-speaking group of women from African, Tunisian, Indonesian, and Surinam backgrounds, so quite an international company. We had very good discussions and felt really close. I’m still touched by it, and we still see each other regularly and meet as a group.

Many of the themes discussed in this chapter feature in Farida’s story. First of all, her story about the decision to visit Mecca points to the merging of religious interests with a common Dutch habit to seek out sunny places for one’s holiday. Farida’s initial concern whether she was ‘ready’ for the journey indicates, however, that visiting Mecca is not like any other holiday to her but has implications for one’s life style afterwards, for instance in terms of dress code. Her story also sheds light on the relation between the ‘sensational’ power of the pilgrimage to Mecca and ethical self-formation; upon her return to the Netherlands after performing umra, Farida took off the headscarf she had worn in Mecca only to find out that this ‘kept gnawing’ at her. Having experienced the sensational power of ‘actually taking the same route as our Prophet’, her religious feelings had intensified, and returning to her old routine ‘did not feel good’. Not being quite ready yet to change her ways, her ‘urge’ to ‘complete’ her religious duties increased and culminated in the ‘festive experience’ of the hajj. As a result of this ‘blissful feeling’, she was able to shed her ambivalent feelings about the headscarf, which she has been wearing ever since.

The ‘blissful feeling’ of performing the hajj in the company of a multi-ethnic group of women reinforced to Farida the meaning of Islam as a ‘safe haven’ that is open to all people, regardless of class or ethnic background. Note, however, that she not only felt close to her travel companions as Muslims but also identifies with them by stating: ‘We were a Dutch-speaking group of women’. The bonding among women sharing the Dutch language in a context where nearly everybody else spoke different languages introduced Farida to a more inclusive conception of Dutchness than she had hitherto experienced and opened up space to self-identify as Dutch. This sense of belonging activated during the liminal phase of the hajj ritual might have disappeared again after the women’s return to ordinary life. As is often the case with hajj groups, however, the women continued to meet upon return to the Netherlands, thus reinforcing Farida’s newly discovered sense of belonging as a Dutch Muslim citizen. Paradoxically, then, what began for Farida as a spiritual homecoming journey to Mecca as the nodal point of Islam as a ‘safe haven’ eventually resulted into a homecoming journey to the Netherlands.

Whereas in Dutch popular discourse identification with Islam is often conceived of as hindering integration into Dutch society, Farida’s story demonstrates
that social identifications always intersect: her hajj experience made her realize that being Muslim and being Dutch are not two separate identifications but that her being Muslim only comes in the modality of being a Dutch Muslim. In fact, as I have argued elsewhere (Buitelaar 2013), it is an Islamic moral discourse that inspired her to henceforth engage actively with non-Muslim fellow Dutch citizens and strive for a more inclusive Dutch society.

Conclusion

Taking the popularity of a hajj exhibition among Muslims in the Netherlands as a starting point, in this contribution I have reflected on the significance of pilgrimage to Mecca for West European Muslims. I have argued that the hajj is a powerful ‘sensational form’. Islamic cosmology is translated through the kinaesthetic appropriation of the Meccan landscape where proximity to God, the Prophet Muhammad, and other Islamic role models can be experienced in a most direct way. Also, the flow of pilgrims circumambulating the Ka’ba is the most powerful expression of the global Muslim community.

For West European pilgrims with migration backgrounds, the ritual re-enactment of critical sacred dramas in Islamic historiography can have extra salience; it can provide them with anchor points to formulate answers to existential questions about being and belonging in a modern, globalized world. Particularly for those who feel they that they neither fully belong to their country of origin nor to their country of residence, envisaging Mecca as a spiritual homeland may be appealing. Moreover, hajj performance can be empowering; it stimulates the development of pious dispositions that can make West European pilgrims feel better equipped to participate as ‘good’ Muslims in a predominantly non-Muslim environment. Throughout this chapter, excerpts from hajj stories of Dutch Muslims have been presented that demonstrate that the desire among younger Muslims to perform hajj for spiritual and personal growth points to the merging of an Islamic discourse of ethical self-formation with a modern liberal discourse on self-identity as a ‘project’, thus illustrating that the habitus and identifications of people are always informed by various cultural discourses simultaneously.

Notes

1 I would like to thank the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO) for its generous grant (350–25–150) for the research project ‘More Magical than Disneyland: Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca’.

2 As came to the fore in some instances in the overview – however, not all hajj practices and meanings go uncontented; sharing religious symbols does not necessarily entail attaching the same meanings to these symbols. The massive *mise en scène* of Muslim unity cross-cuts but also reconfirms various forms of proximity and distance between pilgrims. Investing Meccan ritual space with their own embodied memories, pilgrims establish plurality and creativity in appropriating normative performances and interpretations of the hajj.


Moved by Mecca

5 Cf. www.youtube.com/watch?v=p86KllYhG-s.
7 Cf. her exact words: ‘Being a Muslim is universal, anyone can be a Muslim; this religion relates you to everybody. Despite the feeling that you don’t feel at home in this or that country, your Muslim identity tells you that there is a home somehow. To me, that is a sense of security and protection. Islam is a kind of haven for me’ (Buitelaar 2013, 259).

References


Marjo Buitelaar


2 Mediating pilgrimage

Pilgrimage remembered and desired in a Norwegian home community

*Ingvild Flaskerud*

Pilgrimage in Islam is often conceptualized as being a duty expected to be performed by the believers. And quite correctly, following the Qur’an, hajj is one of the so-called five pillars or ritual obligations regulated by Islamic law, *sharia*, instructing any capable Muslim to visit the Ka’ba (based on Qur’an 3: 96–97) at least once in his or her lifetime. In addition, *ziyara*, a ‘visit’ to religiously beneficial locations, is a highly recommended practice. Nevertheless, I suggest, pilgrimage practices are not simply generated and sustained by religious laws and recommendations regulating peoples’ sense of duty. The practices are also motivated by pilgrimage sites being remembered as sacred and special places that individuals nourish a desire to visit. This argument is motivated by my observations of how pilgrimage is mediated in a local Twelver Shia mosque in Oslo. The adjective ‘mediate’, according to its lexical definition, refers to something being the medium for bringing about (a result), conveying (an object), or communicating something (information) (Guralnik 1980, 881). In the present discussion, I explore how pilgrimage was brought about, conveyed, and communicated during rituals in the mosque. The situations I have observed and examine are not extraordinary in the sense that pilgrimage was selected as a central topic of public debate in the mosque. Rather, I refer to incidents in which pilgrimage was mediated through peoples’ sharing of personal pilgrimage stories, in the reference to pilgrimage in public weekly speeches, in the sharing of gifts from shrine sites, and in the gifting of pilgrimage.

Coleman and Eade have argued that the study of pilgrimage will benefit from being placed in a broader framework than the pilgrimage site. In particular, they have suggested that the study of motion, for example, the movement to and movement at sites, as well as the movement from sites, in addition to mobile performances, can help theorize the construction of sacredly charged places. The purpose is partly methodological, ‘to take in more than the central shrine’, and partly theoretical to ‘widen the theoretical location of studies of “sacred travel”’ (Coleman and Eade 2004, 3). The study of pilgrimage mediation taps into the idea of expanding the frame of the pilgrimage study. However, the focus is not on the movement to, at, or from sacred sites but rather on how pilgrimage is verbally and materially ‘set in motion’ as recollections and desires mediated in the locations where Muslims live. I introduce the mosque as a devotional and social space in
which storytelling, lecturing, and gift giving mediate pilgrimage by nurturing a memory, real or imaginary, of pilgrimage sites and encouraging personal desires for travelling. Thus, I invert the focus applied in studying ritual practices in terms of their roles in creating, in sustaining, and by modifying memory of past or even mythical events (Gamliel 2014; Flakerud 2015; Shanneik 2015) to examining how the recollection of past events, such as pilgrimage, may motivate ritual practices in the future.

**Pilgrimage opportunities**

The Twelver Shia mosque in Oslo functioned as a devotional and social space for people mainly of Iranian and Afghan heritage familiar with Persian rituals and cultural modes of behaviour. In terms of theological inclination, the mosque did not support or follow any particular religious scholar. The opportunity to travel with family or friends on pilgrimage was readily available since one of the male members ran an agency organizing hajj and umra in addition to ziyara round trips to shrines of the Twelver Shia Imams and Imamzadehs in the Middle East. Until pro-democracy protests erupted in southern Syria in March 2011, a ten-day ziyara programme included visiting shrines near Damascus (dedicated to Imam Ali’s daughter Zaynab and Imam Husayn’s daughter Ruqayyeh) in addition to shrines in Iraq, particularly in Najaf (Imam Ali, d. 661), Karbala (Imam al-Husayn d. 680 and his half-brother Abu al-Fazl al-Abbas d. 680), Kazemayn (Imam Musa al-Kazim and Imam al-Taqi), and Samarah (Imam Ali Hadi d. 868 and Imam Hassan Askari d. 874 – this is also a memorial to the twelfth Imam). The round trip cost 35,000 NOK.

Ziyara was very popular among the members of the mosque since hajj, I was told by the pilgrimage organizer, was less accessible due to the quota regulating the number of pilgrims admitted to Mecca and Medina each year. The particular challenge facing the Norwegian Muslims was that whereas the number of Muslims resident in the country continued to rise every year, the quota of pilgrims admitted from Norway did not. This situation also had financial consequences. Whereas a hajj visa, in principle, was issued free of charge, its high demand made some European companies charge up to 600 Euro for a visa. For many, the hajj was therefore beyond reach, and they chose to visit alternative pilgrimage destinations. In addition to travelling with the local pilgrimage agency, members of the mosque used other travel agencies, sometimes travelling together with family members residing in the Middle East or other European countries.

**Talking about pilgrimage**

**Sharing personal pilgrimage stories**

Pilgrimage sites and journeys were often talked about in the mosque during informal conversations among the members. Some spoke of the journeys they had already made, whereas others spoke of their desire to travel. The
conversations did not so much dwell on the orthopraxis aspect of the pilgrimage and official theological reasoning behind ritual practices. Instead, the conversations provided small glimpses into personal, emotional experiences which stayed with the pilgrims as transformative experiences. For example, Samira, a single mother of two, won an umra pilgrimage donated by the mosque in 2011. Upon returning, she shared her experiences with a group of women one Thursday evening when people had assembled for the weekly recitation of the supplication known as *dua Kumayl*, ‘Kumayl’s supplication’. While we sat on the carpeted floor drinking tea, she told us that her experience had been both overwhelming and confusing. For a start, she had cried when she first saw the Ka’ba. But next, she said, ‘I did not quite know what to do there. I cannot pray very well and I cannot read the Qur’an [in Arabic]. I was happy but also confused’. Samira’s solution was to sit down on some stairs ‘in the *haram* (Masjid al-Haram, the Great Mosque in Mecca surrounding the Ka’ba), look at the Ka’ba, and ask God to give her a sign. She was then approached by a guard who told her she was not allowed to sit there. To her, this was a disturbing moment, adding a feeling of hopelessness to her confusion. However, when he saw she had been crying, he left and returned with a glass of water from the *zamzam* well, which is considered imbued with curative qualities (Grunebaum 1981, 24). She described this experience as ‘very nice’, transforming her emotional state to that of feeling ‘relaxed and happy’.

Sima had gone on umra with her mother, and one evening during Muharram, before the commemorative rituals were to start, she shared her experiences with women sitting next to her. Like Samira, Sima had not informed herself about the ritual proceedings commonly performed during pilgrimage. Thus, when she arrived in Mecca and Medina, she did not know what to do and how to pray. However, she told us, when she approached the Ka’ba from between the columns and arrived to a place where she could see it, she prostrated herself. Similar to Samira’s experience, she was overwhelmed and started to cry. The feeling of confusion did, however, stay with her, and she went around to the places she was supposed to visit during the pilgrimage without performing the prescribed rituals. When fellow pilgrims urged her to perform them, she tells us, the religious scholar who was their guide told them, ‘Leave her alone, she is not ready yet’. Addressing her, he said: ‘You are free to do what you want while you are here’. Several of the female members of the mosque who had been in Mecca and Medina more than once then volunteered to describe their own experiences as going through a development. The first time, they were confused and overwhelmed. The next time, they knew what to expect emotionally as well as practically. This knowledge better prepared them to concentrate on performing the rites and to focus their prayer to contemplate and be near God.

Yet, there were also the stories about being ‘the other Muslim’, where Shias were denied performing certain commemorative rituals during hajj and umra. In particular, al-Baqi cemetery in Medina is a popular site to visit for the Shias. At the graveyard are buried significant men and women from the early era of Islam, including members of the Prophet Muhammad’s household and family. In
1925, the mausoleums at the cemetery were demolished by King Abdul Aziz al-Saud, a decision inspired by Wahhabi ideology, which is against saint veneration and the building of graves (Wensinck 1960). The site of the old cemetery is today a walled ground scattered by small heaps of sand, each marked by a simple stone, indicating anonymous graves. The current layout of the cemetery and strict Saudi monitoring of the pilgrims’ behaviour make it difficult to conduct commemoration cults on the site. Women in the mosque in Oslo told stories about how the guards on a few occasions had hit them with sticks, in particular when they tried to pick stones from the yard to bring home as ‘souvenirs’.

These and similar stories shared among women in the mosque explain what to expect when on pilgrimage to Mecca. They differ significantly from the descriptive, discursive, and sometimes political narratives presented in the pilgrimage travelogues discussed by Karić in this volume. Instead, the fragmented glimpses into some of the Shia women’s pilgrimage experiences offered emotional and sensuous impressions which underlined the extraordinary in feeling near God, the inclusive experience of being met with kindness from other people, but also the exclusive experience in being harassed for one’s belief. Moreover, their stories conveyed that pilgrimage is not a rigid practice, and one does not need to be very knowledgeable. Most importantly, it can have a transformative effect on your life.

Referring to pilgrimage in public speeches

In addition to being talked about among members of the mosque, pilgrimage was regularly mentioned by the religious scholars, mullahs, in public speeches from the pulpit in connection with other topics. For example, one Thursday evening, after the weekly recitation of *dua Kumayl*, the mullah spoke about the importance of paying the Prophet Muhammad the proper respect. To make his point, he told a story about a man who spent five days in Medina during pilgrimage but visited the Prophet’s grave only once. The story about the man’s lack of respect for the Prophet while on pilgrimage was then used to advise people how to approach the Prophet in their everyday lives. Although they might pray directly to the Prophet for help, it was not right to pray only when one needed his help. Advice on how to perform the religious duties, among them hajj, was a recurring topic. For example, on one occasion, the audience learnt that they would be rewarded by God for performing the religious duties, such as hajj, when not boasting about their performances to others. On another occasion, the performance of hajj by those who could afford it was mentioned as defining who was a true Muslim. Reference to hajj also figured in explanations about the ramifications of Twelver Shia dogmas. The Twelver Shia believe that the twelfth Imam, called al-Mahdi and Imam al-Zaman, is in occultation. He moves invisibly among the living and administers their needs. On one occasion, the ramifications of this dogma were connected to hajj. The audience was told that each year, Imam al-Zaman travels on hajj. When the pilgrims gather at Mount Arafat and in Mina to ask God’s forgiveness, he is among them and performs the supplications. For the pilgrims to pray together with the invisible Imam was described as an honour, and it demonstrated his great support for the Muslims.
The ceremonies for the commemoration of the battle at Karbala in Muharram and Safar were occasions for teaching about the Imams and their relatives and the *ziyarat* to their graves. During Muharram in 2010, the *mullah* took the opportunity to lecture about the prayer *ziyarat ashura*, which is part of the liturgy developed for the pilgrimage to Imam Husayn’s shrine at Karbala (Figure 2.1). Those who do not have the opportunity to make the journey may perform a symbolic pilgrimage by reciting the supplication, and it is supposed to be particularly beneficial when read on the tenth of Muharram (*ashura*). On that particular day, the *mullah* shared information from the religious history which authenticated as well as legitimated the performance of the prayer. According to his information, *ziyarat ashura* had been conveyed by the Prophet Muhammad, written down by Imam Husayn and then handed down by the fifth Imam, Baqir. Later the same evening before they set out to recite the prayer, the *mullah* explained that a visit to Husayn’s grave carried the rewards from God equivalent to hajj and umra performed several times. The following day, the date after Imam Husayn’s martyrdom at Karbala in 680, the *mullah* gave a talk about the consequences of the battle. On this occasion, he spoke of the significance of visiting the graves of the supporters of Islam. In particular, he talked about Hurr, a soldier in Caliph Yazid’s army set to kill Husayn, but who instead joined Husayn and asked to be the first to sacrifice himself for Husayn. After a short summery of the sacred history, the *mullah* turned to his moral point. He described Hurr’s grave in Karbala as a place of visitation, *ziyaratzadeh* (literally ‘visit-descendent’) and went on: ‘When you visit his grave think about this: Do not complain that he first hurt Zaynab and made her sad but rather rejoice in that he turned to Husayn in the last minute’. The moral in this example is that it is never too late to join Husayn.

In the lectures, the religious scholars did not spend much time providing information about pilgrimage customary behaviour. Instead, pilgrimage was used as a well-known reference point to arrive at other aims, for example, respect for the Prophet, how to be a good Muslim, and teaching about the ramifications of Twelver Shia dogma. Particular attention was given, however, to pilgrimage practices, both physical and by proxy, during ceremonies in Muharram. Nonetheless, also in this case pilgrimage, moral conduct, and piety were treated as interrelated aspects of a religious lifestyle.

**Gift-giving practices at the Mosque**

*Sharing gifts from shrine sites*

Studies examining trade at the markets around Muslim pilgrimage sites and the commodification of pilgrimage suggest the existence of a lot of pilgrimage gift-giving practices involving larger markets and economies (Starrett 1995; Kenny 2007; Pinto 2007; Flaskerud 2010, 102; Moufahim 2013). Nevertheless, the practice of giving presents when returning from pilgrimage is not much investigated. In one of the few studies of pilgrimage gift giving, Kenny (2007) has documented transformations in the relationships between pilgrims and their families...
in Guinea, West Africa, due to the gifting of religious commodities as well as of the pilgrimage. Moufahim (2013), moreover, in her examination of Belgian female pilgrims’ purchases of gifts at the Twelver Shia pilgrimage site in Karbala, distinguishes between gifts purchased to circulate among pilgrims on the pilgrimage site and gifts intended for family and friends at home. Her analysis, however, focuses exclusively on the gifts’ importance to the on-site pilgrimage experience. According to my observations in the mosque in Oslo, pilgrimage-related gifts were given in two situations. One was the gifting of objects purchased at pilgrimage sites by returning pilgrims to random co-members of the mosque. The other was the official gifting of religious commodities purchased at pilgrimage sites and of pilgrimage journeys offered to specific members of the mosque as a token of rewards.

The gifting I observed in the mosque was not perceived of as part of any exchange process involving expectation of reciprocity from the receivers. Instead, while on pilgrimage, whether hajj, umra, or ziyara, pilgrims purchased large quantities of non-personalized objects which would be shared with random members of the mosque upon their return home. An incident of random sharing among members occurred one Thursday evening when people had assembled for the weekly recitation of the supplication dua Kumayl. In the women’s section, before the recitation started, we enjoyed tea and dates while talking among ourselves in small groups. Fatima had recently returned from umra, and now she walked around in the room carrying a large bag from which she pulled out prayer beads (tasbih/misbaha) in great abundance. She handed out rosaries to anyone expressing an interest in the objects. The receivers of the prayer beads returned their gratitude by placing a kiss on each of her cheeks and offered her a blessing. Some women placed the rosary safely in their handbags, whereas others kissed it and started shifting the beads while praying silently. On another occasion Mariam, who had recently returned from ziyara to Karbala, approached the women congregating in the mosque draped in a large piece of green fabric. She had purchased the fabric at a vendor outside the shrine of Abu al-Fazl al-Abbas in Karbala and rubbed it on his sarcophagus to imbue it with his blessing, baraka. Now walking among the women, she tore off small pieces of the fabric, sufficient to be tied around the wrist. The pieces of fabric were expected to bring the carrier protection, a belief which is widespread among Twelver Shias (Flaskerud 2013). Another powerful object to be carried on the body was parts of the kiswa covering the Ka’ba in Mecca. Not so easy to purchase, this gift was reserved for family members and friends. Nada and Mariam, two teenage girls, carried a collection of such powerful objects on their right-hand wrists. Nada’s bracelet, purchased while on ziyara to Karbala and Najaf, carried small plates onto which had been printed imaginary portraits of Ali, Husayn, and al-Abbas. Mariam’s bracelet was similar, except the plates were inscribed with the names Allah, Hassan, Muhammad, Fatima, Ali, and Husayn. The bracelets were intended for protection and the recollection of God, the Prophet, and the Imams, but they were also conveniently used as sites onto which gifts from friends’ pilgrimages were added. Nada had attached a black thread from the kiswa to her bracelet, a gift from a friend who had performed the umra (Figure 2.2).
Figure 2.1 The shrine of Imam Husayn at Karbala.
© Ingvild Flakerud

Figure 2.2 A bracelet with a thread from the kiswa and a piece of fabric from the shrine of Abu al-Fazl al-Abbas.
© Ingvild Flakerud
The friend, sitting next to us, explained she had given threads she had pulled from the kiswa to friends and family for baraka, or blessing.

Pilgrims also brought home liturgical gifts which were donated to the mosque. These included mohr-e namaz/turba, a clay prayer stone onto which the Shias place their heads when prostrating during prayer, or salat. The stones are made out of clay from the plains around Karbala, where Imam Husayn was martyred. Another popular gift donated to the mosque is wall hangings with images from events in the Twelver Shia history and calligraphy honouring God, the Prophet Muhammad, and the Twelver Imams.²² The wall hangings were used to decorate the mosque during liturgical festivals (Figure 2.3).

**Official gift giving at the mosque**

The official gifting taking place at the mosque was arranged to honour members, often in connection with ritual events in which creating a positive social atmosphere was important. One such example was the celebration of the birthday of Fatima.²³ In Iran, where Twelver Shiism is the official religion, the birthday of Fatima is also ‘Mother’s day’, and in the mosque the gender-mixed celebration was an occasion also for honouring the female members. Accordingly, the visiting religious scholar or mullah from Iran announced that he had a gift for a person ‘who had worked hard for everybody to have this nice celebration’. He called...
forward Roya, who works regularly in the kitchen, and handed her one of several shawls he had bought while on pilgrimage to Karbala. He had rubbed the shawls on Imam Husayn’s sarcophagus, and Roya beamed with happiness upon receiving the shawl. Next, as a gesture of recognition for my research on Shiism (in Iran and Norway), I was also given a shawl (Figure 2.4).

On both occasions the audience applauded excitedly, and back at my seat, women seated nearby told me I was fortunate to have received such a special gift which, surely, would bring me good fortune. Religious commodities that had been in direct contact with a shrine were also awarded as prizes in competitions. For example on the celebration of Imam Ali’s birthday, which in Iran is also ‘Father’s day’, there was a competition to elect the ‘best husband’. Wives were asked to list their husband’s good qualities on a piece of paper, and a winner was selected randomly. The winner received a shawl from Karbala which he could give to his wife. According to a young woman seated next to me, this would be a nice opportunity for the man to give the wife the feeling that she had been to Karbala.

Also pilgrimage journeys were gifted at the mosque. For example, on the celebration for the birthday of Imam Ali, umra was offered as a prize to the correct answers to a quiz. The congregation had been presented with a list of questions,

Figure 2.4 Shawl purchased by mullah at Karbala and donated to women as a reward. © Ingvild Flaskerud
the answers to which were embedded in the mullah’s talk. Around me, people commented excitedly about the possibility of winning a trip while waiting for the winner to be selected. A woman who had previously won an umra pilgrimage, described it as ‘a dream come true’. The winner was a man in his seventies who, upon being rewarded the umra, shed tears in delight. Several members of the mosque whom I spoke with shared in his happiness. They said they were very happy he was the winner since they knew he would not have been able to afford the cost.

**Discussion: mediating pilgrimage in a home community**

Motivated by my observations in a mosque in Oslo, I suggest that pilgrimage practices are not simply generated and sustained by religious laws and recommendations regulating peoples’ sense of duty. Rather, pilgrimage is also motivated through the ways in which pilgrimage is verbally and materially ‘set in motion’ as recollections and as desires for future actions, mediated in the location where Muslims live. In particular, pilgrimage was brought about, conveyed, and communicated through the techniques of peoples’ sharing of personal pilgrimage stories in the reference to pilgrimage in public weekly speeches, in the sharing of gifts from shrine sites, and in the gifting of pilgrimage. Through these techniques of mediation, pilgrimage sites were remembered as sacred and special places that individuals nourished a desire to visit in the future.

Memory, Bateson has argued, is actively constructed as a social and cultural process (Bateson 1972). Among the members in the mosque in Oslo, memory was mediated and constructed through verbal, visual, and tactile media. Through autobiographical stories which concentrated on especially emotive moments, personal recollections from pilgrimage were shared among members of the mosque. Autobiographical remembering, Wang and Brockmeier (2002) suggest, can be understood as a cultural practice unfolding in the developmental dynamics of the interplay among memory, self, and culture. From a comparative field research perspective, it was interesting for me to notice the difference between the Norwegian pilgrims’ episodic and emotive narratives, and narratives presented to me in 2002 by pilgrims resident in Iran focusing on formal, idealized aspects of the pilgrimage proceedings. In Oslo, pilgrimage narratives were shared in an informal setting in which pilgrimage experiences were communicated within assumed frames of shared cultural knowledge about Muslim pilgrimage practices. Highlighted in this communication were first-hand emotive memories which could authenticate personal benefits engendered by performing the pilgrimage. In Iran, the stories I overheard were told at large receptions hosted by returned pilgrims to celebrate their accomplished pilgrimage. In both cases, however, pilgrimage stories were well received by the audience, who listened attentively and expressed amazement in their responses. Contributing to the shaping of shared collective knowledge about Muslim pilgrimage practices was also the mullahs’ regular and repeated mentioning of and reference to pilgrimage sites and holy personages in their
speeches. Given the *mullahs’* formal authority as authorized religious scholars, their forms of mediation did not primarily contribute to authenticate pilgrimage experiences but to authorize the practice as sound Muslim behaviour.

The gifting of objects brought home from pilgrimage sites functioned, I suggest, as yet another method of creating and sustaining memories of pilgrimage sites and to stimulate a desire to travel. Material culture, Hallam and Hockey propose, has the capacity of mediating our relationship with conditions, past events, and people in calling them to mind or reminding us of them (2001, 2). The artefacts brought home from hajj and umra to Mecca and Medina and from visits (*ziyarat*) to Shia shrines in the Middle East did of course function like souvenirs, calling to mind the pilgrimage experience among those who had already been on pilgrimage. Similarly, McLoughlin has observed, memories of Mecca and Medina were triggered in pilgrims returned to Britain by a range of stimuli and senses, from hearing the call to prayer to the act of praying on a prayer mat, *masala*, perfumed with the smell associated with the Ka’ba (2009, 312). However, as Debrix has suggested, mediation not only serves to transfer meaning by connecting or disconnecting subject and object positions but can also construct and transform social reality (Debrix 2003, xxv). Similarly, artefacts brought home from pilgrimage, I argue, contributed to shape the memory of pilgrimage also among those who received the gifts. The objects served to remind the receivers not of a place they had already visited or something they had already experienced but of something they had knowledge about through other media, such as listening to autobiographical stories, the *mullahs’* speeches, and watching television productions, the Internet, and so on. Moreover, memory was stimulated when members of the mosque were brought into direct contact with the pilgrimage sites through the gifts they received. The objects gifted, such as prayer beads, bracelets, shawls, and clay prayer stones, served as transporters of the power associated with the pilgrimage sites. In fact, the objects were not simply perceived of as being transporters of power from the pilgrimage sites to the home community but to create in the receiver the sensation of being there. As an interlocutor explained about a man offering a shawl from Karbala to his wife: ‘It looks like she went to Karbala’. The artefacts therefore, I suggest, mediated pilgrimage in experiential and sensual manners when touched, worn, and seen. In the process, pilgrimage sites and the home location were linked to an imagined ‘sacred landscape’ in which the potency of the pilgrimage site was felt also at home, a sensation which stimulated the desire to perform a pilgrimage for real. The gifting of pilgrimage journeys by the mosque placed such journeys potentially within the reach even among those who could not afford it.

The imagination of the pilgrim, McKevitt has suggested, is well stimulated even before he or she makes the journey to the shrine (McKevitt 1991, 90). And as Karić shows, in this volume, hajj travelogues are important arenas for Muslims to share pilgrimage experiences and as sources for information and inspiration. The mediation of pilgrimage through peoples’ sharing of personal pilgrimage stories in the reference to pilgrimage in public weekly speeches, in the sharing of gifts from shrine sites, and in the gifting of pilgrimage, I have argued, is an
important factor stimulating peoples’ desire to perform their religious duties. However, in asking what memory is for, Glenburg (1997) has suggested that we use the information we gather to advise us in future situations either when confronted with new situations or people or similar situations and people. In the mosque, people listened attentively to autobiographical stories, taking lessons from them on what to expect and how to behave. The memory of pilgrimage therefore, I suggest, is also useful in helping pilgrims differentiate, plan, and act in the future.

Concluding remarks

I have introduced the mosque as a devotional and social space in which pilgrimage practices were not simply generated and sustained by religious laws and recommendations regulating peoples’ sense of duty but also motivated by pilgrimage sites being remembered as sacred and special places that individuals nourish a desire to visit. The memory of pilgrimage, therefore, was also useful in helping pilgrims differentiate, plan, and act in the future. In this setting, pilgrimage was mediated, that is, brought about, conveyed, and communicated through the techniques of pilgrims’ sharing of autobiographical pilgrimage stories with co-members of the mosque in the references to pilgrimage in public weekly speeches, in the sharing of gifts from shrine sites, and in the gifting of pilgrimage. Through verbal, tactile, and visual media, points of contact were created between pilgrimage sites and the home community. Although situated in a Norwegian context, such mediations of Muslim pilgrimage should not be seen as unique. But what the study brings into attention is how pilgrimage figures in the lives of Muslims away from the pilgrimage sites. In the Norwegian case, in a society where the Muslim population is a minority, and the Twelver Shias a minority within this religious minority, the mosque became an arena of particular importance in mediating pilgrimage not simply because of the mosque being a place in which ritual duties were brought up but because it functioned as a social space in which mediating pilgrimage also was an expression of caring for others’ well-being.

Notes

1 The field research was conducted between 2009 and 2014, partly funded by the Research Council of Norway (2010–2013) and Vetenskapsrådet (2013–2016).
2 In Twelver Shiism, each individual has since the mid-nineteenth century been expected to follow the advice of a religious scholar, marja al-taqlid. See, for example, Litvak 1998.
3 An Imamzadeh is a descendant of the Imams. Visitation to local shrines, imamzadeh, is not formalized to the same extent as visitation to central shrines, and local customs have developed.
4 The redemptive merits of visiting the Twelver Shia Imams’ graves were authorized by Imam al-Sadiq (d. 765) and Imam al-Reza (d. 818) (Ayoub 1978, 180–96; Talib 2000, 69).
5 Interview with pilgrimage organizer in June 2010. The average monthly income in Norway in 2010 was 36,700 NOK (www.ssb.no/arbeid-og-lonn/statistikker/lonnsatt/aar/2011-03-31). The average income tax was about 40%.
6 Usually a state’s representatives negotiate with Saudis to settle the number of pilgrims admitted every year, but Norwegian Muslims do not have such backing from the state. Interview with pilgrimage organizer, 14 October 2010.

7 *Dua Kumayl*, the ‘Supplication of Kumayl’, is said have been taught by Imam Ali to one of his disciples, Kumayl. It is held to be useful, among other things, for protection against evil and for forgiveness of sins (*Call on Me I Answer You*, 810).

8 Tuesday 6 November/2 Muharram 2013.

9 It is not uncommon that things found at sanctuaries are taken away by pilgrims as they are perceived to be imbued with blessings, or *barakat*. See, for example, Procházka-Eisl and Procházka 2010, 206.

10 Thursday 13 January 2011.

11 Thursday 27 January 2011.


14 For a description of the haj rituals, see Buitelaar in this volume.

15 The idea that visits to the tombs of the Fourteen Infallibles are as important as the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina has been known since early works on pilgrimage written in the tenth century; see Amir-Moezzi 2011, 391.

16 Thursday 16 December/10 Muharram 2010.

17 Friday 17 December/11 Muharram 2010.

18 Based on the Maussian perception, Gregory and Carrier formulated gift exchange as an obligatory transfer of inalienable objects or services between mutually obligated and related transactors (Gregory 1982; Carrier 1995).

19 Similar behaviour among pilgrims at Twelver Shia pilgrimage sites are observed by Betteridge in Shiraz in Iran and Moufahim in Karbala in Iraq. See Betteridge 1985; Moufahim 2013, 429–31.

20 The practice of carrying green fabrics around the wrists resembles another practice involving carrying arm amulets, or *bazuband*, on the upper right arm or on both arms, historically as a sign of commemoration for the battle at Karbala; see Vesel 2006. For protection during battle, see Porter and Frembgen 2010, 201–4, but it is also in circulation today in Iran, Shirazi 2009, 77.

21 Similar bracelets, called ‘icon bracelets’ with images of Catholic saints, can be purchased from www.italianrosaries.com/product/70-0002.

22 For a review of the Twelver Shia juristic discussions concerning the use of the *mohr-e namaz/turba*, see Gleave 2012. For a discussion of wall hangings in liturgical Twelver Shia settings, see Flaskerud 2010, 177–248.

23 Sunday 16 May 2010.


References


Bosnian hajj pilgrimage dates to the first centuries of Ottoman rule. Bosnia was conquered in 1463, and the earliest documented Bosnian pilgrims appear in the second half of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth centuries. Information on the variety of pilgrims (and especially female pilgrims) during this early period, however, is meagre. What is more certain is the fact that the practice of hajj was regulated by imperial authorities: firstly by the Ottomans and later by the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Subsequent governments all sought to influence the practice of hajj in various ways – including attempts to suppress or discourage it. However, both the pre-modern and modern histories of Bosnian hajj remain highly understudied and afford the researcher ample opportunities for exploration.

A number of aspects of Bosnian hajj practice are similarly understudied. This includes the rich oral tradition (songs, proverbs, and stories) related to the pilgrimage as well as written accounts of the various sacred sites of Mekka, Medina, and Jerusalem, a genre which has been cultivated over the last five centuries. The great bulk of Bosnian hajj literature has been produced in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. One must not, however, overstate Metcalf’s contention that ‘western technology, including the printing press . . . and new modes of transport influenced the impulse to write’ (Metcalf 1990, 87). Hajj travelogues composed in the Ottoman period attest to the fact that not all literary production of this sort was influenced by technological, epistemological, or other types of change originating in the West. Narratives of pilgrimage are fundamentally related to the internal dynamics of the empire, including changes in literary culture and aesthetic sensibilities. These involved, most prominently, the cultivation of first-person narratives and the popularization of the form of the diary or travelogue, which for the first time became available to the less privileged classes (including humble copyists and barbers), eager for avenues of social mobility.

Notwithstanding this point, we must not neglect the role of technology in the post-Ottoman period since it influenced the very media in which the authors chose to write their accounts; increasingly, these were circulated in journals, other printed forms, and with the advent of the Internet, web pages. We can further observe that technology transformed the experience of the pilgrimage itself in unprecedented ways, alongside preserving certain pre-modern conventions in sometimes radically altered forms. Remarks on the differences between
one’s own ethnic or regional group of hajjis and other groups encountered on the journey is a recurring feature of the narratives across all periods, although the sentiments and underlying ideas are articulated in a variety of ways. The most striking example is the depiction of Arab Bedouins; one may compare their treatment in the eighteenth-century Ottoman Turkish work by Mustafa Mukhlisi with the reminiscences on Bedouin raids by Muhamed Krpo (1938; in Bosnian). The contexts of the authors are hugely different, but the continuities are equally impressive; the threat to pilgrimage routes is mentioned repeatedly well into the last century, even when dangers are reported in their negative form (when authors emphasize their recent elimination).

This chapter will deal with the relatively recent but hugely popular trend of online publication of Bosniak hajj narratives; it will also address the literature frequently accompanying such travelogues in the form of prescriptive essays and journalism on the topic of the pilgrimage. Bosniak narratives offer valuable first-person perspectives on the experience of the hajj and provide unique insights into the complex relationship between race, ritual, and privilege during pilgrimage, especially significant given that Bosniaks are indigenous non-convert white Muslims. In other words, one can analyze the degree to which authors are aware of their privilege and how this influences their relationships to the holy places and also to the concept of the umma (the global Muslim community). Among other things, these narratives permit us to explore the various and/or competing identities the pilgrims profess, whether these represent loyalty to an ethnic community, a nation-state, or religion within the framework of a national (Bosnian) identity. It bears emphasising that modern Bosniak hajj literature present us with a case of Muslim belonging in Europe which is not easily witnessed in other contexts. That is to say, it operates with a very particular insider-outsider orientation that is of tremendous relevance given contemporary debates about the role of Islam in Europe.

The first part of this chapter concerns the context in which online hajj travelogues are produced, and the remaining parts deal with the travelogues themselves and their major preoccupations under the topic of the relationship between hajj and narrative, including issues of spatio-temporality, mobility, technology, and ideology.

**Context**

During the last decade or so, the Internet has afforded enormous new possibilities for Bosnian Muslim pilgrims to share their experiences of the hajj in an almost-instantaneous and easily accessible manner. The narratives are usually published on web pages dedicated to or maintained by Islamic organizations or communities, for example, the Islamic Community of North American Bosniaks (www.icnab.com) and the Islamic Community of Bosniaks in Munich (www.sabur.de). Hajj narratives are also published on web pages dedicated to Islamic and/or Bosniak themes and topics, for example, www.bosnjaci.net or www.minber.ba. The most prominent website for Bosnian hajjis, as well as future pilgrims and others, is the web page of the Zul Hulejfa Association of the hajjis of Novo Sarajevo (www.
Unlike the previous examples, this page is focused solely on the hajj practice of Bosniak Muslims, operating under the motto ‘The first European Internet portal dedicated to the fifth Islamic duty – hajj’ (Prvi evropski internet portal posvećen petoj islamskoj dužnosti – hadžu). Content ranges from video accounts of the hajj to written narratives, photographs, and official reports. Some of the content is available in English, including the mission statement of the association. This emphasizes the website’s intention not to interfere with or contest the authority of the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Herzegovina over the organization and execution of the hajj. There is, notwithstanding these irenic sentiments, an activist commitment at work:

The main and motive force of the Association is a group of young, educated hajjis, who are very much at home with international travel and modern technologies. Our mission is to spread glad tidings about the hajj and to undermine the Bosniak dogma that you need not make hajj when you are young, but only once you have grown old.

This is evidently a call to change what is perceived as ‘common’ Bosniak hajj practices. The ideal increasingly promoted in the post-war era (1995 onwards) is that of young people who are not only upwardly mobile and literate in the use of new technologies but are also conscious of their national identity as Bosnians. Attempts to combat the stereotypical image of the hajj pilgrim as an old man or woman are prominent in many travelogues and essays. Zehra Alispahić, one of the few female hajj travelogue authors, writes in 2008 of how older people are disproportionately represented in Bosniak hajj groups. This is, she writes, a result of a widespread opinion that the older the pilgrims, the less likely they are to revert to a life of sin and so the greater the chance of keeping ‘their hajj innocent of corruption’ (Alispahić 2008). Such an opinion needs to be challenged, says the author, particularly since the rituals require a physical robustness and strength that older hajjis lack.

The appeal to people to make hajj at a younger age seems to have produced some results, although the numbers of young adults making pilgrimage does not seem to have changed to any great extent. A decade after the war, in 2005, the largest single group of Bosnian hajjis still belonged to the seventy and above age cohort. The situation changed somewhat in more recent years, and by 2011 the largest group was in the 60-to-70 age range. Thus, reality still remains some distance from the wishes of the hajj activists. The general trend of decreasing age has continued in the past few years, with a slight tendency for younger age groups to more readily go on pilgrimage. In this way it would seem that while popular rhetoric (as already described) is directed towards the much younger population, economic and other reasons (including the mahrem requirement for women) prevent young adults from making hajj in larger numbers.

Hajj narratives – particularly those published online – are being cited with increasing frequency as important inspirations behind the decision to go on pilgrimage. At the same time, negative comments are voiced when content is not felt
to be sufficiently devotional or when the tone is seen as frivolous and unsuited to the conventional piety of the genre. For example, Bošnjački glas (Bosniak Voice), the journal of the Bosniak community of Croatia (BNZH), published an article titled ‘A Message to the Hajjis of the Diaspora’ (Poruka dijaspornim hadžijama), in which the author Adem Smajić criticizes those diaspora pilgrims who retell their experiences without paying due attention to the ‘real message of the all-Islamic hajj congress’. The phrase ‘all-Islamic congress’ recurs in twentieth- and twenty-first-century Bosniak hajj travelogues and suggests that the hajj not only brings believers from various Muslim societies to participate in common rituals in a shared space but that it unites them with a singularity of purpose and intent which can endure long after the pilgrimage. The word ‘congress’ is of especial interest here given its political resonances, implying that the hajj has larger dimensions than the merely affective; it provides a space for the (imagined) political and social unification of Muslims. It is significant that Smajić’s critique is directed against diaspora authors who are, apparently, under various pressures to maintain their religious and cultural traditions in a minority context. Interestingly, the motto of the web page of the Bosniak community of Croatia reads: ‘With culture, religion and tradition against assimilation’ (Kulturom, vjerom i tradicijom protiv asimilacije). But as we can observe, a large number of online diaspora travelogues describe unplanned encounters with members of other Bosniak diasporas. The authors are evidently preoccupied with the idea of unity among Muslims in general and among Bosniak Muslims in particular.

From a historical perspective, it should be noted that publication online involves another interesting development over printed travelogues in which the voice of the diaspora was severely underrepresented. We can observe an interesting connection here between Internet technology and a burgeoning nationalist sentiment. Online hajj travelogues play a significant role in the development and sustaining of Bosniak diaspora nationalism in a manner similar to what Smith has described as an ideological movement ‘to secure for a self-defined ethnocultural population collective autonomy, unity and identity by restoring its members to their historic homeland’ (Smith 2010, 4). However, this description is not applicable across the diaspora narratives. In the present case, it cannot always be claimed that the nationalism of Bosniak diasporas tends to restore its members to ‘their historic homeland’, although it does tend to preserve their ‘collective autonomy, unity and identity’.

Since diaspora authors were not always able to travel with ‘resident’ Bosniaks, their mutual encounters involve another layer of diasporic self-reflection. Their experiences with double mobility, from Bosnia as a perceived first homeland, and towards the holy lands of Mecca and Medina as a perceived spiritual homeland, are crucial to the ‘construction, negotiation and contestation of various identities, including religious identities’ (Hopkins et al. 2007, 2). In this respect, the Bosniak hajj narrative genre has been preoccupied with issues of ethnic and national belonging at the end of the twentieth and the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The appearance of online hajj narratives has accentuated the ethnic dimensions of Bosniak identity, which receive further emphasis from diasporic authors who perceive
themselves to be exposed to the dangers of cultural assimilation. It is precisely in the diaspora experience that the preoccupation with identity becomes most pertinent. It might be suggested that since the diaspora experience has developed in different phases over the last century, it is a highly contingent phenomenon. Bosniak concern with identity therefore relates to the decidedly modern preoccupation with identity. Indeed, the Bosniak experience recalls Ammerman’s observation that ‘only when human beings begin to be disembedded from traditional spaces and relationships, long-accepted rhythms of time and well-established activities of survival do they begin to ask questions about themselves and their various degrees and types of belonging’ (Ammerman 2003, 209). The fear of assimilation is also the driving force behind the more prominent assertions of ethnic and national identity among diasporic Bosniaks, as can be seen in the motto of the website of the community in Croatia.

**Hajj and narrative**

Online Bosniak hajj narratives are obviously indebted to the literature of the preceding (twentieth) century and are deeply shaped by it; the continuities are much more obvious here than in the case of regular touristic writings. They frequently include *fiqh* instructions on the correct performance of pilgrimage, often by the same author. Pre-modern accounts often display the same feature. One seventeenth-century Bosniak travelogue translated and published in 1981 is often cited online, where it is juxtaposed with modern narratives to highlight changes and continuities in the experience of hajj. In other words, modern pilgrims’ literary visions are already shaped by a voluminous heritage available to them through print and electronic media. Older, printed narratives have also been made available on the Internet, which has brought about a change in the readership of the material. Hajj narratives are published electronically to appeal to a younger population, many of whom are considering going on pilgrimage themselves. Another reason for the popularity of online hajj narratives is that they grant diaspora Bosniaks easy access to websites with a prominent ethnic marker (such as, e.g., www.bosnjaci.net). As Bordes-Benayoun points out, the establishment of the ‘electronic network’ represents ‘a significant example of the activities of the diasporas’, implying the sustaining of ‘relations with the homeland’ (2010, 54). The Internet also makes it extremely easy for authors to include photographs and maps of the hajj journey and the sacred places they have visited, which had been possible in a much more limited form in the age of print media. Some online authors use the wide opportunities for communication afforded by the Internet to offer readers the possibility of interaction by including their email addresses.

A remarkable shift in patterns of authorship is evident after the introduction of the Internet. The new medium has attracted an unprecedented number of female Bosniak authors. This new platform for female writers makes the Internet a more open and democratic forum of expression than print media, which dominated hajj writings of the twentieth century. Although women authors are still few in number, their appearance on mainstream internet web pages dedicated to religious affairs is...
significant. It should be noted, however, that female pilgrimage narratives are usually shorter than those written by men and are typically presented in the form of an essay or series of vignettes rather than a sustained travelogue.

The second point that can be made about the significance of the Internet is the peculiar relationship of the narratives to the various ideologies they reference, explicitly or implicitly. The various ideological leanings of hajj travelogues are in evidence throughout the twentieth century. Ideologies presented or promoted in the narratives include pan-Islamism (in the work of Muhamed Krpo, of 1938), communism (in the travelogue of Hasan Ljubunčić from 1949 (Ljubunčić 1951)), and anti-communism (in Hasan Šestić’s travelogue from 1996 (Šestić 1968)). Apparent praise or sympathy for these ideologies does not mean that the authors were propagandists on behalf of those causes, however; the circumstances under which they travelled necessarily shaped their presentations. For example, Hasan Ljubunčić travelled as a member of the official Yugoslavian hajj delegation to the Saudi king, with the aim of presenting Muslims there as happy and flourishing (Ljubunčić 1951). Apparent ideological leanings might represent no more than a reflection of the political moods prevailing at the time. Alternatively, the travelogue of Ibrahim Hakki Ćokić (1932–33) expresses fierce anti-colonial views, whereas the narrative of Fejzulah Hadžibajrić from 1969 (Hadžibajrić 2002) is conspicuous for its lack of socialist or communist overtones. Thus, travelogues in the Bosnian hajj tradition served as fora for the expression of diverse political and other views. Han Mui Ling has argued that places can serve as avenues for the reproduction of ruling ideologies, while at the same time providing ‘sites for resistance and struggle by individuals and groups’ (2003, 259).

Besides an account of the pilgrimage itself, online authors include videos or maps describing the daily routine of hajjis and even live videos broadcasted from minute to minute. Such live coverage of the pilgrimage is of great value to the pilgrims’ relatives, who are eager to be well informed about their safety and movements. Hajj web pages such as zulhulejfa.ba offer other features, such as sections on ‘Mekka and Medina’ (Meka i Medina) and ‘Interesting Facts’ (Zanimljivost), along with the travelogues (Putopisi). The first two sections offer relevant news from Mecca and Medina (concerning the practicalities of hajj or the opening of new institutions) and historical information concerning the holy places and their significance. The third section directs the viewer to a range of travelogues not invariably concerned with the hajj, including narratives of visits to Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Iran. It seems that the only criterion for inclusion is that they be written on Muslim-majority countries, which presumably makes them of interest to the website’s visitors.

The hajj narratives typically contain an introduction describing the author’s reasons for embarking on their journey. Often, the role of God’s will is invoked to explain the successful completion of an otherwise unattainable pilgrimage (unattainable for economic or other reasons). Kenan Ćemo writes, for example, that ‘as usually happens, beautiful things come unexpectedly’ (Kao što to obično i biva, lijepe stvari otvaraju se neočekivano) (Ćemo 2006a). Another customary introductory motif involves citing travelogues that inspired the pilgrims, encouraging
them to undertake the hajj and to write an account of what they experienced. Narratives that are frequently cited as inspirational include Muhamed Krpo’s of 1938 (Čemo 2006a) and Jusuf Livnjak’s from the early seventeenth century. The latter is especially popular since it is thought to be the first Bosniak hajj travelogue, and so it bears tremendous symbolic power for twenty-first century authors. Apart from these, the narratives cite non-Bosniak authors; the many references to Muhammad Asad’s account of 1954 in online travelogues testify to its ongoing popularity among Bosnian hajjis.

The spatio-temporal features of the narratives are of particular interest in the modern period, as authors find it much easier to write their observations while on the move. Changes in the way time is marked point to deeper cultural transformations, including those suggested by the adoption of Gregorian in place of *hijri* dates (Green 2015, 221–2). In the Digital Age, there are profound changes involving not only the marking of the hajj itinerary, according to the Gregorian calendar, but also the needs of Internet technology itself. Thus, time is in some cases divided according to the availability of an Internet connection! In the online hajj travelogue of Devad Koldžo, one of the founders of the Zulhulejfa organization, there are entries remarkable for their descriptions of the presence or absence of an Internet connection (Koldžo 2011). In this respect it can be said that whereas previous generations of pilgrims debated the virtues and vices of modernity as it affected their journeys, hajjis in the Digital Age are not mere observers or consumers of technology but are actively seeking to accommodate their journeys to its demands. In a peculiar way, the usage of Internet technology becomes an element in the shaping of the ‘new self’ which emerges in the most recent hajj narratives. The neo-hajji is supposed to be interested in technology or, at least, to have a positive attitude towards it. The author’s stance on particular technologies is meant to indicate a broader position on the various aspects of modernization, understood as a process of thoroughgoing change with wide-ranging consequences for the conduct of religious and social life. Time flows according to the borderlines that delimit the landscapes of the journey; it flows in the shorter or longer periods that signal transitions from the familiar into the unknown or even hostile. The shifts between factual and real time are evident when hajjis enter unfamiliar territory; authors then typically offer general remarks on the country they are entering. Jusuf Pajević mentions brief details about the states he and his fellow pilgrims are about to pass through on their 2009 journey and duly notifies his readers on entering the new time zone (Pajević 2009). On some occasions, the Gregorian calendar is referred to ironically, as in the case when Kenan Ćemo mentions that the New Year has passed without any corresponding commemoration by the gathered pilgrims (Čemo 2006a).

The fashioning of the ‘new self’ in online Bosnian hajj travelogues (and literature more generally) reinforces identification with the Bosniak ethnic-religious identity. This represents something of a continuity with a trend evident from wartime narratives of pilgrimage in which authors began to emphasize ethnic and communal markers in the creation of a Bosnian Muslim hajj-persona (independent of such affiliations as ‘Yugoslav’). In the context of online hajj literature, there
is, moreover, a prescriptive emphasis involving a marked blending of the terms ‘Bosniak’ (primarily an ethnic marker) and ‘Muslim’ (a religious marker). These markers tend to endure and do not seem to be challenged in the course of the narratives. Perhaps this can be explained by the fact that a large number of the pilgrims travel by air, which reduces the opportunity for experiences of separation and liminality (Buitelaar 2015, 10). In such circumstances, the perception of oneself as a Bosniak Muslim and the emphasis on ethnic origin are sustained throughout the narratives, given the absence of sufficient time for redevelopment or reconsideration. Reactions to travel by air are not uniformly positive, with some authors complaining that the brief duration of the journey detracts from ‘authenticity’ of their pilgrimage (Šantić 2013). Attention has also been called to the way in which air travel ‘re-Islamized’ the hajj since pilgrims could reach their destination without passing through unknown and non-Muslim territories (Green 2015, 209). The emphasis on self-identification as a Bosniak Muslim is not undermined by the encounter with other ethnicities, although the ‘re-Islamization’ of the hajj has foregrounded the religious aspect of this identity at the expense of its purely ethnic element. Generally, however, one gets the impression that religious and ethnic or national identities sit together comfortably.

Regardless of the importance given in online narratives to the technological aspect of the journey, the dominant place in hajj travelogues continues to be reserved for the experience of sacred spaces. This is an important continuity that has survived the transition from manuscript to print culture – and, beyond it, into the Digital Age. Arrival in the holy places represents the culmination of a journey whose religious significance is deeply felt. Following the completion of the rituals, the narratives usually conclude with a short description of the return journey, often describing the pilgrims’ eagerness to convey their impressions to those they have left behind. The first meeting with the holy places is usually described as an overwhelming and ineffable experience (‘I am not able to describe the experience, the feeling that I am entering nothing less than Mekka in any words’).

Sometimes the encounter stirs feelings of anxiety, pilgrims being burdened by the weight of expectation; they struggle to mouth the words of a prayer on first seeing the Ka’ba (in the belief that such a prayer will be accepted), and they are very scrupulous about getting it right (Koldžo 2009).

Comparison with hajj narratives in the age of steam travel is instructive (Green 2015, 209), but the depiction of different peoples features no less prominently in more recent tellings. Bosniak authors regard themselves vis-à-vis other pilgrims from a curious double-vantage point. On the one hand, they lament the tremendous suffering of the genocide of the late twentieth century; on the other, Bosniaks express astonishment at the ‘fate’ of other Muslim peoples who are not so fortunate as to enjoy a hajj policy permitting frequent pilgrimage (as the Bosniaks apparently have). A strident nationalism is evident in the description of the holy places, whereby the perceived victim or hero status of the Bosniak people is related to the elevation of the sacred ground. The topos of a ‘Bosniak man’ (bošnjacki insan) who is going on hajj despite suffering and shortcomings is frequently used in both online and printed pilgrimage narratives from the end of the twentieth to
the beginning of the twenty-first centuries. The online (and printed) narratives are rarely critical of the stereotypical and self-congratulatory image of Bosniaks as ‘privileged’ people; the rare exception is Filip Mursel Begović’s travelogue (published in the online journal Preporod) under the provocative title ‘The Black Man’s Legs Make the Hajj, Too’ (I crnčeve noge idu na hadž) (Begović 2015a). In this hajj narrative, the author criticizes the racist remarks uttered by some of his fellow (Bosniak) pilgrims and tries to correct these pernicious misperceptions with ironic comments.

However, one’s overall impression is that online Bosniak hajj narratives do not depart from stereotypes in any radical way. On the contrary, they present readers with a parochial viewpoint, underlining Bosniak ethnic identity while discouraging a more than superficial interest in the racial or national other. For the most part, one senses that a patriarchal attitude is not negatively directed against women, however, since the general atmosphere of the hajj is one of professed equality, the hajj itself re-enacting the memory of Hagar (Hajara). Since no later than the early twentieth century, moreover, Bosnian society has been more or less accustomed to female visibility in many spheres of life, making the intermingling of the sexes in the hajj all the more unremarkable.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of Bosniaks publishing their hajj narratives online is part of a broader trend of late twentieth- and early twenty-first-century ‘internetization’ of religious experience involving the use of electronic media by underrepresented groups. As such, the authorship of online narratives is not restricted to a privileged circle of ulama and/or academics, who constitute a minority of authors. This marginalization was a trend which began as early as the second half of the twentieth century, and authorship has increasingly come to embrace such groups as ‘lay’ men, women, and members of the Bosniak diaspora. With the introduction of the Internet, travelogues are able to present information in a variety of formats (prose, audio-visual material, etc.). The authors’ aim is to convey their impressions in as short a time as possible and in some cases simultaneously with their pursuit of the hajj. The primary goal of such travelogues is to give the reader and potential hajji as much interesting information as possible, sometimes with the consequence of making the devotional aspects of the journey less visible. The authors are not only avid consumers of technology but are able to actively influence their communities through an intelligent and sophisticated use of it. In addition to its originality as a mode of expression, the online travelogue has become a place for ideological contestation; in some accounts stereotypes are deployed, whereas elsewhere they are challenged.

The Bosniak hajj narratives published online testify to a broad democratization of the genre but also to important continuities with the old forms, serving as valuable sources for the investigation of Bosniak self- and other-construction. Allowing for greater participation than the traditional print media and enabling the emergence of a greater diversity of perspectives among its authorship, electronic
fora grant the researcher an intimate look at the hajj experiences of pilgrims who were, until recently, on the very margins of the world of the pilgrimage travelogue.

Notes
1 For the history of Bosniak hajj during the Ottoman period, see Husić 2014. For the purposes of this chapter, ‘pilgrim’ and ‘pilgrimage’ refer to the hajj.
2 For details of Ottoman regulation of the hajj, see Faroqhi 1994.
3 See, for example, the following studies of state relationships to the practice of Bosnian hajj: Bećirović 2012; Jahić 2010.
4 On first-person narratives in the Ottoman tradition, see Kafadar 1989. On the phenomenon of the ‘new literacy’ in the context of the eighteenth-century Ottoman Empire, see Sajdi 2013.
5 MS Bagdatli Vehbi 1024 in the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul.
6 I use the terms ‘Bosniak’ and ‘Bosnian Muslim’ interchangeably.
8 The Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina was established in 1882 under Austro-Hungarian rule, and it is not a state but a religious community in a secular state. It has its own religious leader (reis-ul-ulama) and muftis.
10 This information was obtained from the Hajj and Umra Office of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Ured za hadž i umru). I thank Mr. Rasim Brković for making these statistics available to me.
11 The requirement that a woman must be accompanied on hajj by a mahrem, that is, her husband or a near relative with whom it is unlawful to marry.
12 ‘Ono što prati većinu dijaspornih hadžija jeste prepričavanje i doživljaji te sjećanja, a ne, stvarne poruke sa sveislamskog kongresa hadža’ (Smajić 2010, 51).
13 For example, Kenan Čemo combines a manual of ritual and a travelogue on the same web page (Čemo 2006b).
14 Compare, for example, Filip Mursel Begović’s warnings about the dangers to the hajj route (from the ISIS threat) to Livnjak’s relatively safe journey (Begović 2015b).
15 The travelogue of Jusuf Pajević from 2009 contains an email address at the beginning and the request for readers to contact him if they notice any mistakes (Pajević 2009).
16 For example, women’s travelogues have appeared on the web pages zulhulejfa.ba and znaci.ba, such as Zehra Alispahić already cited (Alispahić 2008) and Tufo Adisa Sadžak (Sadžak 2010).
19 Jusuf Livnjak’s travelogue is used in two ways: it is used to demonstrate the pedigree of the genre and also, less nationally, to call attention to the radical changes in methods of transportation, technology, and so on. For an example of the first, see Ferid Ferko Šantić’s travelogue (Šantić 2012); for an example of the second, see Devad Koldžo’s article ‘The Traces of Bosnian Hajjis’ (Tragovi bosanskih hadžija) (Koldžo 2012).
20 Born Leopold Weiss; a famous Jewish convert to Islam and influential intellectual and statesman. Ferid Ferko Šantić cites his travelogue; see Šantić 2013.
Dženita Karić

21 ‘Nisam kadar nikakvim riječima opisati taj doživljaj, taj osjećaj da ulazim nigdje drugo do u Meku’ (Šantić 2013).

22 Ferid Ferko Šantić does both in his narrative, firstly addressing his remembrance of the ‘Bosniak martyrs’ (šehid) which is immediately followed by his statement that the Bosniaks are privileged because they can go on pilgrimage as much as they wish to (providing they have the financial means) unlike other, much larger national groups (Šantić 2013).

23 The narrative of Ferid Ferko Šantić from the web page www.bosnjaci.net is an obvious example (Šantić 2012; Šantić 2013).

References


Pilgrimage to Mecca by British converts to Islam in the interwar period

John Slight

Introduction
This chapter examines the experiences of three British converts to Islam – Lord Headley (1855–1935), Eldon Rutter (1894–1950s), and Lady Evelyn Cobbold (1867–1963) – who performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, the hajj, in the interwar period. Whereas there have been studies of the hajj from Britain that focus on the contemporary period, there has been little historical consideration of this phenomenon (McLoughlin 2009, 2013). Furthermore, histories of Islam in Britain and of British converts to Islam have not examined the hajj experiences of British converts (Ansari 2004; Gilliat-Ray 2010; Gilham 2014, 113). Consequently, this chapter is a fresh contribution to the study of Muslim pilgrimage and Islam in Europe. Studying these three converts on hajj highlights the connections between religion and politics and how these influenced each other. Performing the hajj in the interwar period exposed these converts to the political changes that affected the pilgrimage in this period, namely the transition from Hashemite to Saudi control in the Hijaz, where Mecca is located. This had religious consequences as the Saudis introduced several policies that reflected their interpretation of Islam, Wahhabism, which in turn affected pilgrims. This chapter will first provide a historical overview of British converts to Islam in Britain, and the paths of conversion the three pilgrims took, examine the political framework of the hajj, and then the personal experience of the hajj, through the lens of these three converts’ experiences. The chapter concludes with a brief consideration of British hajj narratives to contextualize these pilgrims’ accounts. Travelling to the Hijaz as Britons, these converts were subjects of an empire that ruled over half the world’s Muslim population and had a large degree of interest in and influence over the Hijaz. These factors made their hajj experiences different in many ways from their co-religionists. However, their elite status marked out the similarities between their pilgrimages and those of their fellow elite Muslim pilgrims.

The historical background of British converts to Islam
People born in the British Isles have a long history of converting to Islam. This generally took two forms before the nineteenth century: those who had been captured by North African corsairs in the early modern period and East India Company
employees who converted to Islam in the mid-eighteenth century (see introduction to Dalrymple 2001; Colley 2002, 275–327; Ghosh 2006; and Auctherlonie 2012). Britons who converted to Islam in Britain itself first appeared in the mid-nineteenth century (see Ansari 2004, 24–40; Gilliat-Ray 2010, 1–54). The pioneer proselytizer of Islam in Britain in this period was Abdullah Quilliam, a solicitor in Liverpool (Ansari 2004, 82–4, 121–5; Gilliat-Ray 2010, 39–41; the main work on Quilliam is Geaves 2010). His fledgling community of British Muslims in Liverpool practised their faith in the 1880s and 1890s, but Quilliam’s sudden departure from Britain meant this Muslim community withered away (Ansari 2004, 83; see Geaves 2010, for a full account). In 1889, Dr. Joseph Leitner established the Shah Jahan Mosque at Woking, financed by the Begum of Bhopal. The mosque fell into disuse until it was saved in 1913 by a barrister from Lahore, Khwaja Kamaluddin, who became the mosque’s imam. The mosque subsequently became the focal point of activity for British converts to Islam. It is estimated that by 1924, the work of the Woking Mosque Mission had resulted in more than 1,000 Britons converting to Islam.1

The first British Muslim to perform the hajj is generally agreed to be Joseph Pitts, a Devonshire sailor captured by North African corsairs in 1678, who then converted to Islam. His 1704 published memoir of his time as a slave, during which he performed the hajj, is the first documented example of a Briton on hajj, but there were undoubtedly other British slaves like Pitts whose experiences went unrecorded (see Auctherlonie 2012). The records of the British consulate in Jidda show a few British converts who arrived to perform hajj, but they came from various parts of the British Empire, not Britain itself (Jarman 1990). Consequently, the hajj experiences of Headley, Rutter, and Cobbold remain our main sources for the ‘British hajj’ in this interwar period.

Paths to conversion: Headley, Rutter, and Cobbold

Lord Headley’s early life has little indication of his future path as the most prominent British Muslim convert in the interwar period. Born in 1855 and educated at Cambridge, he trained as a civil engineer. In 1913, he succeeded his cousin to the peerage. Raised as a Protestant, he was continually struck by the intolerance of Christians to rival Christian denominations. Headley converted to Islam during a 1913 meeting of the Islamic Society, an organization whose members included Muslims living in Britain, British converts to Islam, and those with an interest in Islam, who met to discuss various topics related to Islam and the Muslim world. This event was announced in the London Times Court Circular, which quoted from Headley’s letter to the Islamic Society – ‘Those who know me will believe I am perfectly sincere in my belief’.2 The Daily Mirror placed Headley’s conversion within the wider context of ‘the lure of Eastern religions’, a cultural and religious phenomenon that stemmed from a more questioning stance towards Christianity in light of the appalling loss of life in the First World War.3 Kamaluddin, imam of the Woking Mosque, stated at a subsequent prayer meeting that ‘Lord Headley has done much to bridge the gulf’ between East and West as a result
of his conversion. Headley was a potent symbol of what Islam in Britain could look like – a firm part of the British establishment.

Headley was publicly forthcoming about the reasons for his conversion. His study of Islam gave him a happiness and security never approached before. Freedom from the weird dogmas of the various branches of Christian churches came to me like a breath of pure sea air, and on realising the simplicity, as well as the illuminating splendour, of Islam, I was as a man emerging from the cloudy tunnel into the light of day.

In an interview with *The Daily Mail*, Headley said, ‘It is the intolerance of those professing the Christian religion which more than anything else is responsible for my secession. . . . The purity and simplicity of the Mahommedan religion . . . make a special appeal to me’. It seems fair to conclude that Headley’s belief in Islam was sincere. His activities support this – he travelled to Egypt, South Africa, and India under the auspices of the Woking Mosque and was President of the British Muslim Society as well as chair of the Woking Mosque Trust. In speeches given during his tour of Egypt in 1923, before he travelled to the Hijaz, Headley said he had been a ‘Moslem at heart’ for fifty years but only publicly converted recently as ‘all the old people whom he had to consider had gone’, suggestive of the widespread hostility to such a move that many converts faced, especially from their families.

By contrast, there are fewer details available on Eldon Rutter, whose real name was Clement Edward Rutter. He enlisted in the British Army in September 1914 and fought at Gallipoli, where he was wounded and had bouts of ill health. In 1919 he travelled to Penang, in British Malaya, as a clerk for Nestlé. He learnt Arabic in Malaya from Hadhrami immigrants and converted to Islam. Rutter returned to England in 1924 before leaving for Egypt to perform the hajj (Wolfe 1997, 331). He appears to have permanently settled in England after performing the hajj in 1925. Rutter’s pilgrimage account opens in May 1925, with the author in Cairo making preparations for his travels to Arabia, although he never elaborates on the reasons for his conversion to Islam in his book.

Lady Evelyn Cobbold came from a similarly elite background to Headley’s. She was born into a family of Scottish aristocrats and visited North Africa with her family regularly as a child, which gave her experience of a Muslim society (Facey 2008, 4). By 1914–1916, letters from her Arab friends refer to her as Lady Zainab, and although she never formally converted to Islam, she states in her hajj account that she ‘does not know the precise point when the truth of Islam dawned on me. It seems that I have always been a Moslem’ (Cobbold 2008, 89; Facey 2008, 26). In 1933, at the age of sixty-five, she became the first British Muslim woman to perform the hajj, and her published account is the first by a British Muslim woman. These varied paths of conversion to Islam, however, all pointed in the same direction – to Mecca to perform the hajj, the fifth pillar of Islam, an obligatory ritual for all Muslims who are able to do so.
Hajj and imperial and Arabian politics

Since the early years of Islam, the hajj and those who perform it have always been affected by the political situation in the Hijaz (Peters 1994). Whoever was the ruler of Islam’s Holy Cities, Mecca and Medina, held great influence over pilgrims’ experiences during the hajj. A further important political factor that impacted on pilgrims was the political relationships the Hijaz’s ruler had with the empires, nations, and territories from which pilgrims came. Another issue that pilgrims faced was how their own polity viewed the hajj and engaged with the ritual – this was a spectrum that ran from banning subjects going on hajj, in the case of the Soviet Union during certain periods, to polities that actively facilitated the hajj, such as the Ottoman Empire (Ro’i 2000; Faroqhi 2014). In the case of Headley, Rutter, and Cobbold, they went on hajj during a time when the British Empire had been engaged with the ritual since the 1860s. By the early 1920s, there were extensive imperial and colonial bureaucracies throughout British territories in the Muslim world that attempted, with varying degrees of success, to administer pilgrims who were British subjects (Slight 2015). Furthermore, in the 1920s, the British alliance with the Hashemite ruler of Hijaz, King Husayn, was under great strain due to Husayn’s disagreements with the British over the political landscape in the post-war Middle East. The breakdown of the Anglo-Hashemite alliance contributed towards Britain’s favourable attitude to the conquest of the Hijaz by the ruler of Najd in Eastern Arabia, Ibn Saud, and with it control of the hajj, which his forces accomplished in a war against the Hashemites in 1924–1925. This turbulent political context had various effects on the pilgrimages of these British converts, one of which was that British and Hijazi officials were often unhappy with the fact that these converts were on hajj.

The most prominent example of a mixed official response to a pilgrim’s intention to perform the hajj was Lord Headley. The peer finally went on hajj in 1923 since the outbreak of the First World War in 1914 thwarted his initial plans. The return of Kamal-ud-Din from India in 1921 ‘roused [Headley’s] thwarted longing once more’.¹³ Headley wanted the support of his spiritual mentor, so his pilgrimage was a collective experience with a close associate. But Headley’s status as a high-level member of the British establishment, and the fact that his pilgrimage companion, Kamal-ud-Din, was an Ahmadi Muslim, proved problematic.

As a matter of courtesy and protocol, Headley informed Reader Bullard, the British Consul in Jidda, that he was planning to go on hajj with Kamal-ud-Din. Fuad al-Katib, Foreign Secretary of the Hijaz, warned Bullard that Headley’s pilgrimage might inflame Muslim accusations that ‘we are handing the two holy sanctuaries over’ to Britain. The Foreign Secretary went on to explain:

Our remarks are not made with a view to thinking evil of those who claim to be Moslems and confess the Moslem faith, the confession of which by any person causes him to be considered a Moslem at once without hesitation. But . . . we mean that all the world does not know of your British policy and of the freedom of the Hejaz from any interference as is the fact.¹⁴
Al-Katib was referring to Western converts who were viewed with suspicion by some Hijazis, given the widely-publicized exploits of Richard Burton, who went on hajj in disguise in 1853 and subsequently published his travel account to great popular acclaim in the West. The foreign secretary was also probably referring to the fact that Headley was closely associated with Ahmadiyya Muslims, as many Muslims do not consider Ahmadis to be proper Muslims. Bullard replied to Headley:

I anticipated difficulties, owing to the extreme susceptibility of King Hussein to criticism (which is not lacking) of his alleged subservience to British influence. . . . His Majesty’s unwillingness to give colour to the rumour that Mecca is now in British servitude has hitherto debarred English pilgrims from the Haj.

Bullard went on to stress that Headley’s ‘dress and attitude’ should be ‘exclusively Moslem’ during his hajj.\textsuperscript{15} Fuad al-Katib wrote to Kamal-ud-Din further emphasizing the need for Headley to ‘be like an Indian pilgrim’ because ‘you will see many newspapers saying that we sold the country to the English people and that the two sanctuaries became a colony and here are the English going there and coming back’.\textsuperscript{16} King Husayn’s sensitivity to criticism by Hijazis and other Muslims that he was subservient to Britain made Headley’s pilgrimage an especially sensitive religious affair, one which potentially possessed political and diplomatic ramifications.

Headley travelled through Egypt for a week in July 1923 on his way to the Hijaz, and his visit as a prominent British convert to Islam meant sections of British officialdom in Egypt were not well disposed to Headley’s pilgrimage. A secret note from the British High Commission in Egypt described Headley as a ‘well-known English pervert to Islam’ and Kamal-ud-Din as ‘a particularly active Islamic propagandist’ and expressed concern that the Egyptian nationalist party Hizb al-Watan was organizing arrival parties for them in Alexandria and Port Said.\textsuperscript{17} The Hizb al-Watan and the Wafd parties extensively publicized Headley’s visit and were ‘anxious to act as his host during his stay . . . hoping doubtless thereby to gain some local political advantage’.\textsuperscript{18} In Port Said, Alexandria, and Cairo, Headley ‘was the object of most marked attention, while the meetings which were held in his honour were remarkable for their enthusiasm’.\textsuperscript{19} When Headley’s train arrived in Cairo from Port Said, it was apparently ‘crowded to the last inch’. It appears that Headley generated a wide amount of popular feeling among all classes of Egyptians.\textsuperscript{20}

Viscount Edmund Allenby, Britain’s High Commissioner in Egypt, assessed that Headley was ‘an ardent Moslem and the speeches which he made revealed great devotion to the Mohammedan faith and attracted considerable attention’. Headley assured Allenby when they met that ‘his visit had nothing to do with politics and was undertaken solely for religious purposes. He made similar remarks on more than one occasion in public at the various receptions which were held for him’.\textsuperscript{21} Headley’s passage through Egypt was not hindered at any point by British officials or Egyptians, although it is clear his presence was unwelcome to some British officials and Egyptian Christians. In the Hijaz, Reader Bullard was dismissive
about Headley in terms of his piety and hajj experience. Bullard wrote that Headley was a

bird witted creature not competent to give an opinion about anything except boxing. He knows nothing about Islam but is led and prompted by the Imam of the Woking Mosque who usually answers for him any question requiring knowledge of Islam or ordinary intelligence. He saw nothing at Mecca King Hussein didn’t want him to see.\textsuperscript{22}

Although Headley was more knowledgeable about Islam than Bullard stated, it is striking that the Consul believed that Headley’s sojourn in the Hijaz was tightly controlled by the Hijazi authorities.

When Lady Evelyn Cobbold arrived in the Hijaz in 1933, the Saudi authorities were not hostile towards her, nor did they believe her presence was detrimental to Saudi standing among the wider Muslim community. The British figures whom she encountered in the Hijaz, however, were sceptical of her religious credentials. Sir Andrew Ryan, the Consul in Jidda, described her as ‘a pretty lax’ Muslim and caustically remarked that her success in getting permission to perform the hajj was due to her son-in-law’s position as a director of the Bank of England. In 1933, in the midst of the Great Depression, Ibn Saud’s regime had an acute lack of funds (Facey 2008, 40). A possibly more damning reaction was that of former government of India official Harry St. John Philby, who was a convert to Wahhabi Islam and hosted Cobbold in Jidda. He described her as a ‘rather vague’ Muslim (Facey 2008, 38). These doubts about Cobbold’s piety did not exist among Saudi officials and seem misplaced when read against Cobbold’s account of her hajj, discussed as follows.

Eldon Rutter had little to do with either British or Hijazi officials when he performed the hajj in 1925. But his initial steps towards Mecca were complicated by the political situation in the Hijaz due to the Hashemite-Saudi war, which affected all pilgrims alike. The Hashemite forces were attempting to blockade the Hijaz to stop supplies coming in to their Saudi enemies. The Egyptian government had secured a \textit{fatwa}, an advisory opinion on a point of Islamic law given by \textit{ulama}, stating that due to these hostilities, the hajj was not compulsory for Egyptians (Rutter 1930, v–vi). Rutter, by contrast, faced no such restriction, but he had to approach Mecca using a circuitous route. He took the train to Suez, then a boat to Massawa in Italian Eritrea, and witnessed \textit{dhows} full of refugees from Mecca arrive before he went in the opposite direction, taking a \textit{dhow} to the small port of Qunfida, avoiding the Hashemite blockade (Rutter 1930, 3, 15, 17). Throughout history, travelling to Mecca has often been hazardous, yet Rutter’s and others’ desires to perform the ritual meant many took risks on their journey.

\textbf{The personal experience of hajj}

The privileged status of these three converts was perhaps the most important factor that influenced their experience of hajj. Lord Headley, a veritable celebrity given the fact he was a British convert to Islam who was a member of the House of
John Slight

Lords, was treated well during his pilgrimage. In this sense, he had a similar experience to rich Muslim notables and Muslim royalty who performed the hajj, whose experiences were often far removed to that of the majority of other pilgrims. King Husayn lavished hospitality on Headley despite misgivings about how Headley’s hajj would be received by other Muslims. The king’s car, driven by the king’s private doctor, was sent from Mecca to Jidda for Headley, and he also used it to travel from Mecca to Jidda once the hajj was over. Learning that Headley did not have a camp bed on the plain of Arafat, where pilgrims stayed overnight, Husayn apparently sent his own. King Husayn also gave Headley pieces of the kiswa, the cloth that covered the Ka’ba, another privilege that was only accorded to elite pilgrims. Yet despite Headley’s position, he could not escape the strictures of the sanitary and medical regulation that surrounded the hajj. He had to spend several days in the al-Tur quarantine station in Sinai. Nevertheless, Headley’s praise for the Egyptian government’s administration of al-Tur suggests he received special treatment.

Eldon Rutter exercised his status on his return journey from Mecca. On board a Khedival Mail Line ship from the Hijaz to Port Sudan, he donned his suit and tie and dined in the ship’s saloon, marking him out as from a different class and culture from the other pilgrims on board (Rutter 1930, 586). Cobbold also enjoyed a pilgrimage of privilege, and her gender posed little obstacles to her hajj. In the Hijaz, she was treated as an honorary man, much like some other British women in the Middle East in this period, such as Gertrude Bell, Oriental Secretary in Iraq after the First World War (Facey 2008, 42, 45). However, she had to wear a burqa when outside. Her travels to Mecca were made on a succession of boats and trains from Southampton to Port Said, then to Jidda, all in first class, and when she returned from the Hijaz, she flew from Marseilles to London (Cobbold 2008, 98, 109, 261). Cobbold’s aristocratic status and connections meant she was hosted by the Philbys in Jidda, unlike most pilgrims who had to pay for rooms or hostels during their stay. Wealth meant Cobbold could hire an automobile to use in the Hijaz, a new feature of the region’s transportation that made moving between holy sites much quicker. However, in the early 1930s using a car in the Hijaz was only for the rich. The stark economic divide was noted by Cobbold, who noticed from her car seat on the road back from Medina Bedouin who ‘stretch out their skinny arms imploring help’ (Cobbold 2008, 172). However, wealth could not compensate for age, and like Headley, Cobbold suffered from the exertions of the journey. The strain of her travels meant she had to leave the Hijaz early without completing all the hajj rituals (Cobbold 2008, 261).

Given these converts’ privileged status, how far did they feel a sense of community with their fellow pilgrims and indeed the wider umma? A key theoretical concept utilized in answering this question comes from Victor Turner’s work on pilgrimages, namely the concept of communitas, defined as ‘a spontaneously or normatively generated relationship between levelled and equal, total and individuated human beings, stripped of structural attributes’ (Turner 1973, 216). Equality generated a heightened sense of community and solidarity among pilgrims, alongside an increased piety, derived through the shared experience of participation in the pilgrimage, a process which transcends social differences (Turner 1973,
1974a, 1974b). However, this theory has been critiqued as not being applicable to many pilgrimages, including the hajj. Despite all pilgrims being clad in the ihram, they remain divided by language, nationality, race, and socio-economic status. Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori have noted how the experience of hajj heightens pilgrims’ ‘consciousness of locality and difference’ (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990, xii–xv).

In Lord Headley’s case, in a lecture to the Central Asian Society on his pilgrimage experience, he questionably implied that he was regarded by Muslims in the Middle East as head of ‘Western Moslems’, an interesting remark which shows the umma to be divided into geographical sections. Headley spoke of how he was ‘impressed with Islam and the universal spirit of Islamic brotherhood’ during his pilgrimage, which lends credence to the concept of communitas. Lady Cobbold also seemed to believe in the idea of communitas, writing that ‘the Hadj [sic] makes for unity among Moslems – a central point to rally’, although she does not state whether she shared this sense of unity (Cobbold 2008, 91). By contrast, Eldon Rutter saw himself as distinctly separate from the African pilgrims traversing the same route to Mecca, describing African pilgrims ‘marching by the side of the track on their feet – men, women, and children, stepping out with the simple unconsciousness of those who perform something inevitable, along the sun-scorched way to Mecca’ (Rutter 1930, 87). Ideas of racial hierarchies and separateness still held firm in Rutter’s mind, despite the fact that he shared the same religion as these African pilgrims, and was also undertaking the same ritual as them. In Rutter’s example, there was little feeling of equality and community.

The concept of communitas can also be partly tested through the individual and collective natures of these converts’ pilgrimages. Headley undertook his hajj with his associate Kamal-ud-Din. Cobbold was given her own personal pilgrim guides (mutawwifin) in both Mecca and Medina and was accompanied by Mustafa Nadhir, an employee of Philby’s, and an old Sudanese pilgrim whom she had befriended (Facey 2008, 42, 45). Whereas status distinctions played their part, the hajj for Headley and Cobbold was a collective experience. Eldon Rutter again trod a more singular path. He was able to exercise a large degree of agency in relation to his pilgrim guides. After he landed in the Hijaz, his guides repeatedly asked for more money, so he ‘fired’ them, and continued towards Mecca with a party of other pilgrims (Rutter 1930, 40–4). These three converts, then, felt a varied sense of community and equality with other pilgrims and the umma, dependent on specific circumstances during their pilgrimages.

A critically important change in the Hijaz in the interwar period was the assumption of Saudi control over the Hijaz and the hajj. The Saudis imposed various religious policies on pilgrims that reflected their Wahhabi interpretation of Islam. Thousands of pilgrims who gathered on hajj held many doctrinal differences and local variations in their Islamic religious traditions. Experience of this led some Muslims to attempt to ‘purify’ Islamic practices in their locality after returning from hajj. Scholars have concluded that whereas some Muslims accepted Mecca as the source of correct Islamic doctrine and conduct, which caused their adherence to certain Islamic practices to increase after their pilgrimage, others returned
and did not instigate changes to their religious practices (Pearson 1994, 67–70, 72–9). Although it remains unclear whether Rutter and Cobbold changed their religious practices after experiencing the hajj under Saudi and Wahhabi control, their accounts highlight their mixed reactions to Saudi sovereignty over the hajj and Wahhabi religious policies.

Rutter called the *Ikhwan*, Ibn Saud’s Najdi troops, ‘sour-visaged’, but approved of Ibn Saud, ‘an ambitious statesman’, and admired his ‘absolute rule’ (Rutter 1930, 160, 165, 172). He thought the hajj had a ‘fair treatment’ under Saudi rule, compared to Ibn Saud’s predecessor King Husayn (Rutter 1930, 303). For pilgrims, whose religious itinerary in addition to the hajj often included performing *ziyara* to the tombs and shrines of important figures from Islamic history, Saudi rule destroyed the material bases for this activity. Rutter observed a party of pilgrims walking towards Caliph Uthman’s tomb (one of the first Four Rightly Guided Caliphs of Islam) led by an elderly Indian man:

> straight before him he gazed, and tears fell down from his eyes in a ceaseless stream when confronted with the remains of the grave, reduced to a piece of wood thrust in the ground, besides which was another Indian reciting from the Qur’an, and a further Indian sitting by them, sobbing. (Rutter 1930, 564)

This contested response to Wahhabi policies towards *ziyara* was reflected in Cobbold’s account, which describes a debate with some Moroccan visitors to her quarters in Medina. Whereas the group agreed that praying at the various tombs of important persons from Islamic history was against the hadith, they thought the Wahhabis were ‘too ruthless in their methods’. Cobbold disagreed, writing that her visitors ‘forgot that it was Prophet Muhammad who laid down the rule that graves should be level with the ground’ (Cobbold 2008, 123, 126). Cobbold displayed conflicting views about the Saudis and the *Ikhwan* throughout her account – she hoped that time would ‘soften their hearts towards their brother Moslems’, but also admired the Wahhabi religious ‘purity’, and believed that Ibn Saud was the best-qualified person to be ‘custodian’ of the Hijaz (Cobbold 2008, 111, 210). Rutter and Cobbold were both broadly positive towards Saudi rule over the hajj and Wahhabi religious policies.

That the spiritual experience of hajj is profoundly moving is clear in Cobbold’s account. Arriving in Mecca in time for the beginning of the hajj, her first steps in the Holy Mosque in Mecca were clearly very special: ‘for a few seconds I am lost to my surroundings in the wonder of it’ (Cobbold 2008, 182). She also had an elemental response to entering the Prophet Muhammad’s Mosque in Medina: ‘a thrill went through me’ (Cobbold 2008, 123). Rutter does not directly reflect on his own response to seeing the Ka’ba for the first time, but his observation probably speaks for him as well as millions of Muslims, describing it as ‘that strange building, in the attempt to reach which . . . perhaps millions, of human beings have prematurely forfeited their lives; and seeing which, unnumbered millions have felt themselves to be on the very threshold of paradise’ (Rutter 1930, 108). Performing the hajj is an important part of the Muslim faith, and these British converts’ first
responses to being in Mecca, the heart of Islam, mirror those of millions of other pilgrims.

**British hajj narratives**

Whereas Lord Headley’s personal account of his pilgrimage was a speech reproduced in a learned society’s journal, Rutter and Cobbold both published accounts of their pilgrimages. Rutter’s book received various reviews in newspapers and journals which praised his literary abilities. Cobbold’s achievement as the first British Muslim woman to perform the hajj, at a relatively old age, caught the attention of the British press, who interviewed her after she returned. Her pilgrimage account was widely reviewed – whereas learned society journals such as the *Royal Geographical Society* gave an unfavourable reaction, the book garnered favourable reviews in the broadsheets and academic journals (Facey 2008, 59, 61). Their accounts formed part of a longer tradition of British hajj narratives. Joseph Pitts wrote the first hajj narrative published in Britain in 1704, but the genre came to popular prominence with Richard Burton’s *Pilgrimage to Al-Medinah and Meccah*, which was published in 1855. The book was a bestseller, appealing to a Victorian reading public who had a taste for works that dealt with ‘the Orient’. The unknown quality of Mecca and Medina, being closed to non-Muslims, added to the appeal of Burton’s account, as did the fact that he performed the hajj in disguise. This was followed by a trickle of other hajj narratives by Britons who travelled to the Hijaz incognito like John Keane in the 1880s and others by British converts such as Philby in the 1940s (Keane 1881; Philby 1943). These narratives contain a wealth of material about the hajj, such as the history of the ritual and the experience of performing the hajj alongside pilgrims from across the Muslim world, although there are clear differences in the quality of the knowledge about the hajj displayed by certain authors – in this respect, Rutter’s hajj account is one of the very best.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has analyzed the experience of hajj through three British converts to Islam during the interwar period. Pilgrimage by these converts was in some sense more akin to elite Muslims from elsewhere in the *dar al-Islam* than the majority of pilgrims’ experiences. Their sense of communitas with their co-religionists varied according to certain circumstances and may have been affected by their status as converts. The racial, class, and socio-economic differences among these British converts and other Muslims made their pilgrimage experiences very different from many others in several ways. In Headley’s case, his hajj came at a time of heightened tension in Anglo-Egyptian and Anglo-Hijazi relations and formed one small component of these complex and fraught interactions. With Rutter, his anonymity and literary ability enabled him to present an unsparring picture of the hajj under Saudi rule, which remains a remarkable historical source. Finally, Cobbold’s pilgrimage experience further shows the advantages that privilege and
connections conferred and shows how the difference of her gender was circumvented in the Hijaz by treating her as an honorary man, with the notable exception of her having to wear a *burqa* outside. A final observation on this remarkable set of Muslims is that they were perceived disdainfully by British officialdom but were generally admired in the British press and among the British Muslim community. What did the inhabitants of the Hijaz and other pilgrims make of these converts to Islam from Britain on hajj? Given the limited research on the British Muslim community during this period, further conclusions remain tentative, but the discovery of new sources and hajj accounts will enable a fuller consideration of the hajj from Britain in the period before large-scale immigration from South Asia and elsewhere changed the character and nature of the Muslim community in Britain and the British hajj.

**Notes**


9. See the new scholarly introduction with details of Rutter’s life in the 2015 edition of Rutter’s *Holy Cities of Arabia*. I am grateful to Richard J. Natvig for this information on Rutter’s background.

10. James Canton raises doubts about whether Rutter was actually a Muslim (Canton 2011), although Sharon Sharpe and William Facey question this interpretation in their introduction to the 2015 edition of Rutter’s *Holy Cities of Arabia*.


12. As Facey points out, Cobbold is not mentioned in existing surveys of British women travellers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.


14. Headley to British Consul Jeddah, 21 May 1923, Bullard to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Hijaz, 2 June 1923, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Hijaz to Bullard, 5 June, 1923, FO 686/134, the National Archives, London (TNA).

15. Bullard to Headley, 10 June 1923, FO 686/134, TNA.

16. Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Hijaz to Khwaja Kamal-ud-Din, undated, FO 686/134, TNA.

17. Secret, High Commission Egypt to S.I.S., British Agent Jeddah, Embassies in Turkey, Switzerland, Italy, and Foreign Office, 22 June 1923, FO 686/134, TNA.


19. Allenby to Curzon, copies to Khartoum, Jeddah and Aden, 13 July 1923, FO 686/134, TNA.


21. Allenby to Curzon, copies to Khartoum, Jeddah and Aden, 13 July 1923, FO 686/134, TNA.

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5 Seeking blessing and earning merit
Muslim travellers in Bosnia-Hercegovina

Tone Bringa and David Henig

This chapter considers the significance of journeys and the forms of veneration to Muslim sacred sites in contemporary Bosnia-Hercegovina. We specifically focus on the sites that have been elevated in various degrees to the status of ‘national sites’ and fallen into an embrace with the realm of post-war Muslim identity politics in the past two decades. Yet we attend to these changes with caution. We argue that despite the ongoing process of ‘nationalization’ of these sites in the public discourses – the process that is also often taken as a proxy and starting point in the scholarship – more attention needs to be paid to the complex affective and historical intertwinnements of Bosnian Muslims with the sites. Throughout the chapter, we argue that a more nuanced ethnographic attention needs to be paid to the rich Bosnian Muslims’ conceptualization and practices associated with both journeys and the forms of veneration to Muslim sacred sites to fully appreciate the complex engagement with these sites.

In their seminal volume *Muslim Travellers*, Eickelman and Piscatori prefer the words ‘Muslim traveller’ to pilgrim since Islamic traditions encourage specific forms of travel (1990, 5). Our chapter similarly focuses on Muslim travellers and sojourners and the forms of veneration to local or regional sites that are recognized in the Islamic traditions as *zviyara* (see the introduction). In Bosnia-Hercegovina the notions of *ziyaret* along with *dava* (prayer; pl. *dove*) and *doviste* (outdoor prayer site) are widely invoked by Muslims when engaging with the sacred sites. When considering the notion of Muslim pilgrimage in Bosnia-Hercegovina, we therefore propose to engage with these vernacular concepts in the context of the affective and historical intertwinnings of Bosnian Muslims with the sites. In what follows we focus on a form of religiously inspired travel where the destination is local and regional shrines but where, at the same time, the visits are large, annual gatherings of Muslims who perform communal prayers at the sites. Although Muslims may also visit these sites individually or in smaller groups at other times, these larger, ritualized gatherings are in form somewhere between the highly formalized hajj pilgrimage and the informal visits, in Bosnia often covered by the term *ziyara* (*ziyaret*, Bosnian).

We examine two specific collective gatherings, two sites, namely Ajvatovica and Karići, that are important to the villagers in Central Bosnia, where both Bringa and Henig have conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork. Both sites are
considered by Muslims locally as *mali hadž*, or small hajj, and sometimes humorously as the poor people’s hajj. The two sites discussed here are both referred to in the vernacular and more recently also in the calendar (takvim) of ‘significant dates’ and prayer times of the Islamska Zajednica (i.e., the Islamic Council) as *dovište* (a place for prayers). The word for ‘pilgrimage’ – *hodočašć* – is rarely used in relation to Muslim sites in Bosnia. This particular form of veneration is recognized by some sojourners as *zijaret*, although not all are familiar with this word; most commonly, however, people simply talk about going to the *dova* at Ajvatovica, Karići and so on.

Regarding the study of Muslim pilgrimage, we would like to make two points. First, we believe the study of pilgrimage should be opened to a discussion of sacred landscapes and how pilgrimages are often part of a larger sacred geography of visitations and ritual activities. The term ‘pilgrimage’ tends to focus on the most spectacular individual sites, and in studies of Muslim pilgrimage this is perhaps particularly evident because of the strong position held by the hajj pilgrimage (see the introduction). But this strong focus on travelling to one – for most Muslims – faraway site (see Karić, this volume) ignores the place of travel to smaller local sites where Muslims seek blessing and earn merit as part of a larger dynamics of vital exchange among people, the sacred and the land forming in turn the sacred landscape. Second, and as an extension of the first point, we would like to go against the grain of the almost exclusive attention to identity politics in recent studies of Islamic practices, sacred sites, and pilgrimage in Bosnia (see what follows) and focus on the religious and social significance for the individuals of travels to sacred sites as constitutive parts of a sociality and ontology which reaches beyond this world (*dunjaluk*) to the other (after) world (*ahiret*). Put differently, we agree with Coleman who suggests that the religious and therefore pilgrimage ‘should not be seen as an isolated realm of human activity’ but instead ‘see travel to sacred sites as a way for individuals and groups to orient themselves in space, time and history’ (2002, 363). An important part of this orientation in ‘space, time and history’ is knowledge of the history of a site and its origin as a site of pilgrimage. We therefore start by situating each pilgrimage site historically before placing them within a wider web of relations between Bosnian Muslims’ ontology and ongoing histories of sacred spaces.

**Situating Ajvatovica and Karići in a sacred landscape**

In Bosnia-Hercegovina, Ajvatovica and Karići are part of a larger Muslim pilgrimage complex associated with *dovište* and *zijaret*. In Central Bosnia, the veneration of multiple sacred sites, including tombs, caves, water springs, hills, and trees, is closely associated with Muslims’ personal notions of well-being. The actions carried out at the sites, such as visitation, praying, or maintaining the sites, bring Muslims individual blessing (*berićeć/bereket*), fortune (*nafaka*), luck (*sreća*), and the good life as such. This applies for large-scale pilgrimages such as Ajvatovica or Karići as well as for more localized forms of veneration such as village prayers for rain or individual visits to *dovište* situated around villages.
These outdoor sites for prayers vary along several variables such as scale (a continuum of national-local), gender (male-female), historical trajectory, official or state involvement, commercial elements, and secular ‘folklore’ elements such as folk dance performances. But they all share a feature that has perhaps been poorly understood in the literature on the Bosnian Muslims and their interaction with venerated sites, namely what Bringa has referred to as ‘seeking blessing and earning merit’ (Bringa 1995, 160–9) and Henig in his forthcoming book refers to as ‘vital exchange’ (Henig n.d.). With these expressions we want to convey the mutual and triangular relationship between the individual and Allah and significant others (relatives, neighbours, and fellow Muslims) mediated by the landscape. The point is that Muslims’ ritualized visits to sacred sites help constitute a social world which includes both the sacred and the secular. In addition to the interaction between individuals and Allah that takes places at such sites, there are the more visible social exchange elements of offering and receiving hospitality and maintaining relationships with fellow Muslims from other villages, expressed through the idioms of respect (postovanje) and friendship (prijatelstvo).

Whereas Ajvatovica has come to dominate the image of Muslim pilgrimages in Bosnia-Hercegovina, and has been promoted as the largest Muslim pilgrimage in Europe, Karići is an example of a relatively lesser known site which shares key features with Ajvatovica as a dovište. These are sites that the local Muslims will visit annually on a fixed date to say prayers and may be identified with an eviša (holy person), a šehit (a martyr), a tekija (a dervish lodge), or a physical formation where miracles or extraordinary events (keramet) are said to have taken place. Not least Karići and Ajvatovica share with many smaller sites, some still active, others not so, yet others being revived, that they are or once were sites for prayers of rain (Bringa 1995, 172; Henig 2012a, n.d.). In what follows, we firstly outline the key moments of recent history that have impacted the sacred sites in Bosnia-Hercegovina. This will be followed by a closer examination of Ajvatovica and Karići dovište, respectively, and finally situating them as part of a larger landscape of venerated sites.

**Visits to annual dovište and the recent past**

Communist Yugoslavia (1945–1990), which Bosnia-Hercegovina was a part of, allowed people to practice their religion in private but excluded any display of religiosity in public. Thus the larger traditional annual gatherings at various dovište which take place outdoors ended, but there were some exceptions. Ajvatovica is an example of a site where people individually, and in smaller groups, living near the site continued to visit, but the large pilgrimages with outdoor gatherings and processions stopped in 1947, whereas Karići is an example of a site which perhaps because of its less accessible location people continued to visit from further afield and gather outside, albeit in smaller numbers of hundreds. In the second half of the 1980s the authorities relaxed its anti-religious stance and allowed among others the building of numerous new mosques and churches. With the development of the Catholic pilgrimage site at Medjugorije in Hercegovina into an international
pilgrimage center during the same period (Belaj 2012), the Islamic leadership in Bosnia was eager to promote some traditional Bosnian Muslim sites of veneration to claim legitimate public visibility for Muslim religiosity and to perhaps increase the popular appeal of practising Islam (Bringa 1995, 222).

In 1990, the end of Communism and one-party rule brought new freedom to express religiosity in public, but increasingly religious symbols became part of the competing nationalisms which fed ethnic antagonisms and ultimately a war. The war caused displacement of the population, and the destruction of villages and their social fabric, and travelling became difficult (due to damaged road infrastructure, hostile territory, and/or landmines) (Henig 2012b, 21–3). People’s interaction with sites of veneration had become difficult and in some instances impossible. For Muslims in particular, religious rituals, and not least the travel to and participation in the annual, larger dove, took on new meanings in light of the ‘ethnic cleansing’ campaigns, massacres, and genocide committed against Bosnia’s Muslims. They became a vehicle for remembrance as well as for the celebration of survival. At the same time they continued to play a vital role in people’s spiritual connections with the landscape in their search for blessing and religious merit, a search which consists of visiting various sites noted and that involves not only interaction and thus maintenance of a person’s relationship with the sacred and Allah but also exchange which maintains horizontal relationships with relatives, in-laws, and fellow Muslims in neighbouring villages. Because of the social, emotional, and moral dimensions of such larger sites, they lend themselves as vehicles for identity politics and nationalist purposes, and many analysts see only this aspect and fail to see beyond and behind the obvious political instrumentality, and thus ignore fundamental aspects of the pilgrimage that are integral to Bosnian Muslims’ orientation to self, place, family, and the sacred. In juxtapositioning Ajvatovica with Karići, we hope to bring out this absolutely critical aspect of venerating dovište in Bosnia, where Islam and Muslim practice have a more than 500-year presence and history.

A landscape of dovište: Karići

Dova na Karićiima is the annual three-day pilgrimage during which Bosnian male Muslims gather to commemorate Hajdar Dedo Karić at the place of the wooden mosque called Karići. The place is situated right at the top of the plateau at the intersection between the Selačka, Budoželjska, and Zvijezda highlands. Although there are no written historical records about Hajdar Dedo Karić, he remains alive through a vivid oral tradition, the annual dova, and Muslims’ individual visits (zijaret) in search of blessing (bereket). It is narrated that Hajdar Dedo Karić was one of the messengers of Islam who were brought to the Balkan Peninsula during early Islamization. These narratives portray Hajdar Dedo Karić as a wise, knowledgeable Islamic scholar, effendi, a dervish sheikh (dedo is often used as a diminutive of dervish), and a holy man (evlija) who performed miracles (keramet) during his life. The very first tomb (mezar) next to the mosque, situated to face in the direction of Mecca, is venerated not only during the pilgrimage but during individual visits throughout the year.
There are many stories of divine power associated with the site as there are with the Ajvatovica site. During the Second World War, the Četnik troops tried to burn down the wooden mosque but were unable to set it alight by any means. Another story claims that no Muslim community has dwelt on the plateau for the last 150 years and that the mosque and pilgrimage site were used only during the annual gatherings and individual visits. The nearest residents were a few Serbian (Orthodox) households who became very respectful caretakers of the pilgrimage site until the Bosnian war broke out.

During the socialist Yugoslavia period, the Karići pilgrimage was neither sanctioned by the state power nor banned by the Islamic Community. In 1993, during the Bosnian War (1992–1995), a Yugoslav National Army tank drove through the ancient wooden mosque. At the time, the region was barely accessible because of the many landmines scattered around the pilgrimage site during the war. Local Muslims temporarily organized the annual gathering in a nearby provincial town mosque. After the war, the landscape was slowly de-mined; the wooden mosque was eventually rebuilt in 2002 by using the timber from surrounding forest and the pilgrimage fully restored again.

Although the restoration of the mosque was initiated by a group of local Muslim patriots, the land and the mosque are officially owned and maintained by the Islamic Community. The Islamic Community is also responsible for organizing and setting the dates in July for the Karići annual gathering. The date is counted according to the old Julian calendar as the week of the eleventh Tuesday after Jurjevdan (6 May). The gathering usually begins with Friday’s noon prayer and lasts until the Sunday midday prayer. Only male Muslims are allowed to attend the Karići gathering. The gathering involves reciting the Qur’an, singing ilahija (songs in praise of Allah), and other performances, such as reciting verses from mevlud both in Turkish and Bosnian, tevhid for the Ottoman as well as Bosnian martyrs (šehide), and a collective devotional prayer, kijam zikr (qiyam dhikr in Arabic). Kijam zikr is performed by dervishes and led by a dervish sheikh. Other pilgrims usually observe rather than take part in this form of prayer because dervishes in the territory of the former Yugoslavia have been historically perceived ambivalently as the Islamic ‘other-within’ (Bringa 1995, 221; Duijzings 2000, 107). The devotional zikr prayer was also performed as part of the pilgrimage under socialist Yugoslavia, which is worth mentioning since all dervish orders in Bosnia-Hercegovina had been officially banned in the 1950s by the Islamic Community itself, with the Yugoslav state’s assistance, for being ‘devoid of cultural value’ (Algar 1971, 196; Bringa 1995, 221; Duijzings 2000, 112), and this ban lasted until 1989.

The organization of the Karići pilgrimage according to the old Julian calendar brings us to the question as to how the Karići pilgrimage site is situated in a larger Muslim pilgrimage complex associated with dovište and zijaret, that is, with sacred landscape. There are annual local outdoor prayers in Central Bosnia that are scheduled according to the old Julian calendar and are recognized as prayers for rain (dove za kišu). The prayers have historically been correlated to the cycle of agricultural production, with its corresponding fertility rituals and regenerative
symbolism, and the dates of the outdoor collective *zijaret* continue to be pivotal for the pastoral and agricultural work schedules in many Central Bosnian villages and shape the local sense of belonging and identity. The Karići pilgrimage therefore needs to be situated within this wider network of sacred sites that constitute what we describe in this chapter as a sacred landscape.

There were approximately sixty sites in use in the Central Bosnian highlands before 1945, including the Karići site. After 1945 the restrictions imposed on various religious practices by the socialist state had caused nearly half of the sites to no longer exist. Nonetheless, many of these sites, like the Ajvatovica, continued to be venerated semi-clandestinely in defiance of the restrictions. In the wake of the post-Yugoslav religious liberation and the war in the 1990s, the veneration to these sites significantly resurfaced, and there are now more than thirty just in the region of Henig’s fieldwork that are being venerated individually and collectively. However, in his recent work Henig (2012a) has documented how the post-socialist liberation of religious conduct along with the proliferation of ethnonational identity discourses in Bosnia have affected the very *dovište*, including the Karići site, and fuelled the contest over appropriation of these sites between multiple actors involved in the sharing of the sites, as diverse as the Islamic Community, foreign Islamic aid agencies, imams educated abroad, Salafists who direct an ‘anti-idolatry’ rhetoric against sacred sites, dervishes with links throughout the Balkans, and village Muslims. In particular, Henig showed how the sites such as Karići, but also Ajvatovica among others, are increasingly and
intricately entangled in the state-level bureaucratic field as their administration involves the state religious body politics – the Islamska Zajednica (Islamic Council) cooperating with ethnoreligious politics represented by the SDA party (Party of Democratic Action).

Being in charge of organization and control of the annual dova thus gives considerable power to the Islamic Council to influence and intervene into the very choreography of the collective veneration and pilgrimage. This is often done in a manner which does not take into account the complex affective, historical, and relational character of sites such as Karići and Ajvatovica within a wider sacred landscape. This is of great concern for many of the participants at the annual Karići gathering who live nearby and feel close to a long tradition of locally controlled and orchestrated dove. Put differently, these increasing interventions in post-Yugoslav period into the very choreography of the dove (e.g., changing dates, relocating from outdoor sites to the mosques) are often perceived as further disembedding rather than re-embedding the sacred sites from the larger pilgrimage complex of dovište. Paradoxically, these recent interventions, as the following section on Ajvatovica further illustrates, have meant that many of the participants for whom dovište like the Ajvatovica or Karići involves seeking blessing and earning merit prefer to visit at other times, outside of the bureaucratized and controlled tradition, as they did during the socialist period.
A landscape of dovište: Ajvatovica

In this section, we first trace the development of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage, before we describe the different movements of people on the day of the dove, and finally place it within a larger landscape of dovište and zijaras in Central Bosnia, which also connects it to the Karićić site.

Ajvatovica – the myth of origin and a short history

Ajvatovica has a long history as a religious site for Bosnia’s Muslims. In the 1980s, it was only whispered about among the villagers in Central Bosnia, where Bringa was then conducting anthropological field research. By 2008 it was being referred to as the largest Muslim religious site and pilgrimage in Europe. Ajvatovica has been coined the ‘Mecca of the Balkans’ by European journalists, and in Bosnia, local scholars have referred to it as ‘little Mecca’. It has become the most spectacular of the annual dove in Bosnia in terms of the number of people who attend, the number of buses that bring people from the various Muslim communities (džemat) around the country, the media exposure, and the participation and involvement of national politicians, such as official representatives of the Islamic Community, and official participation from abroad (with official guests typically from Iran and Turkey).

Ajvatovica dates back from the time of the Ottoman conquest and rule of Bosnia (approx. 1463–1878) and is in honour of a dervish and Islamic scholar called Ajvaz Dedo, who settled in the town of Prusac (then a major fortified city on the main trading route between Dubrovnik on the Adriatic coast and the East). Prusac was one of the biggest towns in Bosnia in the Middle Ages, and under the Ottomans it became a center of Islamic learning. The most prominent Islamic philosopher and writer in sixteenth-century Bosnia, Hasan Kjaﬁja Pruščak, was born in Prusac. Both scholars are considered evlija and have their own turbe in Prusac. According to the official history of Ajvatovica, Ajvaz Dedo is credited with converting a whole village in one day and otherwise being responsible for many conversions to Islam in the area. Through this history the site connects to the Ottoman past and the Islamization of Bosnia more than 500 years ago. But it is also a site of miracles and testimony to the potency of faith and the religious merit earned by prayers and patience. As with Hajdar Dedo Karić, there is a rich oral tradition pertaining to Ajvaz Dedo’s life and ministry. The legend has it that the inhabitants of Prusac did not have a reliable water supply, so Ajvaz Dedo started looking for one in the hills around Prusac. He found a source on the Suljag mountain about six kilometres above Prusac, but a huge rock was blocking the free passage of the water and the building of a pipe system to bring the water down the mountain to Prusac. Ajvaz Dedo was determined to make it work and went to pray at the water source every morning for forty days. On the fortieth day after the morning prayers, he fell asleep, and in his sleep he dreamt that two billy goats were fighting and the rock split. When he woke up he found the rock had indeed split in two, allowing access to the source. The gorge is indeed formed by what
looks like a rock split in two. The Ajvaz Dedo’s rock thus became a site of marvel and veneration and the object of pilgrimage.⁴

During Communist Yugoslavia the Ajvatovica procession of horsemen (konjanici) and flagbearers (bajraktari) and the dove were banned like other similar public displays of religiosity. But the story about what led to the ban has made the Ajvatovica procession in particular a powerful symbol of repression and defiance. In 1947 the procession was stopped by police before they reached Prusac. The police asked the participants at the head of the procession for official documentation for permission to proceed. They had no such documentation and refused to stop; they were then attempted stopped by physical force, and the imam at the head of the procession was arrested a few days later. He received a six-year prison sentence. (For a detailed account of the event, see Hadžić 2005). However, like other banned religious activities, a lower-key and more secretive dove took place without the procession throughout Communist times. Prusac inhabitants and a small circle of trusted relatives and friends would continue to celebrate Ajvatovica out of sight of the public and the government’s watchful eye, and dervishes would hold a mevlud and a zikr at the site (Hadžić 2005). In the mid-1980s džemats in Central Bosnia started organizing travels by bus to the annual mevlud at the tekija in Buna in Hercegovina, not far from the increasingly popular Catholic pilgrimage site at Medjugorje, and local imams and others were talking about organizing the procession again in 1988 when the Communist authorities had started relaxing its restrictions on the public expression of religious traditions.

In 1990 Ajatovica was held for the first time since 1947, and it became a huge manifestation of Bosnian Muslim cultural liberation, which was eagerly encouraged and embraced by the political and religious leadership in Sarajevo.⁵ It was repeated in 1991 with war raging in neighbouring Croatia, and it then consisted of numerous cultural and religious events. The programme was running from 19 to 30 June and constituted a considerable cultural-political manifestation in a climate of competitive nationalisms (Croat, Serb, and Bosnian Muslim or Bosniak) anchored in religious traditions. Only the two last days were dedicated to the Ajvatovica pilgrimage itself. The official programme for what was now called the ‘Ajvatovica days’ program’ announced that this was the ‘biggest religious manifestations of Muslims in Yugoslavia’ (Hadžić 2005). In 1992, 1993, 1994, and 1995 the Ajvatovica procession was again interrupted, this time by the war when the town of Prusac itself came under attack and several of its religious buildings were destroyed. When the celebrations picked up again in 1996, it continued with the expanded religious-cultural programme introduced in 1991. In the years since then, Ajvatovica programmes have spread to other cities of Bosnia-Hercegovina beyond Donji Vakuf and Prusac, and under the umbrella of ‘program dana Ajvatovice’ there are ‘cultural, religious, and sports programs’ in at least seven cities, including Sarajevo.

Ajvatovica has become many different things to different people, and the spectrum of activities accommodates many different needs and interests, but some elements have remained constant, and in the next section we will focus on Ajvatovica as dova and people’s interaction with the religious sites in Prusac.
Prusac is a small town consisting of a village-like settlement of about 1,500 inhabitants and a complex of religious sites and objects, among these, three historic mosques and several *turbe* of which Hasan Kjafija Pruščak’s and Ajvaz Dedo’s are the most significant. The Ajvatovica *dova* and its many elements are perhaps best understood by looking at the movement of people between the different sacred sites and objects. On the eve of the Ajvatovica, the horsemen and flagbearers from village and town *džemata* in North-central Bosnia make their way to Prusac, where they will stay the night. In the evening there is a *mevlud* and *zikr* in one of the mosques, with the procession of horsemen starting out the day before as men from different municipalities join the procession along its route from outside Donji Vakuf. The next morning, men and horses will set out in a procession from the Handanije (Handanagine) mosque (this characteristic seventeenth-century mosque was destroyed during the war but reopened in 2005 after being carefully rebuilt).

The visitors and pilgrims line up along the main route for the procession. For a Bosniak to be present at Ajvatovica where Bosniaks from all over Bosnia-Hercegovina and from the diaspora gather, has become an expression of national survival and pride both after the end of Communism and again after the end of the war in the 1990s. (For a more detailed description of the procession, see Kuehn, this volume.) The procession, joined by thousands of people, continues to the Suljag mountain and the site of the split rock with the water source running through. This is the natural wonder and miracle facilitated by Ajvaz Dedo’s prayers. The narrow gorge where the water source is located is where a group of imams lead the prayers (*dove*), and in the tradition mentioned it ends with a prayer for rain. At the same time, there are crowds inside and outside the mosques in Prusac performing the noon prayers.

In one of the mosques there is a *mevlud* for women. Until 1997 women did not go to the Suljag mountain on the day of the pilgrimage; like Karići the *dova* was only attended by men. Instead they would stay in Prusac, have a picnic in the town meadow, visit the *turbe*, and attend the women’s *mevlud*. The women’s *mevlud* is a continuation of this tradition, but in addition women also attend the prayers at the split rock and the noon prayers in the nearby meadow. Whereas for some sojourners the reason for travelling to Ajvatovica may be the spectacle of the procession of men on horses, the market stalls and the folkdance/music entertainment, for many others it is an occasion to fulfill religious duties on behalf of oneself but not the least on behalf of one’s household. This can also be done by visiting and praying at various sites in Prusac; it is not dependent on making the hike to the Suljag mountain (although to hike up there to pray at the water source is considered particularly meritorious). Throughout the morning and away from all the commotion at the various *turbe*, you can find quietness and serenity and women (and a few older men) praying, seeking blessing or help through prayers and other forms of interaction with the site. The most visited and potent *turbe* are those of Ajvaz Dedo and of Hasan Kjafija.
Seeking blessing and earning merit

For most of the women in the cluster of villages in the area of Central Bosnia, where Bringa has mainly worked, Ajvatovica has been included in their ritual calendar as one of many dovište they will travel to during the summer months to seek blessing and earn merit. It is considered as one of the most potent sites, potent from being saturated with the prayers of generations of Muslims and potent for the presence of a sentient evlija. The women’s season of visiting dovište starts with a dova which draws women from surrounding villages as well as from further away, many of whom have relatives or in-laws in the village and will be staying overnight as a guest in one of the village homes. After the communal prayers, when women pray for the souls of dead relatives and neighbours, they may visit the turbe individually to say prayers and ask for good health and fortune, that is, for blessings (beriće/bereket) for themselves or often for a child, parent, or spouse (Bringa 1995, 171–7). On the same site three weeks later the women from the various hamlets in the village will return to hold prayers for rain (as described), but they will also include two or three other sites in different parts of the village where there are Muslim graves, believed to be the graves of martyrs and therefore

Figure 5.3 Women visiting the Hasan Kjafija turbe during Ajvatovica 2008.
© Tone Bringa
where one’s prayers will be considered more potent. The prayers for rain are also a way of seeking a blessing as rain will secure a fertile land, a good harvest, and thus the well-being of all the members of the household, neighbours, and co-villagers.  

For the women, to travel to participate in the *dova* is an occasion to visit relatives and in-laws in the village and for the villagers to offer hospitality, and it is thus important to social relationships, but it is primarily an act of religious and moral duty to take care of the souls of dead relatives, to care for the health and well-being of one’s family and household members, and to earn religious merit for oneself and one’s household members. By doing this, the woman herself gains merit (*sevap*), which may help her in her transition to ‘the other side’. In turn, when that time comes, this may benefit her surviving family members (Bringa 1995, 194). The *dovište* is a potent site where critical relationships which define and orient the visiting person are enacted and affirmed through various forms of exchange. At Ajvatovica some of the same relationships that we have just seen in the much smaller women’s *dove* are affirmed, but there are also others of a more recent date. The Ajvatovica *dovište* is a site with a historical continuity which connects it through a network of *dovište* via its sojourners throughout Central Bosnia. But it is also a site where contemporary collective concerns situated in a particular political-historical context are expressed. The Ajvatovica has in this respect become the iconic post-war *dovište*.

*Figure 5.4* Men and women starting their climb towards the Suljag mountain. © Tone Bringa
Conclusion

As the annual Ajvatovica pilgrimage has grown in size and visibility since the end of the war in Bosnia-Hercegovina (1992–1995), it has also received, unlike the Karići, increased interest from both the media and from local and above all foreign scholars. Local scholars have been concerned with the history of the pilgrimage, and Islamic scholars have been concerned with developing more Qur’an-focused activities. Foreign scholarship, on the other hand, is completely dominated by an analysis of Ajvatovica as national events and political acts which focus on the Ajvatovica as a spectacular platform to reinvent not only the ritual pilgrimage itself but also to (re)invent a Bosniak national identity or more recently as a site for religious tourism (Sarač Rujanac 2013, 117–36). This is part of a growing literature on Islam in Bosnia more generally which almost exclusively ascribe Muslims’ more visible and well-attended public ritual activities since the end of the 1992–1995 war, to a rise in a ‘new’ Bosniak nationalism driven by an Islamic revival (Bougarel 2007, 167–91; Duijzings 2007, 141–66). Such instrumental views, first, completely miss the continuity in people’s reasons for travelling to Ajvatovica, which needs to be situated with other visits to other sacred sites, including the Karići. During the course of the history of Ajvatovica, it has taken on new layers of meaning with changing political and often dramatic historical circumstance that have affected Bosnia’s Muslims. Yet through all this Ajatovica and the Karići have for generations of Bosnia’s Muslims been sites of a life-giving miracle and a testimony to the power of prayer. Both sites are part of a meaningful landscape of venerated sites that local Muslim interact with through what Henig calls vital exchange and Bringa refers to as seeking blessing and earning merit (Bringa 1995, 160–96; Henig n.d.). These aspects are harder to spot under all the cultural, religious, and sports programme wrappers around the public images of Ajatovica dova. The Karići dova has avoided such an expansion and looks more like Ajvatovica would have looked like in 1947, when the dova was locally organized and controlled, and the main religious events, the zikr in the old mosque and the prayers at the site of the water source, were exclusively attended by men. For the men in the villages Bringa and Henig have studied, Karići retains an aura of authenticity they feel Ajvatovica has lost, and it therefore remains, as we have seen, the preferred dova for men in Central Bosnia.

To conclude, this focus on political instrumentality in the study of Muslim pilgrimage in Bosnia-Hercegovina also misses the fact that Ajvatovica is just one of many sites in a network of sites which Bosnia’s Muslims interact with to seek blessing and earn merit, many of which form part of annual calendars of ritualized visitations to hold collective prayers. Clusters of villages have traditionally had their specific calendars, but during the last couple of decades, an increasing number of these sites have been incorporated into a centrally organized Islamic calendar which fuses the religious and the national. As sites become both more national and more international with the participation of diasporas and promotion of so-called religious tourism, they are increasingly dis-embedded from the complex pattern of movement and of sacred exchanges described, and thus from
the intimate mutual interdependency between dwellers and land, and thus perhaps take on more of the characteristics of popular pilgrimage sites elsewhere.

Notes

1 In Bosnia, tevhid (from Arabic tawhid, via Turkish tevhid) are ritualized collective prayers said for the souls of the dead; see Bringa 1995, 187–94.
2 The turbe is a mausoleum for a particularly blessed dead person.
3 This legend has now become part of the official historiography of the Islamska Zajednica and the Ajvatovica organizing committee, and the year for when Ajvaz Dedo split the rock with his prayers has been set to the year 1467. See www.rijaset.ba, last accessed 20 December 2015.
4 This story about Ajvaz Dedo and the rock may now be found on the many websites that explain Ajvatovica.
5 Traditionally, Ajvatovica had been held on the seventh Monday after Jurjevdan. In 1990 it was held on a Saturday, and post-war it has been held on Sundays to accommodate people who are working, but it is always held in the second half of June.
6 In the speech he gave at the 1997 Ajvatovica, the late Bosnian Muslim political leader and member of the presidency of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Alija Izetbegović, suggested that in the future, women should also be able to visit. He drew a parallel with Mecca, where he had seen women pray together with men, cf. Hadžić 2005, 761, and Kuehn, this volume.
7 In Bosnian as in Turkish, the Arab plural form is used in singular.
8 The fair with dance, music, and food stalls which used to take place in a field on the outskirts of the village in the evening was disrupted by the 1992–1995 war and has not been revived.
9 The mufti of Travnik Nusret Abdibegović is also the leader of the organizing committee for Ajvatovica.
10 See, for instance, Clayer and Popovic 1995; Dimitrijevic 1999.

References


6 Pilgrimage as Muslim religious commemoration

The case of Ajvatovica in Bosnia-Hercegovina

Sara Kuehn

The enduring need for a ritual framing of a sacred site was certainly one of the stimuli for the renewal of the public performance and collective pilgrimage of Ajvatovica in central Bosnia-Hercegovina in June 1990.1 Allegedly the most attended Muslim gathering in Europe, there are factors in play around this event that go beyond just the religious. The revival and reinvention of narratives associated with Ajvatovica is a contested political-aesthetic process serving also to (re)define and (re)shape the authenticity and representation of the collective ethno-national and religious identities of the Bosniaks.2

In this chapter, I attempt to conceptualize the (re)creation of the religio-cultural event in its historical and cultural context and to point to its iconographic interpretation with a view to its symbolic and religious value as well as its significance for the cultural identity and political imagination of the Bosnian people. I thereby consider the (re)fashioning of various layers of collective and connective memory and desire, invigorated through a selection of traditions and cultural forms that are ‘canonized’ in the process (J. Assmann 2006, 9–16).

Located about eighty-five kilometres west of Sarajevo at the Ajvatovica plateau (the Šuljaga mountain) near the towns of Donji Vakuf and Bugojno, northwest of the small town of Prusac, the pilgrimage is an annual event. Taking place at the end of June with a two-week cultural, religious, and tourist programme, it culminates in a two-day procession to the holy sites in the remote mountains. In 1947 the practice was banned in Communist Yugoslavia.3 In a post-Yugoslav context, the ritualization of the national history and heritage belongs to the domain of the national identity formation and re-Islamization process linking secular and religious elements.

The main impresarios involved in the memory recuperation and (re)appropriation of the site were the Islamic Community in Bosnia-Hercegovina (Islamska zajednica u Bosni i Hercegovini, IZ) and the Party of Democratic Action (Stranka demokratske akcije, SDA), led at the time by the late Alija Izetbegović, a prominent pan-Islamic activist, who by association, was identifying himself as the bearer of that memory. Ajvatovica provided a stage for the selection and subsequent propagation of the familiar narrative of the pilgrimage with the tendency to demythologize it, although not without introducing new mythic elements.
meant to elevate contemporary developments to the level of a salvation-historical development and to achieve a new sacred quality (cf. Coomans 2012, 210–11, 220–41). The powerful effect of this functionalist framing and its concomitant associated symbolism gave rise to a sense of the (half-remembered) tradition and to notions of identity-constitutive narratives, enmeshed with a growing sense of the presence of the sacred. The (re)definition, recognition, authentication, and reinforcement of the shared mythical and historical tradition and cultural memories allowed for the revitalization and mobilization of both religious and political power.4

Besides a religious programme – consisting of the canonical prayer (salat), the personal prayer of supplication or invocation (Bosnian dova, Arabic duʿaʾ) in the open air at the dovišta (‘supplication sites’, see what follows), and the continuing remembrance of God and of the Divine Names (zikr, Arabic dhikr) – the festival of gathering and pilgrimage served as an opportunity for politicians to address the people.5 On 16 and 17 June 1990, reportedly more than 100,000 people participated in the landmark commemoration of the sixteenth-century conversions to Islam in Bosnia – explicitly associating the pilgrimage with the Islamization of Bosnia and in so doing officially sanctioning and sacralizing the practice of open-air prayers. The appropriation of religio-cultural traditions into a new national frame led to a legitimization of power which was ritualized by combining elements of aesthetics and art, in addition to popular and religious rituals and celebrations, elevating the practice into the sacral realm.

Addressing the pilgrims after his duʿaʾ and the midday prayer, the then acting former Yugoslav reisu-l-ulema (Arabic raʾis al-ʿulamaʾ, ‘grand mufti’) of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Hercegovina, the late Jakub Selimoski, hinted at the generative power of the symbolism initiated by the pilgrimage:

With the help of the Almighty Merciful Allah. With this is the time when we Bosniaks are restoring the right to express our religious identity in a dignified and humane way: this is the time when we restore our traditions and customs in liberty, though being aware of the responsibility and constraints the freedom we have acquired are imposing upon us. . . . Congregating here at Ajvatovica, as our ancestors before us did, we are paying tribute to literacy and education. . . . We are today also paying tribute to our history and our forefathers.

(Quoted in Perica 2002, 65)

In the following year, about 150,000 pilgrims and guests participated in the ritual procession. In addition to the march to the Ajvatovica Rock, a cultural programme was also organized (Perica 2002, 65). After the Bosnian War of 1992–1995, which brought about dramatic political, economic, and social change, accompanied by traumatic conflict and shifting borders, Ajvatovica developed into a pilgrimage site of national salience that attracts more than half a million pilgrims annually.
The *dovišta* as ritual reinforcement of the mythical tradition

The polymorphic phenomenon of Ajvatovica involves not only the previously described protagonists but a distinct location together with its symbolic language and religious and ritual acts. During the drought-prone summer months, tens of thousands of Muslims from Bosnia and neighbouring countries, including Turkey, congregate. Some narratives trace the Ajvatovica pilgrimage site back to pre-Islamic times and associate it with Islamized elements of older folk practices. These ancient pre-Islamic ritual performances were clearly informed by the symbolism of the changing seasons (cf. Hadžijahić 1978, 301–28; Stegemann 1936, 580–4). However, the pre-Islamic rites were given new meaning commemorating historical events crucial to the community’s identity.

In the Western Balkans remote places such as mountaintops, forest glades, caves, crevices, springs, wells, and so on have served as places of worship since pre-Islamic times. Known as *dovišta*, they function as supplication sites, or places where religious gatherings and congregational prayers are held, linked in local legends to legendary events. The annual production cycles composed a calendar based on the perceptions of the natural order; this cyclical perception of time is characterized by predictability and repetition related to the economic base of the community – agriculture and stockbreeding. Punctuated by devotions done in grottos, by rocks, near springs and sacred trees to overcome the vicissitudes of nature and thereby ensure the survival of the community, circuits are made to mountaintops during the summer to pray for rain, to ward off drought, and to ensure that the crops will grow and yield a plentiful harvest. From this perspective, rain-making rituals represent fertility cults and reflect the belief in the sanctity of life-giving water. They also mirror the life cycle of stockbreeders who migrate seasonally from the wooded foothills to mountaintop pastures as well as important passages of the agricultural year. This was particularly important for the Prusac plain, which was the granary of Uskoplje, extending along the valley below Prusac town. Pilgrimages to such sacred places are often associated with holy persons or saints (*awliyaʿ*) and their legends (cf. Bušatlić 2009, 97–101). All these propitious elements, geographical and natural, are united in the *dovišta* of Ajvatovica, a site of great natural beauty with associative spiritual value.

The Ajvatovica pilgrimage is the most important of the pilgrimages that traditionally occur in Bosnia between St George’s Day (*Đurđevdan/Jurjevo*) and St Elijah’s Day (*Ilindan/Alidun*) (see Clayer and Popovic 1995b, 353). The celebration of the return of springtime, on 23 April according to the Gregorian and on 6 May according to the Julian calendar, is marked by St George’s Day, symbolizing springtime, fertility, and nature. By contrast, St Elijah’s Day marks a turning point of the summer, the end to the harvest and the most difficult labour. It falls on 24 June according to the Gregorian and on 2 August according to the Julian calendar. Muslims call it Alidun, Alija’s Day, and Christians Ilindan, Ilija’s Day. According to popular tradition, Ilija (Elijah/Elias) comes before noon and Alija (ʿAli) in the afternoon; the festivities are thus divided and connected when the sun is at its peak; indeed it is believed that ʿAli becomes Elijah at midday. Elijah is also known as ‘the Thunderer’ and according to legend, is held responsible for
summer storms, hail, rain, thunder, and dew. At the same time he is associated with mountaintops. Like other points in the sacred calendar, the feast day is much older than its name would suggest and associates the prophet with pre-Christian lightning gods. Slavic mythology is full of references to Perun, the supreme god of climatological phenomena such as storms, thunder, and lightning bolts, who after the arrival of Christianity, was amalgamated with St Elijah. The natural characteristics, pre-Islamic cultic reality, and local events thus lend sacredness to the Ajvatovica landscape and places of veneration.

Apart from Ajvatovica, the most popular dovišta in Bosnia are likewise to be found in often secluded and remarkable landscapes. These include Djevojačka Pečina near Kladanj, Karići near Sarajevo (see Bringa and Henig, this volume), Lastavica near Zenica, the Musalla plateau near Sanski Most, as well as the Blagaj tekke (a dervish gathering place) near Mostar containing the turbe (shaykh’s or saint’s tomb) of the hero and mystic saint Sari Saltuq Dede, credited with the propagation of Islam in the Balkans.

**Ajvaz Dedo, the resonance of the sacred and ideas of ‘origin’ of place**

Closely linked to Ajvatovica are the miracles of the eponymous legendary figure of Ajvaz Dedo (‘Grandfather Ayvaz’). Thought to have been a ghazi (Muslim warrior for the faith) from Anatolia who arrived in Bosnia and the city of Akhisar (present-day Prusac) after 1463, during the Ottoman conquest, he is similarly alleged to have been instrumental in the Islamization of the local population. The saint’s appearance in the concrete setting of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage thereby relates a given ‘transhistorical’ religious landscape to the form of his ‘historical’ appearance and maintenance that is of significance with regard to the ongoing local political and social reconstruction. The associated mythical narratives allude to certain cosmic and social phenomena based on the intrinsic values of the Bosniak community with the purpose of ensuring its cohesion (cf. Schöpflin 1997, 19–35, esp. 20).

The legend that supports the pilgrimage exists in several versions, all of which focus on the theme of water. In Ajvaz Dedo’s time the village of Prusac did not have a source of drinking water. Near the village at the foot of Mount Šuljaga, the holy man identified a spring obstructed by a huge rock. His forty days of prayer followed by a dream of two white rams fiercely butting horns miraculously split the rock in two, allowing the water to burst through the crevice (cf. also Bringa and Henig, this volume). Thanks to the ‘marvel’ wrought by this ‘friend of God’ (karamat al-awliya), a wooden spring-water conduit (tomruk) was laid that distributed the water to the fortifications in Prusac and to its settlement below. According to a variant of the legend, Ajvaz Dedo brought water to Prusac’s fortress during a Christian siege, as water began to be scarce, bringing much needed relief (Popovic 2011).

In commemoration and celebration of this event and in honour of Ajvaz Dedo, the site of the split rock with its spring was called Ajvatovica, and women and men began to visit it annually. Curiously, there is no reference to Ajvaz Dedo or the pilgrimage to Ajvatovica in existing Ottoman sources. Indeed the earliest
evidence of the pilgrimage dates to the travelogue of the erudite Austrian prehistorian, Moritz Hoernes (1888). It is interesting to see how in the framework of the contemporary pilgrimage the experience of saint veneration, Sufism, and mainstream Islam are linked to the broader realm of Bosnian politics and society.

Ajvaz Dedo’s water supply system was rebuilt by the famous scholar and benefactor Hasan Kjafija Pruščak (1544–1615/16). He erected several public buildings and a tekke in Prusac and also built a domed turbe over Ajvaz Dedo’s grave, thus memorializing the mythical history of the saint (Clayer 1994, 98). The complex around the Hasan Kjafija Mosque (1606–1607) with the madrasa and tekke (1612) includes both Hasan Kjafija’s turbe and Ajvaz Dedo’s turbe (Figure 6.1).

A focal point of the pilgrimage, the latter is an unassuming small building, built of sundried brick and timber with a four-sloped roof, covered with wooden tiles (cf. Mazalič 1951, 147–89), which has recently been completely reconstructed with modern building materials.

As a holy place the pilgrimage site is a visual and material manifestation of divine presence, in which the mystery of the divine is thought to resonate and reverberate still, and is linked to religious emotions. Before entering the turbe some visitors recite a du ’a’ prayer and respectfully kiss the door frame of the turbe, symbolizing the threshold that separates the outer world from the sacred space. When entering they place the left foot first. Once inside the tomb chamber, they silently greet the tomb occupant and offer one or more prayers. Of note is the fact that the interior of Ajvaz Dedo’s turbe has a wooden partition separating the first chamber (Figure 6.2) from the sanctuary which houses the draped, gabled cenotaph marking the grave of the saint.

Figure 6.1 Turbe of Ajvaz Dedo in Prusac.
© Sara Kuehn
Figure 6.2 Interior of Ajvaz Dedo’s turbe having a wooden partition separating the chamber from the sanctuary.

© Sara Kuehn
The latter is framed by a simply cut grave stele without inscriptions which, like the top of the cenotaph, is crowned with a three-dimensional representation of a *taj* (lit. ‘crown’, dervish headdress). After the completion of the prayers, visitors often kiss the partition or rub their hands on it and then upon their faces, thereby transferring blessings or benefits (*bereket*, Arabic *baraka*). Before leaving the tomb, some visitors sit for a while facing the tomb doing silent *zikr*, reading the Qur’an, or just contemplating the tomb. Most visitors place monetary donations in a wooden box. Others bring small gifts such as towels or prayer beads to be left as offerings.

Due to its location at a crossroads and on the main road leading from the Split region to Bosnia, numerous travellers and delegations passed through the town that was an important cultural centre. In the late sixteenth century Akhisar was a strong fort (Šabanović 1982, 151, 153, 205, 213). According to Evliya Çelebi, who visited Prusac in the mid-seventeenth century, there were three *tekkes* in Prusac at that time, of which that of ‘his Eminence Shaykh Kjasija’ was particularly notable (Çelebi 1996, 133). It belonged to the Khalwatiyya order of dervishes, which are specially connected with Prusac (cf. Clayer 1994, 98).

This legacy of the region as a ‘spiritual place’ was compounded by the fact that – as if through divine intervention – the site of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage was the only territory of the Donji Vakuf district that was under the control of the Bosnian army during the 1992–1995 war. Hence it acquired the symbolism of a ‘sacred land’ representing hope and permanence for the beleaguered Muslim community. Prusac, which plays a central role in the yearly gathering of Muslims at the Ajvatovica plateau, is thus often referred to as the ‘heroic city’ – a symbol of resistance and survival of all Bosniaks (cf. Dimitrijevic 1999, 38–9).

It is particularly noteworthy that in comparison to the canonical hajj, Ajvatovica has been known as ‘the small hajj’, sometimes humbly defined as ‘pilgrimage of the poor’ or the ‘Ka’ba of the poor’ (Grdjić-Bjelokosić 1901, 38–40, see also Bringa and Henig, this volume). Writing in the late 1920s, the noted German scholar Franz Babinger described Prusac as the ‘Bosnian Mecca’ (Babinger 1929, 125–6). Especially in the case of poorer Muslims with no realistic prospect of ever seeing Mecca, Bosnian Muslims state that performing three times the pilgrimage to Ajvatovica is equivalent or will substitute for the obligatory hajj to the Holy Places and the Ka’ba (Clayer and Popovic 1995a, 346–7). In this way, the impact of the two locations is symbolically joined, the constitutive mytho-historical significance of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage not being understood in isolation. It is here important to note the symbolic dimension of the hajj and its commemorative quality. This includes the idea of purification and absolution of sins, combined with a new departure in life. In like manner, ‘the small hajj’ to the Ajvatovica Rock is a transformative experience infused with the idea of spiritual cleansing. The pilgrim thereby performs the visitation (*ziyara*) to Ajvaz Dedo’s *turbe* imploring the saint to find solutions to personal afflictions and, more generally, to attain prosperity, protection and blessings.
The Ajvatovica public performance/ritual and procession

The main ritual of Ajvatovica, the two-day procession, consists of several parts beginning the day before with the arrival of the horsemen and a great number of visitors in Prusac. The starting point for the annual pilgrimage circuit is at the Handanjia Mosque (1617). Located in the centre of Prusac, the mosque was heavily damaged in shelling that took place in the Bosnian War of 1992–1995, with restoration and conservation works still in progress. Here the standard-bearers leave their flags and banners and collect them again next morning before the procession departs for the Ajvatovica Rock.

Before 1995, it was common for guests to stay in local homes. After the 1992–1995 war, it became customary for the Bosnian Army to set up large tents to accommodate some of the pilgrims, the horsemen, and their horses. Until today the army fulfils this role, soldiers hand out drinks, and some communal meals are held before and after the main procession.

In the evening before the main procession, the evening prayer is held in the musalla, the open communal prayer place outside the mosque, which can accommodate a larger number of believers. This takes place in the so-called garden of what used to be the mekteb (school) of Hasan Kjafija Pruščak, now housing his turbe. It is followed by the communal zikr, a constitutive part of the Ajvatovica event, demonstrating the inherent connection between Sufism and local traditions of sainthood and mainstream Islam (Figure 6.3).

More specifically, the collective performance plays a central role in the invocation of local tradition and the unfolding of local configurations. Organized by the Islamic Community, the long nocturnal ritual is attended by shaykhs (spiritual guides), their veikils (deputies), and dervishes comprising a few hundred people. It goes on well after the last prayer, which in summer falls around 3.30 a.m. The ritual

Figure 6.3 Communal zikr led by Šejh Sirri Hadžimejlić in the musalla in Prusac, 25 June 2011.

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takes place in a halka (circle) with prominent positions allocated for the shaykhs. The pilgrimage thereby exemplifies the attraction of mystical brotherhoods and their teaching traditions embedded in a commemorative culture advancing the virtues of the Ottoman-Balkan era.

The Sunday procession begins in the early morning with a review of the horsemen who form the principal part of the procession. It commences with the sound of the horsemen and then the roll call. After the equestrian parade, the ceremonial procession proceeds with a display of flags and tall, rectangular organizational standards. It is divided into the different džemats (the main ‘unit’ of the Islamic Community formed of about one hundred households), each headed by an imam and a representative carrying its flag and an Islamic banner inscribed with Qur’anic verses. The staging adopted by the standard-bearers clearly reflects the (re)possession of local identities. This segment of the performance, with flags from different parts of Bosnia as well as from around the world, often crowned by the emblem of the ‘star and crescent’, the official emblem of the Islamic Community, symbolizes a unifying function of the event. The ‘star and crescent’ iconography is interpreted as the ensign of Islam or the Muslim community, implicitly associating it with the Ottoman ‘star and crescent’ and hence the Bosnian-Ottoman legacy. Prominent among these are the flags of the Republic of Turkey carried by official delegations. This also reflects the increasingly influential role played by Turkey and Turkish-based religious and cultural organizations in Bosnia.

As a signalling or guiding device the horsemen, too, carry banners, long poles with tails fluttering in the wind, surmounted by ensigns and decorated by flowers and foliage. Banners of the Islamic Community with the gold ‘crescent and star’ on a green background are numerous; the most senior horseman carries the flag of Bosnia. As a mark of riches the horses are set at the front of the procession (Figure 6.4).

The harnesses and equestrian accoutrements are richly decorated with flowers and tassels. The parade involves passages, changes of pace, or any of the exercises which make up a fairly advanced equestrianism including some manoeuvres of riders as in tournaments as well as some jousting and arms play on horseback displaying the riders’ levels of horsemanship. Many of the horsemen are dressed in national Bosnian attire, closely linked to the regulation on garments, colours, and types of shoes adopted in 1794.

The procession towards the dovišta is the highlight of the pilgrimage, giving voice to the representations of the story of Ajvaz Dedo and thereby affirming Bosniak identity. It also defines the ritual space. As they march, the pilgrims raise their hands in supplications to God, ‘appealing’ for good fortune, the efficacy being enhanced by the liturgical Amin followed by the singing of devotional songs or ilahis, some of which are specially composed to be sung during the collective ritual supplications for rain.

A very important part of the pilgrimage occurs when the procession passes through the narrow crevice, the Ajvatovica Rock (Figure 6.5).
Figure 6.4 Equestrian procession, 26 June 2011.
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Figure 6.5 Procession of pilgrims passing through the narrow crevice, the Ajvatovica Rock, 26 June 2011.

© Sara Kuehn
Many pilgrims break off small pebbles and recite appropriate formulae over these. The pilgrims take the stones to spread them on their fields and meadows for the crops to grow better, to place them in front of their houses during storms for protection, or simply for the appropriation of blessings (bereket) and good fortune (nafaka). The taking away of such objects of course also functions as a permanent embodiment of the pilgrimage.

Arriving at the top of the crevice, the religious dignitaries and the standard-bearers surrounded by the pilgrims pause to recite the Surat al-Fath (Sura of Victory, Qur’ān 48) in a seated position followed by a communal kišna dova, the ritual prayer appealing for rain (Figure 6.6).

According to Islamic tradition, the first three verses of the Sura were revealed to the Prophet Muhammad after his victorious entry into Mecca in 630, which secured his control over Western Arabia. The Sura is therefore commonly recited as a victory commemoration alluding to the survival of the people in the region and allowing for a remembrance of the victory of Islam (cf. Sarač Rujanac 2013, 120).

The path continues to a large forest glade, where the banners are deposited in front of a large tribune. A select programme – comprising concerts of spiritual music, ilahi, and Qur’ānic recitation, performed also by official guests from Turkey and Iran – precedes the midday prayer (Figure 6.7).

This is followed by a special prayer for the šehidi (lit. ‘witnesses of the Faith’, believers who shed their blood or gave their lives for the faith, martyrs) of the Bosnian War of 1992–1995 (Figure 6.8).

After the war, the remembrance of the šehidi remained a central element of the IZ and the SDA (Bougarel 2007, 167–91, esp. 172). Led by the head of IZ, the reisu-l-ulema, the prayer symbolically marks the end of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage. During the prayer women place themselves behind the men.

In 2011, the programme of the present-day event of the ‘Days of Ajvatovica’ comprising religious, cultural, artistic, and athletic events held throughout central Bosnia was expanded to last for sixteen days. It is a festive celebration that at the end of the dovišta is marked by collective meals and picnics followed by a fair (teferič), the vitality and materiality of interface relationships of which link it closely to the process of local configuration.

There has been some opposition to the pilgrimage (see also Dimitrijevic 1999, 38–9). The Bosnian Wahhabi website www.putvjernika.com, the title of which means ‘path of the believers’, denounced Ajvatovica as a ‘forbidden innovation’ (bid’a), a practice for which there is no precedent in the time of the Prophet. The most notable case in Bosnia took place in the early morning of 27 June 2010, the purported five hundredth anniversary of Ajvatovica, when extremists bombed a police station in Bugojno located on the circuit towards Ajvatovica. One officer was killed and six more wounded. Bosnian authorities arrested Haris Causevic, a follower of Wahhabi principles and practices, who admitted the attack, declaring he was motivated by opposition to Ajvatovica. The Bosnian police arrested four more alleged Wahhabis in the case.
Figure 6.6 Communal kišna dova, 26 June 2011.
© Sara Kuehn

Figure 6.7 Midday prayer of Ajvatovica pilgrims led by the reisu-l-ulema of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Dr Mustafa Cerić, 26 June 2011.
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Figure 6.8 Special prayer for the šehidi of the Bosnian War of 1992–1995, 26 June 2011. © Sara Kuehn
Gender politics of the Ajvatovica commemoration revival

Objections to Ajvatovica have also extended to the participation of women in the pilgrimage. This aspect has clearly been brought to the fore – and exaggerated – to devalue the mixed practice by condemning these ‘excesses’, that is, an occasion when men and women mingle. Indeed not only those associated with Wahhabi doctrine and its propagation, but also elderly Sufi shaykhs and their followers, who performed the pilgrimage to Ajvatovica in secret even after its prohibition in 1947, stressed the great difference between Ajvatovica now and then (personal communications with Bosnian Sufi shaykhs in 2011–2013; see also Dimitrijevic 1999, 47; Katić et al. 2014, 20), mainly because of the involvement of women. Although they had participated in the pilgrimage after its revival in the 1990s and again after the 1992–1995 war, they decided not to attend any longer.

Conversely, even though the pilgrimage is distinguished by the active presence of women (Figure 6.9), their dynamics of self-definition are still sometimes curtailed by restrictions and also in terms of their access to religious space, forcing them into religious margins.

In the pre-Yugoslav period women used to make the pilgrimage one week after the men. However during the first year of the Ajvatovica commemoration revival in 1990, some religious authorities suggested that women should stay in the Handanija Mosque in Prusac and should not go together with the men to the Ajvatovica Rock. About two thousand women used this as an opportunity to pray

Figure 6.9 Communal prayer of Ajvatovica female pilgrims separated by a cord from the male pilgrims at front, 26 June 2011.

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the midday prayer in a women’s congregation with a female imam and also performed *ziyara* to Ajvaz Dedo’s *tрубе* (F.F. 1990, 9; cf. Clayer and Popovic 1995b, 364). The following year, in 1991, the Islamic Community allowed women to perform the pilgrimage but organized a separate circuit for female participants to the Ajvatovica Rock (Perica 2002, 65). However as a result of conservative gender regimes and a tradition of gender segregation, the formerly banned female participation at the religious commemoration of Ajvatovica continued to be highly disputed. Two years after the 1992–1995 war, the male organizers of Ajvatovica once again forbade women to take part in the procession to the pilgrimage site. In response, Alija Izetbegović, at the time leader of the SDA, summarized his view of the role of women at Ajvatovica in a public speech in June 1997:

> Women make up half of our nation (*narod*). In the midst of the war, together they shared with us [i.e. the male Bosnians] the burden of wartime misfortune: dying, starving and suffering. From them we expect that they bear and bring up a generation of Bosniacs [*sic*] who will preserve what we have elected and fight to rid themselves of what we are not. Such a proud and aware generation cannot be brought up by humiliated and excluded women.

(Krehić 1997, translated by Elissa Helms in Helms 2003, 83–4)

Alija Izetbegović is today still credited by many Bosnians to have upheld women’s dignity and to have been instrumental to nevertheless accord them the right to participate at that time. This was done, as Elissa Helms points out, on the basis of their function as mothers with primary duties towards the home and family (Helms 2003, 84). Even so, since that year, women are permitted to take part in the Ajvatovica pilgrimage.

**Ajvatovica and Srebrenica**

It is of particular significance that today Ajvatovica is seen by many as a symbolic counterbalance to the annual commemoration of the 1995 ethnic cleansing and genocide at the small town of Srebrenica. After completing the Ajvatovica pilgrimage, many pilgrims choose to travel to Potočari near Srebrenica facilitated by the fact that both commemorations are in quick succession following one another after a short interval (end of June and early July). Located today in the Republika Srpska (the Serb Republic of Bosnia-Hercegovina), Srebrenica is generally regarded as one of the main symbols of the war and of the suffering of the Bosniaks, generating a powerful interaction of symbol and memory (J. Assmann 2006, 8–9). The genocide is annually commemorated on 11 July, as the official day of remembrance of the massacre. The first large-scale commemorative protest took place in Potočari in the presence of Alija Izetbegović, setting foot on Republika Srpska territory for the first time since 1995, on the fifth anniversary of the massacre in 2000. The political reframing of the Bosnian memory of suffering created public visibility and audibility, in turn aiding memory formation and transformation (cf. A. Assmann 2010, 39). The commemoration developed into
a March of Peace made by tens of thousands of people from across the world to mourn, honour, and pay respects to the victims of the atrocities and express solidarity with the families of the victims in a day of silence and remembrance with newly-identified massacre victims being laid to rest after a commemoration ceremony held at the cemetery and memorial complex in Potočari near Srebrenica.

Of central importance are the collective funeral prayers (namaz-e janaza, Arabic: salat al-janaza) for the šehidi at the musalla in Potočari, an obligation which, as stressed by the present reisu-l-ulema of the Islamic Community of Bosnia-Hercegovina, Husein Kavazović, is incumbent upon the community. In his speech on 11 July 2013 at the funeral marking the Eighteenth Anniversary of the Srebrenica Genocide, Kavazović called Potočari ‘a place in which we can all constantly make ziyara, so that we may remember the dead and our painful past – and with this refine and reenergize ourselves, never losing sight of how much harm our shuhada (Arabic sing. al-shahid, pl. al-shuhada; lit. ‘witnesses’, martyrs) had to endure.’ This is followed by a duʿa for the victims which is not said in a loud voice and does not have a fixed formula.

Many of those attending the annual remembrance of the massacre also partook in the Ajvatovica pilgrimage. A common link between the two commemorative ziyaras is certainly the remembrance of the 1992–1995 war, paradigmatically exemplified by Srebrenica as a generic symbol, and the shuhada, thereby rooting the Bosniaks in a collective experience. This also permits the forging of emotional links between lieux de mémoire, sites of memory (cf. J. Assmann 2006, 8–9). Participation moreover allows for memories to be mobilized in the effort to come to terms with the losses and traumas of the atrocities, in this way demonstrating Muslim survival and unity resulting in a strengthened sense of national identity. As has been pointed out by Aleida Assmann, ‘to concede memories, both individual and collective . . . is to acknowledge the multiple and diverse impact of the past, and in particular a traumatic past . . . and also provides a repository for . . . identity formations’ (A. Assmann 2010, 39). It is well-known that the connection of collective trauma, collective memory, and trans-generational transmission of memory allows for the continuity of identity (A. Assmann 2010, 42–3), for, importantly, community healing involves self-definition (Winter 2006, 17–78; Winter 2010, 19; also Das and Kleinman 2001, 4).

Conclusion

In a very specific way, the rite of commemoration of Ajvatovica is not only the outcome of a selection and ‘canonization’ of a selection of religio-cultural traditions but also mirrors the phenomenon of longevity of popular cults as well as the historical and political conditions in these parts of South-eastern Europe. Yet it also reflects the ambivalent and changing nature of interethnic relations in Bosnia.

In this chapter I have described the important role the pilgrimage plays in the process of (re)shaping and transforming national memories and identities in Bosnia today and its contributions to the composition of the nation’s history and heritage, a process which is not unchallenged. On the one hand, the pilgrimage
acts as a repository that conserves some of the multilayered aspects of traditional knowledge of Bosnian heritage, which may be defined as a cumulative body of knowledge, ritual practices, and representations in interaction with the natural environment. On the other hand, it provides a platform for ways to (re)conceptualize, (re)present, and (re)negotiate the past that is largely dependent on the permanent mutual exchange between the Bosnian religious and political leadership and the Bosnian population. More particularly, by transferring collective memory from one generation to another, it serves as a medium and setting for a continuous social-aesthetic process imbued with a sacrality that makes it appear both potent and authentic. In a symbolic way, the Muslim religious commemoration of Ajvatovica under green flags with the golden ‘star and crescent’ represents a powerfully evocative yet still ‘emerging tradition’ that thereby finds itself again in a stage of transformation attempting to organize the cultural memory of the Bosnian people, a polymorphic situation that cannot appear as a defined practice.

Notes

1 Fieldwork in Bosnia-Hercegovina in 2011 and 2012 was supported by the Österreichische Forschungsgemeinschaft (Austrian Research Foundation), which permitted me to attend the 501st ‘Dani Ajvatovice’ (‘Days of Ajvatovica’) in June 2011. Hereafter the term ‘Bosnia’ refers to the state of Bosnia-Hercegovina.

2 In September 1993 the Bosnian Muslim Assembly in Sarajevo decided to replace the ethnonym ‘Muslim’ with the new national name Bosniak (bošnjak) that should not be confused with the designation ‘Bosnian’ (bosanac), which applies to all inhabitants of Bosnia-Hercegovina. See Merdjanova 2013, 37 and n. 207.

3 For a discussion of the history of Ajvatovica, see Clayer and Popovic 1995b, 353–65; on the fate of Ajvatovica during the Yugoslav period; see also Rujanac 2013, 115–16.

4 The term ‘collective memory’ was introduced by Maurice Halbwachs in 1925. For a recent review of the term, see A. Assmann 2010.

5 In contrast to previous years when the event served as platform for political authorities who used this national commemoration for political demonstrations, most politicians now attend the event privately ‘as believers’.

6 In the past, horse races were an integral part of the programme at Ajvatovica. It is of significance that even after the ban of the Ajvatovica pilgrimage in 1947, Prusac continued to annually host a so-called race – a feast for the people marked by a horse race – however without any religious or national symbolism.

7 This pertains to a shirt, wide trousers (čakšire), embroidered wide-sleeve shirt (anterija), vest, belt, fez, and shoes. The red fez by itself often symbolizes Bosnian clothing.

8 The use of stones that after a ritual ceremony acquire some power is a widespread method going back to ancient practices. Cf. Goldziher 1906, 311–12.

9 In July 1995, Serb forces killed about eight thousand Bosniak men and expelled the rest of the population. In 2004, the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), located in The Hague, ruled that the Srebrenica massacre constituted genocide, a crime under international law.

10 In December 1995, the Dayton Peace Agreement made official the existence of two distinct entities in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Federation and the Republika Srpska.

11 Husein Kavazović declared that the victims of the Srebrenica genocide would have the status of šehidi (martyrs), and therefore the ‘whole Muslim community has a permanent obligation towards them’. Wagner 2008, 216–17; www.rijaset.ba/english/
In March 1994, the Islamic Community declared the second day of the festivities marking the end of Ramadan (ramazanski bajram) as Day of Šehid (dan šehida) in remembrance of the victims killed in the 1992–1995 war.

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After the war, before the future
Remembrance and public representations of atrocities in Sarajevo

Catharina Raudvere

Public manifestations of remembrance after harsh conflicts tend to be visualized in monochrome imagery of events, victims, and perpetrators and quite often with grand-scale ambitions. This kind of manifestation has a long history worldwide. However, irrespective of the proportions of such monuments, the conceptualizations of the messages inherent in them tend to change over time. What was once constructed as being unambiguously unifying in victory or loss may later stand out as dated manifestations of hierarchies and minority-majority relations and of imposed history cultures and the many subdued voices obscured by the official picture.

In his study of German war memorials, Reinhart Koselleck points to a shift during the twentieth century towards a focus on the lost ones rather than on glorification of the nation and its heroes. The collective, the unnamed dead, became representatives of more than themselves and bearers of a narrative about the past that continues to define the present and its possible futures. Koselleck writes about this transformation: ‘The history of European war memorials testifies to a common visual signature of modernity’ (2002, 324), aesthetics becoming a tool for existential issues to be used across denominational boundaries. This does not mean that death is taken less seriously in the modern era; rather, Koselleck says, ‘while the transcendental sense of death fades or is lost, the inner worldly claims of representations of death grow’ and ‘become more widespread’ (2002, 187).

Another way of following this line of argumentation when analyzing the memory manifestations of more recent conflicts is to emphasize the decreasing dominance of established religious institutions and the appearance of more space for less religiously orientated articulations of ethical themes connected with atrocities and loss. Still, there are strong patterns of behaviour, artistic conventions, and ritual genres that are referred to when visualizations and ceremonies are deemed to be respectful in relation to the victims and in line with the local heritage – or the opposite. Efforts to share a framework that can still represent diverging positions in a conflict appear to be a phenomenon developed only after World War II as part of reconciliation ambitions.

In his How Modernity Forgets (2009), Paul Connerton underlines how speed and change in the modern era have transformed how we use memory as well as amnesia to produce a palatable past to an extent not previously seen (cf. Connerton
After the war, before the future

Our own time demonstrates an obsession with memory and heritage, and the battles over images of the past produce a number of narratives and counter-narratives both in democracies and under repressive regimes. The lines between art, academic history-writing, and ideological narratives are often intentionally blurred for political or aesthetic purposes – if not both (Raudvere 2017). In early memory studies, groups, communities, and collective identities were often understood as comparatively stable categories, whereas nowadays the palimpsestic and polysemic qualities of history cultures are investigated alongside with an increasing interest in performance and ritual (Winter 1995; Bougarel 2007; Duijzings 2007; Silverman 2013). Such a turn sheds light on the simultaneous character of messages that could be embedded in one memorial structure. On closer inspection, intention and interpretation seem to move in different directions in most cases.

After the siege, whose history?

Bosnia’s capital Sarajevo was the target of a long siege and the scene of atrocities and conflicts in the name of ethno-religious division during the war that followed the dissolution of Yugoslavia in the 1990s (Karahasan 1994; Silber and Little 1996; Perica 2002; Velikonja 2003; Sorabji 2006; Maček 2009). Some argue that the contemporary uses of the past are just another way of continuing the conflicts in other arenas (Halilovich 2013; Maček 2014). This chapter will discuss the construction of some public memory spaces that are intended to function across ethno-religious boundaries in contrast to monuments that define belonging by means of one-way uses of history. The examples presented here are memorial sites of differing character and design initiated by different actors and interests. Being part of the cityscape they all invite approach and reflection, if not visitation in the strict sense of the word. The aim of the chapter is to examine whether a sharp distinction can really be made between open-ended memory sites on the one hand and more monochrome ones, on the other, and furthermore to investigate if declared ambitions to establish memorials accessible with different experiences nevertheless carry implicit inclusions and exclusions through the narratives they transmit.

In one of the early studies of Muslim burial grounds constructed after the war in former Yugoslavia, Xavier Bougarel points at the polysemy and paradox in the handling of the victims of the war and in the visual representations of the memory of them (2007, 174). In his analysis, Bougarel discusses the politicization of the fallen as a significant element in war rhetoric and ceremonial identity politics. When the Bosnian authorities officially gave all victims with a Muslim background the honorary name of martyr (šehid), they promoted a theological understanding that the person had died fighting in defence of Islam and left little space to remember other motives for the victim to protect the homeland as well as it excluded non-Muslim defenders of the city. Neither did such a naming take account of persons from a mixed religious background or of individuals with a cultural rather than a religious understanding of their family history. Nor does such a forced categorization distinguish between combatants and civilians.
honorary title šehid cut on the wartime gravestones not only transmits narratives about killings in the recent past; the word ‘martyr’ places them in a religiously defined paradigm of Islamic concepts that lingers. Bougarel argues that ‘the cult of šehidi structures both space and time for the Muslim community, closely following the extent of its territory, emphasizing the imprint of war on its recovering social life, drawing new boundaries between profane space and sacred space, Islamic time and secular time’ (2007, 172). In 1992, the start of the war on 6 April was the second day of the festival after the completion of Ramadan (Ramazanski bajram), and already during the war in 1994, this day of the holiday was proclaimed to be ‘the Day of the Martyrs’ (dan šehida). It now has an official place in the yearly calendar of Muslim holidays (takvim) and is observed with special prayers in mosques and gatherings. This naming of contemporary martyrs stands in striking contrast to some of the attempts that have been made to share memories of atrocities and to give a visible place to diverse remembrance.

This chapter will discuss four public memorials of varying sizes in Sarajevo which all refer to incidents during the war in the 1990s. They are all highly visible – each in its own way – but when and why are they seen and by whom, and what is read into these concrete manifestations? The examples of memory sites discussed here all have more than one connotation for passers-by today in a polysemic sense, and they use transposed forms of expression when transmitting narratives about the city and about living together after atrocities. The memorials are far from representing recollections only; they also reproduce categories and classifications deeply embedded in the present which serve as effective instruments in ongoing debates. The present study of four memorial sites in Sarajevo does not go into the reception of the constructions but looks at non-discursive modes of communication, with a focus on the location, the material, and the size of the structures. In their different ways, all the cases have been given symbolic locations, and they are all incorporated in the cityscape, albeit in varying tempi – and have thus been part of transforming it in the post-war period. Since the chosen memorials all relate to already existing structures and/or ‘empty’ places with a previous history, the background of these recent memorials over the dead is definitely part of the process in the course of which various interests reshaped Sarajevo’s topography in communication with both its Ottoman and its modernist legacy in art and architecture. However, only one of the sites discussed here has an explicitly confessional theme and serves as a contrast to the other three. In the introduction to their edited volume on how heritage sites are both affected and generated by war, Sorensen and Viejo-Rose state: ‘Place exists in networks of references, citing other places through repetition or borrowing forms, and in their materiality places carry meaning – linked to other places and over generations’ (2015, 7). By emphasizing the effect of temporalities, the authors point to ‘how meanings, connotations, and associations accrue around places through time – places are never blanks but carry the imprint of what happens to them even if discourses are constructed so as to negate their history’ (2015, 12). Sorensen and Viejo-Rose’s volume therefore uses the concept ‘biography of place’, which is also the subtitle of John Donia’s comprehensive study of the history of Sarajevo (2006), to identify the processual character of the memory politics of a particular site, large or small.
The location of these memorials makes them both integrated in the urban web among deliberately placed (official) monuments, and more unintentional landmarks (ruined constructions and other urban scars as well as brand-new complexes in sharp contrast to next-door buildings with shell marks). Taken together, they demand attention from passers-by as they constitute comments on the city’s history. The cases will not only highlight the different intentions behind the sites when it comes to the object of remembrance but also show how the very choices of material form and position in the urban landscape affect the narratives communicated and the ways in which people pass or approach these manifestations when moving in the city.

The examples vary greatly, but they all raise questions about the conventional understanding of what a visitation is. ‘Visitation’, with the inherent liturgical implications of that term, is used in this chapter at one end of the wide concept of Muslim pilgrimage approached in the other contributions to this volume. Visitations could be planned beforehand or in the most minimal understanding of the concept, simply referring to sentient approaches when encountering a memorial site. The places discussed here are not pilgrim destinations in any sense. Yet approaching the sites in the urban landscape may provoke reflection or reactions pertaining to belonging, inclusion, and exclusion. Even if it is not expressed in the direct tactile contact (touching, kissing, or drinking water) that is so common in pilgrimage ceremonies, the physical dimension is fundamental to all kinds of visitations. Visitors engage in a performative dialogue with the material structure. Following Koselleck, the visits draw attention to the visitors as much as to those who are commemorated. The aesthetics of these memorials calls for active reflection over the powerful symbols on display, and it may therefore be assumed that the narratives communicated are neither monochrome nor easily shared.

Contemporary memorials and the practices around them challenge institutional religion in many ways. Katherine Verdery, whose discussion of the politics of dead bodies has had a large impact on studies of memory cultures in South-eastern Europe, writes: ‘The link of dead bodies to the sacred and the cosmic – to the feelings of awe aroused by contact with death – seems clearly part of their symbolic efficacy’ (1999, 32). Such a perspective goes beyond the conventional understanding of religion in a productive manner, comprehending a wider sphere of existential issues without losing sight of the political dimension and the actors that put them to work. The dead, Verdery continues, are ‘excellent means for accumulating something essential to political transformation: symbolic capital’. In addition, she says, ‘[t]he fall of communist parties devalued much of what had served as political and social capital, opening a wide field for competition in which success depends on finding and accumulating new capital resources. Dead bodies, in short, can be a site of political profit’ (1999, 33).

Verdery’s Romania study, conducted in the 1990s, provided perspectives on how war casualties and memories were, and still are, integrated in history cultures in South-eastern Europe. References to events, symbols, and narratives related to the dead continue to be elements in the communication of identity politics. Verdery’s perspectives go far back and include the collapse of three empires in the wake of World War I with its immediate impact on the region, authoritarian
interwar regimes, atrocities during World War II, repression and resistance in the socialist period, and the coming down of the Iron Curtain, all of which have left their marks on public memory cultures in South-eastern Europe, discursive as well as visual ones. The long-term references appear to continue to be significant in aesthetic programmes when representing more recent events.

Demographic and political change has made contemporary Sarajevo a predominantly Muslim city (Maček 2009, 136ff; Markowitz 2010; Halilovich 2013). The constitutional system after the Dayton Peace Accords in many respects echoes the Ottoman millet system that categorized religious groups into nations that on the one hand, afforded some independence in civil legal matters but, on the other, petrified ‘identities’ and left little space for crossing the established categories. Many places used to be shared by Christians and Muslims as several of the chapters in this volume bear witness. The Ottoman pilgrimage traditions and visitations to the graves of holy and remarkable persons discussed elsewhere in the present volume constitute an important part of the historical context into which the cases in this study are inscribed (Raudvere 2012a, 2012b; Henig 2012, 2015; Halilovich 2013; Barkan and Barkey 2015). The annual pilgrimage to Ajvatovica in June and the Sufi gatherings at Buna every May are examples of how old ritual patterns of visitations are reactivated for new contexts and constellations of organizers (Raudvere 2012a, 2012b; Henig 2012, 2015; Sarač Rujanac 2013).

Instant memorialization

The war in the 1990s that followed the disintegration of Yugoslavia hit Bosnia-Hercegovina hard. The atrocities are still being dealt with in complicated legal processes as well as in ongoing efforts towards reconciliation that involve local actors, the state and international organizations. But there is hardly any agreement about how to remember the violence or what narratives represent the recent history. Strategies and roadmaps for reconciliation have been made – and rejected – or they have simply faded away (Helms 2010). Most of these ambitions have emphasized the importance of place in memory work. Places that represent, call to mind, and invite reflection can be visited individually or as part of collective commemoration ceremonies. A number of public monuments have been erected all over Bosnia-Hercegovina in remembrance of the human losses, and many – if not most – of them have been controversial from the beginning.

Already during wartime when Sarajevo was, on average, the target of three hundred shell attacks per day, there were spontaneous initiatives to honour and remember the dead. During the forty-four-month siege, red-coloured resin was used to mark the sites of casualties caused by shells fired from the surrounding mountains. The painting of these ‘Sarajevo Roses’ was a kind of immediate action undertaken to pay respect to the civilians who had fallen in the midst of everyday life, and the ‘roses’ stood out from the beginning as alternatives to the conventional heroic war memorials from the Ottoman and Yugoslav periods (Halilovich 2013, 106). An increasing number of red marks appeared on the pavements of the
After the war, before the future

city as the war proceeded. With their blood-red colour, they constituted a lasting reminder during and after the war of places where more than nine people had fallen victim in the same attack. Highly visible and painful for many to look at, the marks were nevertheless slowly integrated into a known urban texture. The message of the roses as memorial signs is the loss of human lives, with no immediate indication as to the victims’ backgrounds. In its simplicity, the form is an example of the significant impact that even a small-scale memorial can have. It is perhaps symptomatic that ‘the Sarajevo Roses’ are now fading in colour and have been eroded by people walking over them for more than twenty years now. Vanishing and pale, they form a mode of remembrance while also signifying the passing of time (Figure 7.1).

Considered as monuments, the roses are an exception in many respects. They were spontaneous acts with no institutional connections and are minimal in size.

Figure 7.1 ‘The Sarajevo Roses’. During the siege of Sarajevo, which lasted for more than a thousand days in 1992–1995, blotches were made with red resin to mark the places where victims of the shelling of the city fell. In his novel *The Question of Bruno* the Bosnian-American novelist Aleksandar Hemon describes the nightmarish impressions made by the red signs: ‘On the pavement, all over the city there were roses – the points of the shell impact. A tiny crate and a few straight lines, of uneven length, like sun rays on a child’s drawing’ (2000, 204).

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Yet, they are significant in form and colour, and pedestrians notice them as they pass by in the midst of everyday life with their immediate resemblance to splashes of blood. These are not places sought out or visited in any conventional sense; rather, it is the pedestrian who is met by the roses on the street as representatives of the past.

Making space for the absent

On 6 April 1992, a large demonstration in Sarajevo that had started the day before broke up. It took place after a wide-ranging appeal from various civil society organizations against the increasing nationalization of politics and the ethnification of identities. With hopes for a broad coalition, perhaps up to a hundred thousand people had marched to the Bosnian parliament. Provocations had already started from the Serbian paramilitary forces and the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) that surrounded the city, and the first casualties were already a fact (Domia 2006, 291ff.; Silber and Little 1996, 226ff.). The events in the early days of April 1992 are now regarded by many as marking the end of any hope for a peaceful solution to the conflicts that had been steadily escalating since 1991. The shelling turned out to be the start of the war and the siege of Sarajevo that would last for forty-four months. On April 6 Bosnia-Hercegovina was recognized as an independent state by the United States and the European Economic Community. Bosnia-Hercegovina could thus establish its own army, and therefore 6 April 1992 came to represent both assault and resistance.

On the same day twenty years later, a commemoration of the 11,541 lives lost during the siege was arranged at the city centre. Exactly 11,541 red plastic chairs were placed in rows along a long line; 643 of them were small chairs, representing the children who had been killed. There were no political speeches, no marches, and no other symbols than the empty chairs during the manifestation but solemn music and poetry. The intention was that neither denomination nor ethnicity should be explicitly marked (Figure 7.2).

The initiative came from theatre and film director Haris Pašović, and the performance was carried out in cooperation with the mayor of Sarajevo at the time, Alija Behmen. The commemoration was named the Sarajevo Red Line (Sarajevska Crvena Linija), and right from the very beginning it encountered some resistance from some individuals who questioned whether it was respectful to remember the dead without their involvement. The fact that the mayor was a Social Democrat, representing a multi-ethnic rather than one of the ethno-nationalist parties, added to the tension and to some immediate political interpretations of the event.

The chairs were placed on parts of the street named after Marshal Tito, which runs west towards the parliament, where the demonstration twenty years earlier had called in vain for co-operation instead of conflict. The location on Tito Street situated the eight-hundred-metre long commemoration in an area which Sarajevans used for strolling. The street starts in the east of the city centre at the pedestrian street called Ferhadija, which is not just any street since it represents the long and varied history of Sarajevo by connecting different parts of the
Figure 7.2 On 6 April 2012, 11,541 red plastic chairs were placed in rows through central Sarajevo to commemorate the victims during the siege of the city. This artistic manifestation was named the Sarajevo Red Line (*Sarajevska Crvena Linija*).
old town. During the Yugoslav period this street was renamed after a local World War II partisan, Vasa Miskin, but in 1992 this emblematic route through the city was given its old name back. As a result, Ferhadija street was symbolically reconnected to the early expansion of Islam in the region since the name refers to the nearby Ferhadija mosque (*Ferhat-pašina džamija*), which was erected in memory of the first Ottoman beylerbey (or pasha) of Bosnia in the late sixteenth century.

The street runs, then, from the Barščaršija area with its mosques and Ottoman monuments, across an Austro-Hungarian section with its Roman Catholic cathedral, Serbian Orthodox cathedral, and the old synagogue. Ferhadija ends where it meets Marshal Tito Street at the Eternal Flame (*Vječna vatra*). This monument was installed on 6 April in 1946 to celebrate the first anniversary of the liberation (*oslobodjenje*) from German occupation and to commemorate the fallen of all ethnic and national groups during World War II and the partisans’ final victory. The inscription by the flame was made by the thankful city of Sarajevo.

In terms of architecture, Ferhadija runs from the *millet* system of religious nations to the Yugoslav brotherhood and unity with its suppressed religious communities and then continues into Marshal Tito Street with its heavy traffic – a street that leads on to the parliament of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which is still the scene of sharp divisions shaped by ethnicity and denominational affiliations.

Although this route is otherwise known as a popular promenade for strolling and leisure, this day was different since the line of chairs filled it. Haris Pašović’s staging adhered to a distinct minimalistic aesthetic programme. On the web page of the East West Theatre Company, he outlined his objectives for the Sarajevo Red Line initiative: ‘I often find myself trying to imagine how these individuals would have lived today’ and mourns the creative contributions they would have provided to the city and the country, adding that ‘Sarajevo has never paid tribute to these silent heroes’. In this short text, he defines the event as ‘a drama and music poem’ and underlines the power of the installation in its combination of cultural and historic relevance with artistic and social elements.

The Red Line event was accompanied by concerts and an exhibition of posters from the siege which was laid along the line of chairs. On five screens nearby there were roll calls of the victims, and a stage was constructed close to the Eternal Flame, the starting-point of the manifestation, facing the rows of empty chairs – the mute audience. The commemoration was a temporary monument that lasted for one day only but was still monumental in size. The simplicity of representation was provocative to some, whereas others approved of the everyday quality of the artefacts on display and thought that this contributed to the solemn atmosphere. The Red Line not only challenges the concept of monumentality with its limited duration; it also raises questions about who the audience is. Through the staging, the instructor made the absent Sarajevans the recipients of the artistic performances. However, the contemporary Sarajevans were, of course, as much audience as participants in the event.

Few things are more immobile than a line of thousands of chairs in rows; yet, it was a performance in motion. On the pavements along the chairs, there was constant movement as people came and, in some cases, returned for a second encounter with the commemoration, followed the rows, stopped, and contemplated. There
was no haste as the installation lasted all day. The visitors walked in silence along the long line of chairs while classical music was played. They had the opportunity to interact by putting flowers and toys on the chairs and were, thereby, included as contributors to the commemoration, whereas the majority silently watched the long line. Some found it hard to be so straightforwardly confronted with this very direct way of representing the number of lives lost. The installation had been advertised on billboards simply indicating the number of casualties with large digits. The very number was a harsh reminder, bearing the story of a cruel three-year period in the history of the city.

It was an individual choice to visit the event on 6 April 2012, with both push and pull factors, and the act of approaching the lined chairs definitely had liturgical dimensions focused on powerful symbols. It was impossible for anyone to ignore the construction when moving around the central areas of the city that day. Visiting was part of the performance, and it is hard to distinguish between what was ritual, artistic performance, demonstration, and memorial during this event. Individuals could choose to look at the massive row from a distance out of dislike (for political reasons or because they felt that heavy grief should be a personal matter) or owing to their experiences, finding it emotionally difficult to be close to this very tactile manifestation. As with every ritual, participation had its phases, starting with the visitors’ approaching the line before they could take in the scenery with the installation and before the performances could start. Finding individual space before contemplating and receiving the music and poetry was also essential to the visitors. Leaving was part of the remembrance ceremony as well.

It was an unusual event with no involvement by the political parties or religious institutions. Sarajevans mostly appreciated its non-religious character and found space for their own memories within a broader framework. Instead of official history, it was life in the city that constituted the platform. The installation focused on a shared identity with the deceased Sarajevans (like the Eternal Flame with its Yugoslav connotations). Furthermore, it marked the mourners’ belonging as inhabitants of the city, brought together by their grief. The city itself became an important element in this commemorative installation, and there was a chair for everyone who could have been there, the lost citizens of the city (Figure 7.3).

The simplicity in form and material added to the forceful impression. It was the number that was the message; it comprised a narrative about the siege and about victims and perpetrators. The event was firmly structured and made a conscious use of urban space to emphasize the number of casualties during the siege. It was a demonstration as well as an artwork. Its temporal character increased its intensity for the visitors and had a didactic dimension for the young, who were acquainted with narratives but had no personal memories of the siege. However, it would be a mistake to regard the performance as non-political (Morrow 2012). Not even the best intentions of setting ethno-religious divisions aside for one day could overshadow the fact that sensitive issues were at stake. The international coverage, if nothing else, made the event political and drew attention to conditions in Bosnia after the Dayton Peace Accords. For several reasons, constructing a shared concept of belonging around the siege is no easy matter. Most Sarajevans, both
those who stayed on and those who moved to the city from the provinces after the war, can identify with being attacked – but not all. References to the siege and the suffering also carry a subtext about the ethnic groups in the city. Ever since the war, people who usually identified themselves as Sarajevans have been pushed into dichotomies where it has become increasingly difficult to show solidarity across identities.

In the wake of the seminal works by Benedict Anderson (1983), Paul Conner- ton (1989), and Reinhart Koselleck (2002), it is sometimes claimed that memory cultures with their expropriation of certain places, communicative aesthetics, and rituals replace the roles and spaces formerly constructed by religious institutions. Sometimes such analyses are too simplistic since these transformations are rather a question of reconfiguration, as suggested by Siobhan Kattago. ‘Once a memorial has been built, it takes on a life of its own. The original, emotional meaning of suffering and sacrifice may even completely vanish in time’ (2015, 193). Even a memorial with very direct links to events in the recent past, like the Sarajevo Roses, can be interpreted in many ways and carry narratives that take sides in a conflict.

Figure 7.3 The commemoration of the victims of the siege of Sarajevo was manifested on billboards during The Red Line simply indicating the number 11,541. The very number was a harsh reminder to many, bearing the story of a cruel three-year period in the history of the city.

REUTERS/Alamy Stock Photo
Can memory be faceless?

Other, more conventional, initiatives than the roses and the performance with the chairs have been taken to commemorate the victims of the attacks on Sarajevo and to attempt to construct memorials that can communicate across boundaries. These have been contested as much as praised. One of them is the monument over children killed during the siege, which is situated at the edge of the Veliki Park in central Sarajevo and faces a large shopping centre on the other side of Marshal Tito Street (Morrow 2012, 25ff.; Begić and Mraović 2014, 26). The line of red chairs passed here in 2012, and for a day, the monuments stood in connection with each other. Two faceless glass bodies, one larger than the other, stand close to the pavement and the passers-by. The sculpture communicates both at a distance and close up. The circular form of the monument embraces those who stop and approach. The shapes are usually talked of as representing a mother and a child, and hence it is popularly called ‘the mother and child statue’. This non-figurative monument is placed in the immediate vicinity of some remaining tombstones (sing. nišan) in the park, which constitute the only lasting relics of a once Muslim graveyard, the Čekrećijino Cemetery (Figure 7.4).

The municipality has arranged yearly ceremonies during May at the monument, involving children singing and the recitation of poems and statements of
reconciliation. They are attended by parents who lost children during the siege and have attracted international attention through their powerful symbols and the poignant theme of children killed in war. But the children’s deaths also indicate the complicated character of the monument since it is a site for relatives in grief after many years, a wound in Sarajevo’s near history, and a reminder to the outside world.

Death is not represented in visual form, only in the dedication ‘Memorial for the Murdered Children of Besieged Sarajevo 1992–1995’ placed on the edge around the fountain that encircles the sculpture. Like the chair performance, the glass monument has no explicit religious or ethnic markers, but political messages have nevertheless been read into it. At an early stage, the initiative was criticized from several points of view. It was said not to convey any clear signals as to who were depicted, and it was argued that the artist had avoided an explicit representation of the atrocities and the violent history of the recent past. Others claimed that the monument one-sidedly emphasized mothers as mourners, even though mothers are not identified – neither through the official name of the monument nor in plastic form – since the shape of the monument is vague. The popular name of the sculpture ignores the fact that women were also perpetrators as well as supporters of aggressors; instead, it adheres to the convention of war memorials that focus on male soldiers and present women as bystanders and victims. According to some spectators, fathers mourning lost children is another neglected theme, even though the shape of the figures does not indicate any gender.

The monument for the children was an attempt to be inclusive, but it is not always perceived as such. Instead of enabling a sharing of grief and loss, it appears to have failed to embody shared experiences; rather, it is sometimes regarded as a manifestation made by the counterpart or simply as dull and conventional. In the large park remaining tombstones from the old Muslim cemetery are scattered around, and the form of ‘the mother’ and ‘the child’ is said by some to intentionally pick up the shape of these nişans. Others are equally convinced that the statue was intended to resemble a Catholic pietà. Both interpretations are possible owing to the abstraction in plastic form, but more fundamentally the interpretation of the sculpture depends on what narrative is inscribed in it in the eye of the beholder.

The contradictory interpretations, and even ironic readings, of this memorial may derive from the blur between the ambition to visualize a shared local experience of recent events and the expected universal reactions to the theme of children killed in war. In contrast to the Red Line manifestation, no artist name is mentioned. The lack of artistic complexity underlines the vagueness of the monument. The interplay between plastic form (the sculpture, the footprints in the metal from the war, and the placement of the monument at the edge of a leisure area which was once a Muslim cemetery) and the textual expressions is essential to the experience of the memorial as a whole. The contrast between the text – with its explicit reference to the war in the inscription on its edge and the list of names on the cylinders – and the open form is apparent, and the universal character tends to make it even more indeterminate.
A resting-place at the gate of the city

In contrast to these three examples, most war memorials in Bosnia follow aesthetic and political conventions and are inscribed with clear religious and ethnic markers. The fourth case is the monument over a man who is deeply connected with the defence of Sarajevo during the war: the mausoleum (turbe) of the former president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović (1925–2003). Even so, there are many resemblances to the three former cases. It is yet another example of a contemporary memorial site with links to an old burial place. The mausoleum is placed in immediate conjunction with one of Sarajevo’s major Muslim burial grounds, nowadays known as the martyrs’ memorial cemetery in the Kovači District (Šehidsko spomen mezarje Kovači), where many Muslim victims of the war in the 1990s were laid to rest. However, the burial ground dates back to the fifteenth century and a period when the city was conquered by the Ottoman Empire, and the space has changed with the history of the city. During the Austro-Hungarian period it was converted into a park and was then changed back into a Muslim burial ground which expanded during the years of the siege (Figure 7.5).

Sorensen and Viejo-Rose note that ‘place is a powerful focus because it is at once the means and the medium for reconstruction and recovery efforts’ and go on to speak of ‘additional layers of meaning post-conflict causing them [significant places for memory and heritage] to become foci of attention during reconstruction’ (2015, 2). Organizing the final resting place of the former president was a project with wide political implications. It is certainly monumental in scale and was accomplished on quite another budget than the previously discussed cases. The choice of location on the slopes of Sarajevo ensured visibility and entailed a connection with one of many graveyards that expanded during the war. These new, and sometimes improvised, grave sites radically changed the topography of Sarajevo. Now the burial sites are there to stay and have become constant reminders of death and atrocities as well as manifestations of religious separation. From a distance, the shape of the tombstones makes a clear statement as to ‘whose’ burial ground it is. Izetbegović’s position is embodied in the monument that consists of three distinct sections: the museum, the mausoleum, and the larger graveyard that inscribes the former two in a wider context of contemporary history but can be visited separately. Visually, the monument works both from a distance and when walking around on the premises. The site is currently in the midst of an ongoing expansion: a multimedia hall, an outdoor amphitheatre, and a wall with the names of martyrs written into it will be added to the area.

Alija Izetbegović served as Bosnia’s first president and was a well-known dissident already in the Yugoslav period. He was the leading character among the accused during the 1983 trial, when thirteen Muslim intellectuals were sentenced to long imprisonments accused of undermining the Yugoslav constitution, and he was one of the founders of the Democratic Action Party (SDA) in 1990. His ‘Islamic Declaration’, written in the late 1960s, circulated in private copies to begin with. It is recognized as one of the first public ideological articulations of Islamic resistance to Yugoslav politics. During the war in the 1990s, despite his
Figure 7.5 The memorial site of the former president of Bosnia, Alija Izetbegović. A museum is built between two gates in the old city wall, one of them serving as its entrance.

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pronounced Muslim nationalism, Alija Izetbegović functioned as a unifying factor as commander of the new Bosnian state and as president in the early years of the republic. His posthumous reputation has become more controversial, also among Muslims, as the political, social, and cultural consequences of the lingering ethnoreligious divisions in post-Dayton Bosnia have become more apparent.

Izetbegović’s death was not caused by the war, but he is presented at the museum as a man who courageously resisted the socialist state and stood up for his country, with his Islamic faith as the founding principle, in times of repression and later war. The museum dedicated to him and his achievements is strategically located in one of the old tower gates into Sarajevo and stands out as a part of the city wall. The symbolism is obvious. The former president is connected with the defence of the city but also with symbolic inclusion and exclusion. The display of the exhibition is conventional. Photos and artefacts in glass cases tell of Bosnia’s history after World War II with the personal history of Izetbegović as its lens. The outline follows the dissident in the Yugoslav period and to his role as president and military leader during the 1990s war, with a certain emphasis on the war period. The exhibition was inaugurated in October 2007 on the fourth anniversary of Izetbegović’s death, and there are annual ceremonies that directly connect the museum with the mausoleum and the larger burial ground.

The architectural structure, as well as the commemorative rituals, link back to Ottoman practices when mausoleums for saints, martyrs, sultans, and military leaders (sing. gazi) were common. One may also point to a more recent large-scale example which is the complete opposite when it comes to ideology – the Kemal Atatürk mausoleum in Ankara, anıtkabir. Although modernistic in design and constructed in a secular political context, this mausoleum can be seen as a continuation as much as a break with the past (Wilson 2013). The location of Izetbegović’s resting place, the structure (two restored watchtowers at two gates in the city wall), and the narratives told in the museum (in texts and through pictures and artefacts) promote the image of the former president as a traditional fighter who defended Islam.

The modernistic design of the turbe in combination with the mediaeval city tower gate as the entrance to the museum makes a powerful contrast. It is an aesthetic programme that clearly relates to Ottoman style in the monument’s fretwork cupola. The bell-shaped mausoleum, arabesque ornaments, and reticulate pattern are well integrated with the monochrome white and the minimalistic expression (Figure 7.6).

With its grand scale, so characteristic of many public memorial sites, the Alija Izetbegović memorial site tells a narrative based on official history and only has space for one ethnicity or religion. It has a focus on military action and provides a monochrome message, which is also to a very large extent a male story. Religion is interwoven in both the narration and memorial practices, and there are deliberate efforts to establish connections to the particularities of the place and its character as an old Muslim cemetery. By means of its connection to Ottoman architecture through the design of the turbe, it is the only memorial discussed in this chapter that comes close to the traditional Balkan pilgrim sites. There are
yearly ceremonies on the anniversary of Alija Izetbegović’s death, 29 October; these ceremonies are of a civic nature, but the close links between the turbe and the mezar give them a special character.

**Sharing or dividing is in the eye of the beholder**

In the course of their daily movements in the city, a large number of people are frequently confronted with the memorials already discussed, all of which have been integrated in the cityscape over the past twenty years. Both the city’s inhabitants and its visitors come with different experiences and different interpretations that make the monuments part of the process, whereby recent history is interpreted in daily life. The politicization of memory has a Yugoslav background, and it grew in Bosnia during the ethno-religious mobilization of the 1990s. After the Dayton Peace Accords and its division of the country into cantons, a weak state was the outcome – an outcome that has affected how both curricula and teachers’ training programmes relate to the past. National politics, as well as international organizations, have exerted influence over public commemorations at various memorial
sites as well as seminars and publications. As a result, recent history has become subdivided and stuck in fossilized categories ‘before the future’.

A ‘National War Crimes Strategy’ was adopted by the Council of Ministers of Bosnia-Hercegovina in December 2008. On the basis of this plan, with strong support from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, a new working group for ‘Transitional Justice Strategy in Bosnia-Hercegovina’ started work in 2012. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP BiH) began in September 2011 (as a part of the Access to Justice Project, with ambitions far beyond the legal aspects, to document and analyze memorialization in BiH) with the aim of contributing to education. Based on the concept ‘transitional justice’, the project was instructed to ‘offer recommendations relevant for the BiH context in order to help create a conceptually and substantially different approach to memorialisation and to contribute to launching a social dialogue about memorialisation; and to support the development and implementation of the Transitional Justice Strategy in BiH’. This chapter cannot end without mentioning how the international community has been very active in the debate about memorialization in Bosnia.

International faith-based institutions representing all denominations have been deeply involved in supporting and formulating memory projects. In conjunction with the impact of global aid organizations, they have identified memory politics as an effective tool not only to implement support but also to set up platforms for ideological and religious initiatives. In a critical overview of the consequences of using political strategies for commemorating the past, Nicolas Moll concludes:

> The current Bosnian memory landscape is full of homogenizing identity narratives, whether they are nationalist or non-nationalist. In that framework, the main challenge is not the creation of a common Bosnian memory identity but the creation of a shared Bosnian memory space, where the different memory entrepreneurs and narratives would enter into critical and self-critical communication with each other.

(2013, 931)

Our sites for commemoration discussed here reveal some of the difficulties when such attempts are made. Locked ethno-religious categorization lingers, and hybrid identities have difficulties finding space; in most narratives about the fate of Sarajevo during the war, there is a (sub)text about perpetrators and victims.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has focused on the city of Sarajevo, which has a number of memorials referring to wars, victims, perpetrators, victories, and losses and which frame how space is used in public for purposes of remembrance. The city has long been regarded as a symbol of religious and ethnic coexistence in the Balkans, an image destroyed by the siege in the 1990s and the aftermath of the war with continuous ethnic and religious divisions. The cases discussed here are all memorials of war embedded in the urban landscape, each in its own way, and can be passed by in
everyday life. The locations chosen for two of the memorials are in the vicinity of Muslim cemeteries that have long histories in the city. The recently dead are connected with this long history and constitute a continuation of the burial grounds, but the casualties are also linked to a specific ethno-religious group. The painting of the roses and the installation with the chairs are more related to performance and installation than the other two, and they are less connected to any specific religious group. Nevertheless, they share a clear picture of the enemy.

The three examples of anonymous dead are not burial places as such, but they involve a mode of representation and show how the choice of artistic expression transmits specific narratives about the causes behind the atrocities. Memories live their own lives; they can easily transform themselves and become elements in new narratives; initial motives are reinterpreted and, over time, recycled for new understandings. Mieke Bal speaks of the transitive character of memories and underlines the agency aspect involving at least two parties in communication (2015, 16) – or more bluntly, in the Bosnian case, in conflict.

Three of the cases discussed here deliberately avoid explicit references to ethno-religious belonging, whereas the fourth consciously connects to Ottoman architecture and practices in its conceptualization of the near history. This latter case may therefore be regarded as a correlate in that it embodies links to traditional monuments which make very direct inclusions and exclusions in their explicit narratives. Yet it also serves as a correlate in respect of the choice of location and aesthetics. Verdery points to the affective dimensions that arise when the living make direct links with the dead (Verdery 1999). The chairs, the roses, and the mausoleum over Alija Izetbegović very directly relate to the dead bodies, albeit in three very different modes, whereas the ‘mother and child’ monument avoids direct references to atrocities and appears to be the least cherished by Sarajevans despite the poignant theme. Instead, the choice of location seems to carry more meaning and could be understood – in Verdery’s terminology – as ‘a site of political profit’, with space for the sacred and the cosmic beyond the religious.

The conventional understanding of a monument as a fundamentally large-scale phenomenon is challenged by commemorations like the Sarajevo Roses and the line of red chairs. Performances such as these are an opportunity to rethink the concept of ‘monumental’ as something of more than considerable size and with the potential of great impact. These small-scale commemorations had – and, as it turns out, continue to have – an immediate impact far beyond those with personal links to deceased persons and incidents. Absence can be as powerful as grand-scale presence. The commemorations discussed here are more or less performative, both during their construction and when they are visited. The question is: who are the main actors involved in these processes that produce knowledge about the past and meaning for the present, the dead, the people behind the relevant initiative, and/or the visitors? The Sarajevo Red Line of chairs was an event between commemoration and performance. It was temporary yet highly powerful since it visualized the painful absence for a moment. It was simple in form and hence accessible and interactive, open to individual interpretations; there were as many stories as there were chairs and visitors.
The fading of the colour of ‘the Sarajevo Roses’ is a memory process in its own right and can be read as symbolic of a generation whose members are growing up without their own experiences of the siege, forming their perceptions of the war based on family narratives and public representations such as the memorials discussed here. As Reinhart Koselleck put it, ‘[W]hile the transcendental sense of death fades or is lost, the inner-worldly claims of representations of death grow’ (2002, 291). It is an open question how the interpretations of the monuments will develop when made by new generations and whether the sense of belonging will continue to be stuck in a constitutional system which petrifies conflicts and categories and assumes stable ‘identities’ in ethno-religiously defined groups, without recognizing social dynamics, individual choices, or loyalty to a place and its inhabitants.

If traditional pilgrimage means that a site is intentionally sought out for pious practices, the examples from Sarajevo are not less emotionally charged. However, in relation to the traditional pilgrim practices discussed elsewhere in this volume, the memorial sites presented in this chapter represent attempts to use aesthetics in a manner that goes beyond conventional war memorials or other places of memorialization. The practices are less organized (if at all) but more connected to everyday movements in the city and even to tourism in at least two of the cases where people pass by rather than visit. As such, their mode of communication is based on the tension between motion in daily life and reminders of atrocities. Their form and design suggest attempts to rethink the necessity about revisiting the past. However, in the aftermath of harsh conflict, the monochrome narratives tend to remain, affecting who it is who feels welcome to approach even sites that are intended to be inclusive and without determining symbols.

Nicolas Moll remarks: ‘Unfortunately memory entrepreneurs from both BiH and Europe are currently, with some exceptions at the grassroots and academic level, far away from such an interesting communication process, which would require much more effort from both sides’, and he continues: ‘At the same time, it is important to remember that the main problem is not the memories themselves, but the political structures behind them that instrumentalize and fashion public memory cultures for their own purposes’ (2013, 931). Political processes of identity construction which recently meant destruction – committed by all sides involved – are now embedded in the construction of memory sites.

Notes
1 The chapter is based on material from my project ‘Interpretation, Tradition and Conflict. Conceptions of Muslim Heritage in Bosnia-Herzegovina 1940 until Today’ at the research centre ‘The Many Roads in Modernity. The Transformation of South-East Europe and the Ottoman Heritage from 1870 to the Twenty-first Century’, University of Copenhagen (www.modernity.ku.dk). The centre is generously funded by the Carlsberg Foundation.
2 Haris Pašović (b. 1961) is an internationally acclaimed theatre and film director and has cooperated with Susan Sontag and Peter Brook, among others. The productions he staged during the siege of Sarajevo became emblematic of the resistance among its citizens. Haris Pašović founded the East West Theatre Company in 2005 and initiated the
Catharina Raudvere

Sarajevo Red Line manifestation on 6 April 2012. The web page http://eastwest.ba presents the director, the theatre company, and its various projects.

3 Alija Behmen (b. 1940) was the mayor of Sarajevo 2009–2013 and represented the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The mayor supported the artistic initiative, but the municipality did not fund the event.


5 www.muzejalijaizetbegovic.ba/en/.

6 This summary is based on a quotation from the project’s agenda in Dragan M. Popović’s ‘The Notion of Memorialisation and a New Approach to Memorialisation Practice in Bosnia and Herzegovina’ (2013, 6).

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After the war, before the future 139


Dealing with boundaries

Muslim pilgrimages and political economy on the Southern Albanian frontier

Antonio Maria Pusceddu

In the early 1990s Albania witnessed a widespread religious revival following twenty-five years of state atheism and a legal ban on religion. The resurfacing of religion was characterized not only by the difficult recovery of religious institutions, with or without international support but also by a spontaneous and multifaceted grassroots process of reconstruction and renovation of religious sites and the revivification of religious events (Clayer 2003). This chapter examines two Muslim festivals in a multi-religious district on the southern border with Greece that were resumed in the new context of Albania’s transition to liberal democracy and integration into global capitalism.¹

Investigating the intersection between religious and secular mobilities, the interplay of symbolic and material boundaries, and the ethnicization of (formal and informal) cross-border regulations, this chapter contributes to highlighting the importance of political economy for the understanding of contemporary pilgrimages.²

The growing interest in pilgrimage since the 1990s was partially due to the broader impact of mobility studies in social sciences that urged a focus on the centrality of movement in the study of pilgrimages (Coleman and Eade 2004; Albera and Eade 2015). Although a figure with outstanding historical depth, the ‘pilgrim’ began to attract renewed attention for epitomizing ‘emblematic aspects of contemporary life’ and serving as a metaphor to ‘conceptualize the constant change that is assumed to be (variously) inherent within modernity and postmodernity’ (Coleman and Eade 2004, 5–6).

However, the emphasis on ‘nomadism’ over ‘sedentarism’ as the striking novelty of contemporary human condition has been criticized for failing to acknowledge the structures of inequality that shape different regimes of mobility and immobility and the global economic and political scenarios that define the conditions and possibilities of mobility and/or immobility (Glick Schiller and Salazar 2012). In fact, mainstream scholarship on ‘globalization’ has overemphasized issues of cultural identity and belonging at the expense of a more careful reading of structural transformation in the global economic and political order. This aspect is addressed in this chapter, where Muslims’ pilgrimages and interreligious relations are analyzed within the framework of the broader neoliberal transformation of Albania and the Albanian-Greek cross-border relations. It is argued that
the comparative analysis of two revived Muslim festivals linked to Sufi orders cannot be understood without a broader examination of the multiple regimes that controlled and organized labour power mobility across the Albanian-Greek border (Papailias 2003; de Rapper and Sintès 2006; Dalakoglou 2010).

Post-socialism, religion, and common sense

The analysis will highlight how nationalism, ethnicity, and religion are embedded in the structural dialectics that produce political and economic differentiation by showing how national discourses and ethnic and religious belonging are being rephrased in people’s experience of the Albanian neoliberal transition. Hence, pilgrimage will be analyzed in relation to broader economic, political, and social configurations, emphasizing how migration provides a crucial level of articulation of the economic, the political, and the ideological.

In line with this general argument, the theoretical framework draws on the work of Antonio Gramsci (1975), whose insightful reflections on the economic and political relevance of cultural practices inform the development of the analytical framework used here (Hall 1986). I suggest that the concept of ‘common sense’ (senso comune) is useful for understanding pilgrimage as ‘a realm of competing discourses’ (Eade and Sallnow 2000, 5) in relation to broader ideological frameworks and structural constraints. Defining common sense as a fragmented, incoherent, and largely implicit conception of the world – that is, a combination and stratification of disparate conceptions – Gramsci’s conceptualization permits us to articulate the contingency of everyday life with the collective experience of historically defined and hegemonic social relations (cf. Crehan 2011).

To frame the revival of pilgrimage within the complexities of the Albanian political transition of the early 1990s, we need to address three major interrelated issues: first, the disarticulation of the socialist state and economy and shift to capitalism and liberal democracy (De Waal 2005). In a couple of years the socialist state and economy crumbled under the neoliberal ‘shock therapy’ undertaken by the early democratic governments under the supervision of the IMF and World Bank. Liberalization of the economy and the establishment of democratic institutions were enthusiastically sustained by a widespread celebration of ‘freedom’, ‘self-entrepreneurship’, and petty capitalism that eventually led to the disastrous collapse of financial pyramids in 1997. An important shift from ‘collectivism’ to ‘individualism’, from collective to individual property, was sanctioned by the 1992 land reform that turned many Albanians into small landowners, with the resulting extreme fragmentation of cultivable land and high rates of land abandonment.

Second is the massive outward migration, particularly since 1991, which led to Albania being listed ‘in the top ten of emigration countries in the world in terms of emigration scale relative to its resident population’ (Vullnetari 2012, 76). It is estimated that after two decades 45 per cent of the total population had left the country (Vullnetari 2012, 66–78). The economic weight of emigration can hardly be underestimated since migrant remittances – a quarter of the country’s GDP by the mid-1990s – provided the major financial support to the country’s economic...
recovery (Vullnetari 2012, 67). Moreover, the combined effect of internal and external migration deeply transformed the territorial and demographic profile of the country, which was characterized by high rates of depopulation in highland regions and massive urbanization. However, migration was anything but a novelty, and the ‘new’ Albanian migration (King, Mai and Schwandwer-Sievers 2005) was, in fact, framed by the collective memory of kurbet, a Turkish word referring to ‘going away and being distant in a foreign land, usually for work’ (Vullnetari 2012, 59), a relevant historical phenomenon dating back to the Ottoman period.

Third is a religious revival after a radical secularization which had been forcibly imposed by the socialist state. Once again, the features of this phenomenon make Albania a rather singular case. The consequences of the socialist attempt to eradicate religion and ‘superstition’ from Albanian society are difficult to assess, but two general remarks can be made. On the one hand, the anti-religious policies managed – at least partially – to erode the social authority of official religious communities, but on the other hand, they were unsuccessful in ‘eradicating’ religious beliefs. Thus, in effect, popular religious practices persisted and resurfaced with unexpected vitality after the breakdown of the socialist regime. The political consequences of these two interrelated aspects are by no means irrelevant in terms of the reconfiguration of the ‘religious field’ (Bourdieu 1991) and the positioning of religious factors in the organization of post-socialist Albanian civil society. This situation calls our attention directly to the historical development of the relation between nation-state, religion and society, and the place of religious pluralism in it (Morozzo della Rocca 1990; Clayer 2003).

Since the rise of Albanian nationalism in the nineteenth century, the religious heterogeneity of the population has always been a concern because of its potentially divisive consequences. As a result, the emphasis on the persistence of a strong ethnic core over the changing religious affiliation (viewed as an expression of the domination that succeeded in the Albanian territories) has generated widespread common sense about the Albanians’ ‘lightness’ concerning religious issues, along with an emphasis on the cooperative nature of interreligious relations among Albanians – a point summarized by the principle of ‘religious harmony’ (harmonia fetare). However, a distinction between the level of official religious communities (the ones endorsing discourses on tolerance) and a ‘local’ level, where religion is very much a matter of social organization (a ‘sociological’ category, according to Lakshman-Lepain [2001, 142]), has been often underlined (Clayer 2003; Lakshman-Lepain 2001). It is important to investigate the circulation of official discourses and how they are able to shape (or not) people’s social experience of religion and religious diversity (Endresen 2012).

By addressing this double level as the problematic side of the reconfiguration of the ‘religious field’ in post-socialist Albania, this chapter looks at the pilgrimages in question as realms of competing discourses, where people are confronted with state tensions, ideological pressures (national discourses and religious and ethnic categorizations ‘from above’), and the regulatory framework of the border regime. Gramsci’s theorization of ‘civil society’ allows us to conceptualize the broader field of ideological competition that impinge on the local arena. In fact,
‘civil society’ helps encompass the overall discourses and subjects involved in this region, whereas the concept of ‘common sense’ defines the concrete articulation of ‘civil society’ in people’s experience. Conceptualizations of civil society are anything but unequivocal (Hann and Dunn 1996). By referring to Gramsci’s reflections, in this chapter civil society is intimately linked to the problem of hegemony (and hence common sense) and thus taken as the main level of articulation of the political, the economic, and the ideological. The disarticulation of the socialist state in Albania and the speedy integration into the global economy make Gramsci’s concept a helpful tool to analyze the place of religion in the overall process of the transformation of Albanian society and economy. Within this framework, the questions orienting the investigation are the following:

How does religion inform people’s views of the world and their social relations? How does people’s experience of structural transformations in the economy – notably individual and collective experience of economic migration, new international division of labour, and capital accumulation – interact with the religious dimension? How are these transformations embedded in the pilgrimages? How is the political economy useful for understanding the discourses and forces that are reshaping the historical pattern of interreligious practices in local pilgrimages?

**Muslim pilgrimages**

The two festivals I analyze in this chapter take place in the vicinity of the border villages Gjonç (municipality of Ersekë) and Glinë (municipality of Leskovik) and are linked, respectively, to the Bektashi and Halveti orders. People commonly refer to these events as ‘festival’ (festa), although in the case of Gjonç the word pilgrimage (pelegrimazh) is occasionally used, especially when its religious dimension is stressed (Katroshi and Nderi 2005, 11).

The journey is a fundamental element of a pilgrimage, and it is ‘within a broader semantic field related to journeying’ that it should be analyzed (Coleman and Eade 2004, 8). The relation between the ‘secular journeys’ of migrants returning home and the ‘sacred places’ (Gregorič Bon 2015) they regularly attend while at home defines a larger scenario of movements involving various aspects of people’s lives which are an integral part of what pilgrimages are. Moreover, migrants returning home on vacation may also be performing their journey as tourists. All these experiences and senses of journeying define the emotional framework of participation in the local religious festival, where the devotional dimension can hardly be severed from other dimensions that frame people’s experiences. This is the case of the festivals analyzed in the following paragraphs.

**Gjonç: the festival of Dervish Elmazi**

The pilgrimage to the Bektashi mekam (mausoleum) of Dervish Elmazi takes place in May. According to local tradition, Dervish Elmazi was a native from the area who became a dervish in a Bektashi tekke of Konitsa (Konicë, the Albanian spelling), a town on the Greek side of the border. The mekam is located in a fenced
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and gated plot on the edge of the village Gjonç. Lying on the slopes of the Gramoz mountain, the village is nowadays uninhabited for most of the year. Whereas many families moved to the nearby town Ersekë, other villagers migrated to Greece, Italy, Northern Europe and also Turkey, a long-standing destination up until the 1930s. Many villagers have been working on the Greek side of the borders as shepherds, caretakers, or construction workers. The native population of Gjonç is entirely Muslim, linked to the Bektashi order.

During the anti-religious campaign the mekam was converted into a storehouse for the village cooperative. Notwithstanding the prohibitions, local population secretly kept looking after the place and covertly left coins, candles, or foodstuffs. Since the early 1990s, improvement of the area has been gradually taking place, and at the time of the research, a committee composed of four members elected by the families of Gjonç was in charge of collecting money, organizing the festival, and attending the renovation works. Furthermore, since 1992 a pilgrimage has been taking place every year on 22 May, the day of the death of Dervish Elmazi, according to the local tradition. Although initially the pilgrimage was practised mostly by local families, today its reputation has spread beyond the district, helped by being advertised on local TV channels. The choice of a nationally renowned singer has also been a significant step in the making of the reputation of the festival.

For local families the festival begins a day earlier, on the 21 May. This is when most families return to their houses in the village to perform the kurban (animal sacrifice, preferably rams but also chicken) in front of the mekam. Usually the rams’ skins should be placed on the rooftop of the mekam, but due to the large number of skins they are instead piled next to the butchery. Later on the skins are sold, and the money is collected by the committee for further improvements of the site. After the ritual sacrifice people continue roasting the ram in their own houses, and it is eaten cold on the following day at a collective meal with kinsfolk and friends, mostly at home.

On 22 May the pilgrims arrive for the festival early in the morning (Figure 8.1). Before feasting and enjoying food and music, they perform a codified set of rituals to pay homage to the saint. Entering the mekam they take off their shoes, go around the tomb, kiss and touch the marble taxh (dervish hat), and leave their gifts – usually money but also various objects (e.g., socks, clothing, and snacks). Crossing the threshold they also kiss and touch the jamb stones, and right outside they burn candles, one for each member of the family (Figure 8.2).

Inside the mekam are displayed the gifts to the saint, among which Christian icons are always included along with small statues, clocks, tapestries, towels, and images of Imam Ali.

The stream of pilgrims to the mekam is accompanied by the music of the orkestra that plays on the stage at the entrance of the sacred area. At mid-morning the religious and civil authorities arrive. They also pay homage to the saint and sit at the festival table located behind the mekam. In 2012 local religious authorities were the first to attend the festival; Baba Shabani, who runs a tekke in the nearby village Starjë, and the Christian Orthodox priest of Ersekë. Later the prefect of
Figure 8.1 Pilgrims climb the newly built stairs that lead to the mekam. In the background the Albanian side of the Gramoz massif stands out (Gjonç, 22 May 2012).

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Figure 8.2 After paying homage to the dervish inside the mekam, pilgrims light candles outside. The smoke and smell of the burning candles welcome the pilgrims approaching the area (Gjonç, 22 May 2012).

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Korçë appeared and, finally, the head of the Bektashi order, the kryegjysh Haxhi Dede Edmond Brahimaj. As soon as the civil and religious authorities have gathered, the music stops for a while, and the authorities make brief speeches on the stage which is adorned with the Albanian national flag and the flag of the Bektashi community (Figure 8.3).

A common feature of the speeches is the call for tolerance and brotherhood, claiming the festival to be everybody’s festival. Afterwards, the festival continues until late afternoon, with dances and conviviality (Figure 8.4).

**Glinë: ‘the most important local festival’**

The pilgrimage to the two mekam of Glinë takes place on 25 August in the vicinity of the small settlement. The two mekam are located in a fenced, steep meadow under the shadow of big plane trees. These are the only surviving buildings of a Halveti tekke allegedly founded in the late eighteenth century and burnt by Greek irregulars in 1912 (Clayer 1990, 146). All attempts to demolish them nga regimi (from the regime), it is said among locals, were stopped by the powerful and dreadful forces of the sacred place. During the socialist regime the shrines were converted into barns but in spite of official prohibitions, local people kept
respecting the *mekam* and covertly worshipped there. The area was returned to religious worship during the early 1990s, and the two *mekam* were renovated and tombs were rebuilt inside. The site was officially restored with a religious celebration on 25 August 1995 in the presence of the head of the Halveti order.

According to the Halvetis, 25 August is celebrated in commemoration of the coming to the region of the *tekke*’s founder, Sheh Mustafa Kalastra (otherwise known and venerated by many locals as Baba Azizi). Locals attending the pilgrimage or occasionally worshipping at the site are mostly ignorant of the Halveti identity (clearly marked by the black and white *taxh* on the top of the dome of the *mekam*), and the pilgrimage is generically labelled as a ‘Muslim’ festival, sometimes (and mistakenly – according to Bektashis) related to Bektashism.

Unlike Gjonç, there is no elected committee in charge of taking care of the site and organizing the festival. Only some local families related to the Halveti order in Leskovik, the town mostly involved in the festival, provide some basic preparations. They are also responsible for collecting offerings, which are sent to the capital Tirana, where the order holds its official seat. This allocation of local resources has led to complaints by the locals who wanted to use the money donated at the shrine to improve it.

These complaints notwithstanding, in 2011 people in Leskovik suggested that the festival at Glinë was ‘the most important local festival’, meaning in the region

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Figure 8.4  Late in the afternoon the festival continues with dances and conviviality (Gjonç, 22 May 2012).

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surrounding the town. Being massively attended by the local Muslim population, with a large participation by Christians, the pilgrimage has a very strong ‘local’ character and conveys a sense of belonging which encompasses the entire population. The site has definitely religious prestige, being reputed (along with two Christian shrines) to be one of the most sacred (më i shenjtë) places in the area. For that reason it is not unusual for ‘non-locals’ to attend the pilgrimage. The proximity to a border post allows native emigrants, who reside in North-western Greece, to attend the pilgrimage through a one-day trip. Participants arrive also from the small Greek Muslim community of Konitsa, who found in the nearby Albanian Muslim population their old network for marriage exchange.

For many leskovikiars (mostly male) the festival begins on the evening of 24 August, when they reach the site to perform the kurban and spend the night on the spot. Early on the following day, people arrive from the rest of the area and far beyond. After performing a codified set of rituals – kurban, homage to the saints, lighting candles outside – they roast the ram and feast (Figures 8.5 and 8.6). The groups attending the pilgrimage and feasting under the shadows of the plane trees are mainly family or kin groups. Those who do not perform a kurban (usually Christians) only pay homage to the saints, leave some money, and light candles outside the mekat. They can also buy roast lamb or some other foodstuffs from the several booths near the entrance or located inside the area. Musicians start playing early in the morning. Unlike Gjonç, they are not paid by any committee,

Figure 8.5 Pilgrims waiting their turn to enter the mekat. The flames of the burning candles are constantly kept alive. On the rooftop is visible the black-and-white taxh of the Halveti order (Leskovik, 25 August 2011).
Dealing with boundaries

Alcohol consumption is a necessary ingredient of the conviviality. Usually a sheh (shaykh) representative of the Halveti order (if not the head of the order) is present, accompanied by a local member, both recognizable by the garments and the black-and-white taxh. In 2011 no formal speech was made by any official. Unusually for a local custom, the Orthodox priest of Leskovik had not been formally invited to take part in the festival, something he complained about. From his point of view it meant a clear violation of the harmonia fetare and a demonstration of the radical behaviour of ‘certain Muslims’ (unlike the Bektashis), although he recognized that as elsewhere in Albania, there had never been any problem between Christians and Muslims in Leskovik. After all, it was he who had urged Christians to take part in Muslim festivals as a sign of respect, even if he recommended them not to perform rituals that ‘do not belong to us’, as if to say that religious tolerance and respect cannot lead to religious mixing and that recognition of religious boundaries is not the same as blurring them.

Figure 8.6 Under the shade of the plane trees, pilgrims feast until late afternoon. Muslim and Christians alike partake in the festival (Leskovik, 25 August 2011).

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Dealing with boundaries

The external borders of Albania remained sealed off for the majority of the population from the 1950s until early 1990s. The border district of Kolonjë underwent
strict military control, and movement for non-residents was severely restricted. Nonetheless, the collective memory of previous migration (kurbet) remained vivid until the ‘new’ migration began. In fact, the male population of the mountainous district used to migrate seasonally to work as stone masons, painters, decorators, and woodcarvers across the Ottoman Empire. At the turn of the century overseas migration became common as well, and migrant communities emerged in the United States. Transnational networks were also mobilized in support of either pro-Albanian or pro-Greek solutions to the contentious border issues.

Since the early 1990s, migration from the district appeared oriented mostly towards the urban areas of the country and, secondly, towards nearby Greece. Within a single decade the district population fell by 60 per cent, showing high depopulation rates among villages and the concentration of half of the population (a total of 10,070, according to the 2011 census) in the main municipalities, Leskovik (1,525) and Ersekë (3,746). The economic fabric of the region remained quite weak, being restricted to timber, agriculture, petty trade, and the construction sectors and relying heavily on migrants’ remittances. The opening of the border favoured cross-border commuting with Albanians finding work in the Greek construction sector, agriculture, and services. The recovery of ‘pre-existing’ networks, severed by the Iron Curtain, was also important in channelling trans-border mobility (Nitsiakos 2010; Sintès 2010).

Albanian-Greek borderlands have been disputed since the declaration of an independent Albanian state (1912) and the final definition of the national borders by an International Commission in 1913 (Hart 1999). Greece claimed Southern Albania as being inhabited by a majority Greek population (voriopirotēs, from Vorios Ipiros – Northern Epirus, as it came to be referred in Greek). The region of Kolonjë remained among the contested zones until the final delimitation of the borderline and was never included by the Albanian state among its ‘minority zones’.6

Eight decades later, Albanian migration to Greece was framed by the same categorizations, distinguishing Albanians (Muslim by definition) from ‘ethnic Greeks’ (Orthodox Christian by definition) and pursuing a positive discrimination of the latter (under the category of omogeneis, or co-nationals) in granting benefits and residence permits.7 This situation persuaded a number of Albanian citizens to opt for mimetic strategies of religious and ethnic ‘disguises’ as well as ethnic concealment, if not actual religious conversion (i.e., christening), to gain access to the benefits provided for ‘ethnic Greeks’ (cf. Kretsi 2005; Sintès 2010). Ethnic discrimination based on religious belonging affected the ways religious groups confronted the border and its material and symbolic limitations and opportunities. More generally, the ‘ethnicization’ of Albanian-Greek relations informed the ways national and religious discourses were locally endorsed and practised, impinging on centre-periphery relations – between central states and border areas and the ethnic and political saliency of ‘religious boundaries’ (de Rapper and Sintès 2006).

At the same time, a hierarchy of values shaped the local ‘common sense’ in the categorization of religious groups that assigned a lower status to Muslims, whereas Orthodox Christians were seen as ‘cultured’ – me kulturë (cf. de Rapper
Dealing with boundaries

The way in which local religious categories were used and certain places of worship were preferred or avoided reveals how common-sense understandings concerning religious difference continue to prevail among local Muslims. The main categories used by the Muslim population to refer to religious groups today are Mysliman and Krishtere (also called kaur). However, whereas Mysliman is employed by Muslims to distinguish themselves from the Christians, Bektashian is often employed by many Muslims to distance themselves from what they perceive as a somewhat ‘fanatical’ way of being Muslim. By explicit reference to Bektashizmi, one can also explain why certain devotional practices are shared with Christians and why some Christian celebrations are attended by Muslims. In the religiously mixed town of Leskovik, Christians often recognized that ‘they [Bektashis] are more close to us than to other Muslims’ – an observation that underlined a rather common trope on the alleged ‘crypto-Christianity’ of the Balkan Muslim population (Skendi 1967) that still seemed to provide a malleable argument for managing religious boundaries and interreligious relations as well as offering a plausible explanation for Christian conversion. Although local Bektashis may have poor doctrinal knowledge and often ignore the hierarchy of the order (as in being unable to distinguish a dervish from a baba), they often claim a more tolerant attitude to other faiths and a sincere adherence to the principle of harmonia fetare (religious harmony).

The same hierarchical evaluation of religious groups is also reflected in the patterns of religious revival and devotional practices. The renovation and reconstruction of local places of worship has often happened with the support of official communities or foreign help but has been sustained by the spontaneous activity of local populations, with a significant contribution from migrants’ remittances. Local resources were mostly used for the reconstruction of Muslim shrines that are commonly linked to Bektashism or to a generic (i.e., not explicitly connected with any brotherhood) cult of saints (tombs, mausoleums, and other small rudimental shrines). The only mosque that was rebuilt in the district (out of a dozen demolished during the socialist period) was in Leskovik and was funded by an international Muslim charity based in the United Kingdom (UK) at the request of the head of the Albanian Muslim Community. The prayer services there remained mostly unattended, despite the efforts of a young hoxha from the Madrasa of Korçë to attract worshippers. Local Muslims who tried to attend prayer services finally gave up because they ‘were not at ease’, preferring instead grave worshipping. The reluctance to attend prayer services at the mosque was sometimes explained with the fact that ‘we are Bektashi’, which means they hold a different approach to Islam. Furthermore, widespread popular devotion towards so-called good places (venda të mira) – namely, places renowned for their spiritual strength, either Muslim or Christian, or lacking any clear religious connotation (they are also referred to with the term vakëf) – provided a common ground for Christians and Muslims alike (cf. De Rapper 2009). The gap between ‘official’ Islam, identified with the mosque, and the way Islam is locally lived and experienced, is exemplified further by the rare observance of and attendance at official Islamic celebrations.
A realm of competing discourses

The old keeper of a Bektashi mekam in Leskovik contemptuously referred to the festival of Glinë as a ‘festival of emigrants’, complaining about the lack of sincere religious behaviour. He believed that the festival had been appropriated by a heterogeneous crowd to turn it into a stage where they could show off their new material and symbolic statuses. The complaints were also directed towards those Muslims who got baptized to make their own living in Greece while keeping alive their own participation in a Muslim festival. This kind of ambiguity surrounding people’s participation in the pilgrimage – as Muslims or converted Christians (perceived also as treason) – seemed to reveal that in fact, the real pilgrimage was the return journey from abroad to their hometowns instead of a truly devotional journey to sacred places. Although a clear-cut distinction between the two would be meaningless for many ‘pilgrims’, it is nevertheless significant that the need for sharp distinctions was strongly felt by those closely related to religious institutions, as much as the priest who recommended a respectful presence at the festival without any involvement in the ritual. Boundaries had to be maintained also by those who had decided to cross them – that is the Christian converts.

The organizers of the Bektashi pilgrimage in Gjonç emphasized the participation of local Christians, and they also stressed their own devotion towards Christian shrines as a form of mutual and respectful recognition. The Muslims of Gjonç had also renovated a small Christian shrine of Saint Ilias up in the mountains, where they gathered to feast every summer on Saint Ilias’s Day. The more organized presence of the Bektashi order in the area of Ersekë pursued a constant recognition of inter-religious practices within its own institutional realm (cf. Doja 2006). The area of Leskovik, besides the Christian Orthodox church, lacked any politics of recognition of this kind, leaving the Muslim pilgrimage to Glinë open to religious heterodoxies and ambiguities that found their only unifying solution in emphasising the ‘localism’ of the festival. Whereas the Bektashi festival in Gjonç displayed the national symbols (the Albanian flag coupled with the Bektashi flag), the festival in Glinë lacked explicit national references, although the local Halveti followers did openly oppose the pro-Greek propaganda in the region. Halveti shrines had also been reconstructed with the financial help of an Albanian American businessman who came from the area and was known for his strong connection to Albanian national politics.

These remarks provide several clues to explain how these pilgrimages can be approached through the concepts of civil society and common sense. The former concept helps identify the subjects and discourses involved in shaping local consciousness, whereas the latter defines the concrete experience of ideological pressures. Unlike civil society, that identifies a broader field of forces in competition, common sense is linked to people’s actual experiences and bears all the contradictions that spring from the discrepancies between ideological frameworks and the contingency of everyday life.

One can hardly neglect the fact that religion resurfaced as a significant factor in the organization of Albanian civil society since the early 1990s, both as a victim of dictatorship and as a symbol of freedom, with a clear anti-establishment
political content at the very end of the socialist regime. The particular experience of religious repression in Albania certainly contributed to turning the ‘religious field’ into a highly competitive sector of civil society, where religious organizations competed ‘to win hearts and mind’ (Stutzman 1996). At the same time the resurfacing of popular religious belief and the persistence of religion as a sociological category (the tough persistence of ‘religious common sense’) seemed to have provided resourceful material for suddenly replacing – along with neoliberal ideas – the decayed ideological project of the socialist state. All these aspects have to be put in the context of the population’s intense mobility, the rapid accumulation of migrant experiences, and their integration into the international division of labour as – at least at the beginning – cheap and abundant labour force. This is the picture we need to bear in mind when looking at the ethnicization of the Albanian-Greek border regimes. For more than a decade Albania provided a reserve army of labour subject to the discriminatory conditions of the Greek border regime. It is within this context that these Muslim pilgrimages were resumed – a conjuncture marked by a bustling reconfiguration of Albanian society, where external pressures of various kinds joined the field of ideological production, which inevitably poured into the symbolic and material reconfiguration of the religious experience.

Conclusion

As I hope to have shown, the border – in its material and symbolic dimension (Wilson and Donnan 2012) – strongly informs peoples’ common sense since they had to confront it for everything concerning their material and social life. Movement across borders had an impact on the emigrants as well as those who stayed, either in terms of socio-economic differentiation or because of various concerns with the circulation of discourses, financial resources, material objects, and consumer goods that were imbued with the very experience of migration. As such, the foundational movement that shapes the meaning and the experience of the pilgrimage, along with all the contradictions already highlighted, is the migrants’ journey across the border. It is in the institutionalized framework of the pilgrimage that the ideological incoherence and the lack of clear-cut boundaries – being at the same time Christian and Muslim, Greek and Albanian – are made evident, that is, incoherence that was otherwise adjusted and resolved in the concrete experience of everyday life. The many fragments that underpin people’s subjectivity – fragments of national discourses, religious beliefs and belonging, and expectations of modernity – are profoundly informed by movement and the multiple limitations (or opportunities) set by the border regime. Rather than an ecumenical experience of the Islamic religion, these pilgrimages set the stage for the partial solution of the contradictions experienced in a momentous period of recent Albanian history.

This chapter highlighted the significance of political economy for the understanding of pilgrimage revival in a post-socialist country by showing how national discourses and ethnic and religious belonging are being rephrased in people’s experiences of the Albanian neoliberal transition. Drawing on Gramsci’s theorization
of common sense, it suggested that for a better understanding of pilgrimage as ‘a realm of competing discourses’, one should address how religious journeys are entangled in a complex field of material and ideological forces that shape people’s practical consciousness and how people’s experience of pilgrimage cannot be severed from their practical dealing with the contingencies of everyday life within this ‘field of forces’.

Notes

1 Albania is a multi-religious country. Conventional estimates (dating back to the 1940s) divided the population among a widespread majority of Muslims (70 per cent, among whom 25 per cent were Bektashi), 20 per cent of Orthodox Christians in the South, and 10 per cent of Catholics in the North. According to the 2011 national census, Muslims still represent the majority (56.70 per cent), although Bektashis have significantly diminished (2.09 per cent). The real (and contentious) novelty is the overturned balance between Catholics (10.03 per cent) and Orthodox Christians (6.75 per cent), sensibly related to the Greek minority issue (INSTAT 2012, 71).

2 Ethnographic materials were collected during a biennial project, *Mobilities, Boundaries, Religions. A Comparative Study of Two Transnational Contexts in the Mediterranean (Albania/Greece, Morocco/Italy)*, funded by the regional government of Sardinia (LR.7/07) and the E.S.F. (2007–13). Fieldwork was carried out between 2011 and 2012 through participant observation, interviews with local populations, and religious officers as well as participation in religious festivals. The writing of this article has been partially funded by the European Research Council Advanced Grant ‘Grassroots Economics: Meaning, Project and Practice in the Pursuit of Livelihood’ [GRECO], IDEA-ERC FP7, Project Number: 323743.

3 Limitations on authority and properties of religious communities were introduced since the creation of the People’s Republic of Albania (1946), but religion was outlawed in 1967. Religious buildings were either demolished or converted into hospitals, theatres, gyms, or storehouses. The ban on religion was formally lifted in 1991.

4 From Arabic *maqam*. Another word commonly used is *dylbe*, from the Turkish *turbe*.

5 Bektashis are a Sufi order (*tarikat*), widely spread and deep-rooted in post-Ottoman Albania, whose foundation is attributed to Hajji Bektash Veli in thirteenth-century Anatolia. *Tekke* (*teqe* in Albanian) is the lodge where *dervishes* and *babas* (spiritual masters of higher degree) reside. It is also the centre around which all the spiritual and social life of the initiates and followers revolve (Clayer 1990).

6 A Greek minority is recognized by the Albanian state, although figures remain a contentious matter. According to the last Albanian census (2011), the Greek minority has dropped from 60,000 (1989 figures) to 24,243 individuals (INSTAT 2012, 71), whereas Greek sources provide far higher figures (up to 300,000), obtained by including the overall Christian Orthodox population of the southern regions.

7 The recognition of the status of *omogenis* granted a sort of semi-citizenship, without political rights, and a special identity card (*Eidikò Deltio Taftottas Omogenous* – E.D.T.O), that allowed free circulation and access to other services provided by the Greek state.

References


9 Pilgrimages in Western European Sufism

Francesco Piraino

Introduction

Sufism (tasawwuf in Arabic), the esoteric or mystical path to soul purification within Islam, is spreading extensively today throughout many different domains in Western societies. Culturally, there is a large production of traditional Sufi music, as well as what might be called a ‘revisited’ style, in addition to contemporary literature and cinema productions (Hermansen 2004). Intellectually, the academic literature on historical, philosophical, and sociological Sufism has been growing since the 1970s. Within the religious field, Sufi orders (Arabic huruq plural, tariqa singular) are expanding in different ways: a) in numbers and in size, with the consequence that they are looking for new places in which to carry out both religious and non-religious activities; b) in importance, as many shuyukh and khulafa’ (plurals of shaykh and khalifa, Sufi masters and local leaders) have become political and cultural reference points for certain Muslim communities and national institutions (e.g., Shaykh Hisham Kabbani in the UK and in the United States, Shaykh Pallavicini in Italy, and Abd Al Malik in France).

Western European Sufism can today be described as a complex phenomenon drawing from different sources: a) ‘traditional’ religious Sufi organizations are formed by first-, second-, and third-generation migrants, a process labelled by Hermansen as ‘transplanted’ Sufism (Hermansen 2004, 37); b) European esotericism, more precisely René Guénon and Frithjof Schuon (Sedgwick 2004; Bisson 2007; Piraino 2016b); c) the ‘cultic milieu’ (Wilson 1992) or New Age culture (Hermansen 2004; Hammer 2004; Sedgwick 2009; Piraino 2016a); and d) scholarly Sufism, which has often moved beyond an academic context to influence contemporary Sufism (e.g., Louis Massignon, Henry Corbin, William Chittick, Patrick Laude, and Éric Geoffroy). These different sources must not be understood separately since they all contribute, in various degrees, to the composition of Western European Sufi orders.

In this chapter I discuss Western European Sufism through the lens of pilgrimage, and I ask: what forms, what values, and what meanings does pilgrimage have within the Western European Sufi frame? First of all, we will notice that whereas the cult of saints and worship at tombs is quite widespread in African and Asian forms of Sufism (Webner 2003; Rhani 2013), these ritual practices seem secondary
in Western European Sufism. The main reason for undertaking a pilgrimage in the West European context is, instead, to meet the living charismatic Sufi master. Secondly, we will see how pilgrimage can be an instrument of interfaith and intra-faith dialogue and a manifestation of the social and political role played by the Sufi orders. Thirdly, we will see how the universalistic spirit of some Sufi orders encouraged Sufi disciples to perform Christian pilgrimages. And finally, I argue that communitas should not simply be associated with the liminal state of pilgrimage (cf. Turner 1974). In the case of Sufi pilgrimage, I argue, communitas might also be experienced in the pre- and post-liminal stages of the rituals.

The Sufism I describe is particularly related to France and Italy. The discussion is based on a meticulous study of some of the most significant Sufi orders in Western Europe in terms of size and impact. The methodological approach is ethnographic, supported by seventy qualitative, in-depth interviews. In 2013 and 2014, for a period of more than six months, I attended weekly prayer meetings, dhikr (remembering God through the repetition of God’s names), in Milan and Paris. I focused my attention on the following turuq: ʿAlawiyya (Shaykh Khaled Bentounes), Budshishiyya (Shaykh Hamza), Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya (Shaykh Mehmet), and Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya (Shaykh Tuğrul İnançer). During field research I also had the opportunity to participate in ziyarat (Arabic, literally ‘visits’), the visit to holy places, together with Sufi disciples (Arabic fuqara’, faqir in the singular). The pilgrimages took place in Algeria, Morocco, Cyprus, and Turkey, and my presence at these pilgrimage sites has been fundamental to comprehend the processes of continuity and discontinuity in transnational forms of Sufism in Western Europe.

**From the field: new Sufi groups in Europe since the early twentieth century**

In the following section I offer a short review of the history of the Sufi movements discussed in this chapter before turning to a description of the Sufi pilgrimages in which I participated.

**Tariqa ʿAlawiyya**

The tariqa ʿAlawiyya, led by Shaykh Khaled Bentounes, is one of most important turuq in North Africa and Europe. Founded by the Shaykh Ahmad Ibn Mustafa Al-ʿAlawi at the beginning of the twentieth century, ʿAlawiyya was the first tariqa to be established in Western Europe. Important individuals contributing to this development are Algerian migrants in France and Yemenis in the UK, in addition to the conversion of Guénonian intellectuals, such as Frithjof Schuon, Michel Valsan, Titus Burckhardt, and Martin Lings. Following Shaykh Al-ʿAlawi’s death in 1934, the tariqa was dismantled, giving rise to different independent branches. The main branch, first led from Algeria by Shaykh ʿAdda and Shaykh Mahdi, has since 1975 been led from France by Shaykh Khaled Bentounes. ʿAlawiyya is also well developed in Canada, Switzerland, the UK, and Germany.
In terms of appearance, Shaykh Khaled Bentounes can be described as ‘unconventional’ since he does not appear as a conventional Sufi, for example, wearing a beard and characteristic clothing. Moreover, he has married a Catholic French woman. The many activities he is engaged in include writing books, participation in conferences and television broadcasts, and involvement in social issues. In particular, he founded the Muslim Scouts in France, inspired the establishment of a new system of management called Management Ethique Traditionel Alternatif (META), and works in Algeria promoting women’s rights as well as environmental awareness. Moreover, he is strongly active in interfaith dialogue. Shaykh Khaled Bentounes is also a promoter of ‘post confraternity-Sufism’, that is, a form of Sufism that seeks to overcome differences among turuq so that they are no longer in competition with each other but share a common vision of spiritual Islam (Geoffroy 2009).

In the past years, ʿAlawiyya has organized many pilgrimages to sacred Islamic places in Uzbekistan, Tunisia, Morocco, Turkey, Syria, and Jerusalem. The tariqa has also organized, through the Muslim Scouts, spiritual journeys to Sicily and Spain to rediscover Muslim heritage in Western Europe. Furthermore, the tariqa organizes the umra (the little hajj) every year for disabled people, where the fuqara’ (Sufi disciples) are at the service of Muslims who are unable to travel alone.

Pilgrimage is also promoted as an instrument of interfaith dialogue. Every year since 2011, ʿAlawiyya has participated in the parade ‘La marche du vivre ensemble’ (Living Together Parade) in Cannes, where different religious groups demonstrate their desire for peace. To give another example, in September 2013 ʿAlawiyya promoted the Saint Assisi’s Parade in Italy in collaboration with the international interreligious association ‘Compostelle-Cordoue’. This interfaith parade is seen as an opportunity for religious movements to become better acquainted with each other and create dialogue and peace. The Assisi Parade is part of a richer programme which, in the last three years, made its way to other countries, for example, Switzerland, Spain, and Morocco. Finally, the Muslim Scouts and the tariqa ʿAlawiyya in 2011 organized the ‘Flamme de l’espoir citoyen’ (Flame of civic Hope), a bus tour all over France, to promote civic duties and political participation among young Muslims.

As mentioned, ʿAlawiyya works in Algeria to promote women’s rights. In October and November 2014 I attended the conference Congrès Féminin pour une culture de Paix – Paroles aux Femmes held in Oran, Algeria. The conference focused on different themes around women’s rights, women’s interpretation of the Qur’an and hadith, and peace culture and gathered thousands of people from all around the world. After three days of the conference, there was a ‘spiritual day’ during which people could visit the mother zawiyya (literally ‘corner, the house of prayer’, zawaya in plural) in Mostaganem as well as the shuyukh’s tombs.

These pilgrimages to Muslim and Christian sites in various countries are examples of the interreligious and intra-religious dialogue activity promoted by ʿAlawiyya as well as their social commitment to create ‘a culture of peace’, to quote Shaykh Bentoues’ motto. The activities reflect the focus within ʿAlawiyya
Sufism on the ethical and spiritual dimension of the human condition. This does not mean, however, that typical characteristics of Sufi pilgrimages, such as worship at the tombs to participate in the miraculous healing powers, are absent. In fact, these practices are still being performed but have become less central. Instead, the members are encouraged to take responsibility in society.

**Tariqa Qadiriyya Budshishiyya**

From 1972 to 2017, Budshishiyya has been led by Shaykh Hamza, who is considered by his fuqaraʾ to be a ‘living Saint’ or the qutb (axis) of this historical period. He revolutionized the tariqa when initiating a shift described as ‘from Jalal (Majesty) way to the Jamal (Beauty) way’. In other words, he promoted a change from an ascetic and rigid disciplinary form of devotion to a merciful and embracing compassionate attitude. Budshishiyya originated in a little village in Morocco in the nineteenth century and evolved into one of the most important turuq in the country, with tens of thousands of fuqaraʾ and sympathizers. Today it is also spreading in the United States, the UK, and France. This process of expansion began in the early 1990s, when Budshishiyya opened up to Europeans, especially to French people. The development is very much indebted to Faouzi Skali, who wrote several books on Sufism and organized the festival *Le festival de musique sacrée* (Festival of Sacred Music) in Fez, which turned out to be an international success. Today the brotherhood has two zawaya in Paris that bring together around 300 fuqaraʾ.

In Morocco, Budshishiyya has a significant position. Many journalists, professors, and government officials are involved in the tariqa (Domínguez Diaz 2014), and every year it organizes an international Sufi convention, *Le Rencontre Mondial du Soufisme*, which brings together academics and religious leaders from all over the world. Budshishiyya’s politics has been described as ‘engaged distance’ (Heck 2009), which implies that whereas it cultivates a close relationship with Moroccan authorities, it also presents itself as not interested in politics. In fact, Shaykh Hamza invited his fuqaraʾ to focus only on dhikr and not on local and international politics. Also in France, Budshishiyya plays an important role and the former socialist vice president of the Senate Bariza Khiari, the rapper Abd Al Malik, and Professor El Kadiri Mounir (Shaykh Hamza’s nephew) are the tariqa’s most important spokespersons.

Companionship among people is a core feature of the Budshishiyya, and the relations among fuqaraʾ are very strong, even across national borders. For example, the contact between the Parisian and the mother zawiya in Morocco is intense with visits organized at Shaykh Hamza’s house in Naima almost once a month. The most important event is the Mawlid, the celebration of the Prophet Muhammad’s birth, organized in the village of Madagh. During the event the convention *Rencontre Mondial du Soufisme* is organized. Moreover, in Madagh there are several tombs of Sufi masters that are believed to possess strong baraka (spiritual energy) and to be a source of karamat (miracles). I was told that those who are looking for spiritual and physical healing visit these tombs. Nevertheless, the Sufi
tombs are not at the centre of Budshishiyya pilgrimage. Instead, the most important pilgrimage destination was the ‘living saint’ Shaykh Hamza.

Tariqa Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya

In 1973, Shaykh Nazim succeeded his master Shaykh Abdullah al Daghestani, and having been asked by him to spread Sufi knowledge in the Western world, Shaykh Nazim founded a new branch of the Naqshbandiyya, called Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya. Starting from the late 1970s, Shaykh Nazim made yearly trips to London, and in the 1980s he visited the United States, France, Switzerland, and Germany. During the same period, he moved from Syria to Cyprus, where he had been born in 1922. Today the majority of the Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya fuqara’ are in Europe and the United States, although Shaykh Nazim is also well-known in Turkey and Indonesia. When Shaykh Nazim died in 2014, his son Shaykh Mehmet took over the leadership of the tariqa. 4

Shaykh Nazim revolutionized the Naqshbandiyya by changing the silent dhikr into a vocal performance by permitting the ecstatic dance called hadra 5 to attract new disciples. His purpose for changing the method of spiritual devotion was to spread Sufi knowledge to the Western world. Indeed, within a few years, Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya became one of the most well-known turuq in Europe. The brotherhood’s sudden openness to the outside world was also a result of a strong conviction that the end of time was near. The successful proliferation of the tariqa was, however, very much tied to the charisma of local leaders such as Shaykh Hisham in the United States and Shaykh Hassan Dyck and Shaykh Burhanuddin in Europe. It is difficult to assess the theological and political position of Naqshbandiyya. Although there is a large production of speeches (Shaykh Nazim spoke every day through ‘Sultanat TV’ online) and a high number of active charismatic khulafa’, studying the tariqa means dealing with a complex and nebulous structure which merges a traditional tariqa with elements from new religious movements. In fact, Naqshbandiyya, due to its openness to the outside world, has become influenced by New Age culture or what we may call a ‘cultic milieu’ (Damrel 2006; Nielsen et al. 2006).

We can briefly identify two opposing dimensions in Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya: a universal spirit and a sense of superiority. Following the universal spirit, all humankind and all religions should be recognized with great compassion and love. This motivates the tariqa to accept people from different confessional backgrounds, various ethnic origins, diverse sexual orientations, and so on. On the other hand, this spirit of compassion and universal love is associated with an anti-modern attitude and a sense of superiority. For example, Shaykh Nazim was not only the unquestionable qutb, but his Naqshbandiyya is considered by many fuqara’ to be ‘the only Sufi tariqa still working’, an attitude which promotes the notion of exclusiveness. 6

These complex and ambiguous aspects are further reflected in the tariqa’s pilgrimage practices, which are numerous and associated with contrasting meanings. Like Shaykh Hamza (Budshishiyya), Shaykh Nazim was considered a living saint
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by his followers and attracted people from all over the world. Among them were also Muslims who were not fuqaraʾ but who nevertheless searched for miraculous cures for various illnesses. Visits to Shaykh Nazim’s zawiya in Lefke, Cyprus, with departures from zawaya around Europe, are organized two to three times per year, including from Milan and Paris. The pilgrims’ main aims are to meet, speak with, or simply look into the eyes of Shaykh Nazim. When I went to Lefke in April 2013, Shaykh Nazim was already very old and ill, and he did not have enough energy to meet with all his fuqaraʾ. Therefore, the main opportunity to meet him was when he left his apartment and got into the car for a ride in the afternoon. Some disciples waited outside his house, singing and trying to establish eye contact with him when the car slowly passed near them. Others were so eager to see the shaykh that they followed his car in a cab in an attempt to look at him through his rear-view mirror.

For local taxi drivers, pilgrimage has therefore become a welcome business. The so-called fuqaraʾ taxi drivers also offer to take foreign disciples to the various pilgrimage sites in Lefke. Near Lefke there are seven pilgrimage sites that are recommended by old Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya fuqaraʾ to visit: 1) Hala Sultan Tekke or Mosque of Umm Haram, the tomb of the Prophet Muhammad’s wet nurse; 2) Mustafa Ahi’s tomb, which is considered to have a particular miraculous effect for fertility; 3) Canbulat’s tomb, the Ottoman Empire’s commander during the conquest of Famagusta in 1571 against the Venetian Republic; 4) Kutup Osman’s tomb, the founder of Khalveti Fazlullah Effendi’s order; 5) Saint Barnabas’s tomb, a Christian saint; 6) Omer Turbesi, seven tombs of fighters and martyrs who died during the Cyprus-Arab conquest in 647 AD; 7) Hajja Amina Nazim’s tomb, Shaykh Nazim’s wife. There are possibly other pilgrimage destinations too. A ‘faqir taxi driver’ told me that there is a little church where Shaykh Nazim loved to pray, but further research is necessary to map the possible pilgrimage practices connected with this site. Shaykh Nazim is well-known to have taken an interest in Christian sacred places. At the beginning of 2013, he asked his Italian fuqaraʾ to pay a visit to Saint Francis’s tomb in Assisi, and in April that year about thirty Italian fuqaraʾ went to Assisi together with Shaykh Hassan (Naqshbandi’s khalifa for Germany and Italy). This religious visit was repeated in 2017 by Shaykh Mehmet.

As described earlier, the pilgrimages of this tariqa combine inclusive and exclusive aspects, but these are sometimes at odds. Following the universal spirit, differences between religions are minimized in the name of one God – expressed, for example, at the Saint Barnabas and Saint Francis pilgrimages as well as the prayers in the little church in Cyprus. On the other hand, there is the cultural Ottoman-Islamic pride – expressed, for example, in visits paid to the martyrs’ tombs. For many fuqaraʾ, worship at Saint Barnabas’s tomb expresses their acknowledgment of a Christian saint. However, it should be remembered that according to the Saint Barnabas gospel, written in the sixteenth century, Jesus Christ is described as a prophet and not as the son of God (see Cirillio and Fremaux 1977). According to some pilgrims, the gospel provided the Catholic Church with the opportunity to also accept the Muslim view on Jesus’s prophecy. The fact that this opportunity
was not seized by the Church some fuqaraʾ see as the proof of Christian treason, and they resent paying homage at Saint Barnabas’s tomb. I personally experienced this double perspective when visiting the tomb in 2013. A Belgian faqir discouraged me from visiting Saint Barnabas Church because, in his words: ‘Christians are infidels’ and ‘[i]t is better not to speak with them!’ Such views are not, however, held by all members of the tariqa. The day after, other fuqaraʾ joined the Parisian local leader in paying a visit to Saint Barnabas’s tomb. And not only did they visit the church but were also invited by the bishop to have lunch together with the local Christian community.

**Tariqa Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya**

Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya is based in Istanbul and developed in Western societies thanks to Muzaffer Ozak (1916–1985). Nowadays, there are several zawaya in the United States, South America, and Europe. Gabriele Mandel (1924–2010), a multifaceted intellectual and artist, founded the Italian branch of the tariqa. His charisma charmed many people, some of whom became Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya fuqaraʾ, whereas others can be described as ‘fellow travellers’, that is, non-Muslims who participate in cultural events and sometimes religious practices together with the fuqaraʾ. By adopting the notion of ‘fellow travellers’, Mandel was able to distinguish between those who wanted to follow the traditional Sufi tariqa and those who were interested in Sufism but were not looking for a complete engagement in a Sufi-Islamic lifestyle.

Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya is one of the first international Italian-based turuq. Its members have different national backgrounds, such as Egyptian, Turkish, Tunisian, and Azerbaijani in addition to Italian. Mandel has been a key figure within the Italian and international field of Islamic studies and has translated the Qur’an and many of Jalal al-Din Rumi’s poems into Italian. Despite his liberal position (he left his disciples considerable freedom in interpreting Islamic norms) and his heterodoxies (he believed in reincarnation), he had good relations with the Muslim community of Milan.

After Mandel’s death, the Italian Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya lost its charismatic leader and underwent a profound crisis. Currently, the khalifa is Mohsen Mouelhi, who is trying to re-establish the Italian zawiya and build new relations between disciples in Italy and the mother zawiya in Istanbul. Followers make approximately three visits to Istanbul per year. The distinction between fuqaraʾ and ‘fellow travellers’, established by Mandel, allows the participation of non-fuqaraʾ and non-Muslims in these visits to Istanbul. Accordingly, although not being a Muslim, I could participate in a visit to the Istanbul zawiya in April 2014 together with a faqira (the feminine of faqir) from another tariqa and a Christian woman. Istanbul’s zawiya is open only on Mondays and Thursdays, when the meshk (traditional, sacred Ottoman music) and the dhikr are performed. This leaves a lot of free time for the foreign visitors, and our week was quite busy. Together with other pilgrims we visited the most important mosques and monuments in Istanbul,
and there was time for shopping in the Grand Bazar and in the neighbourhood of Galata Tower. My participation in both the emotionally charged two spiritual nights, involving long discussions with the old *fuqara*, and the leisure time spent in Istanbul allowed me to see how the boundaries between tourism and pilgrimage can be blurred during visits to *zawiya* (Turner and Turner 1978; Cohen 1979; Coleman and Eade 2004).

The religious commitment expressed by the ‘fellow travellers’ (Muslims as well as non-Muslims), who frequent the *tu**ruq* without being completely committed to it, can be compared with Hervieu-Léger’s ideal type of pilgrim as someone who seeks emotional experiences but is less interested in dogmatic teachings and regular religious practices (Hervieu-Léger 1999). We can observe the ‘postmodern pilgrim’, who lives Sufism as a spiritual search and the ecstatic practice of *dhikr*, disconnected from a specific vision of the world. In other words, for these disciples practising *dhikr* or going on a pilgrimage are spiritual experiences in themselves which do not require either a complete commitment or a communitarian view of life. Hence, pilgrimage can be a spiritual experience that focuses on a disciple’s inner meanings and is decoupled from all the legalistic and mandatory dimensions of religion; this approach may even sometimes be opposed to mainstream ways of religious living. Therefore, Muslim pilgrimage can include various kinds of religious experiences as well as be combined with elements from pilgrimage sites and practices that are not necessarily Islamic. The result is a spiritual *bricolage* which is highly personal although, at least to some extent, organized.

**Spontaneous pilgrimages**

In contrast to the organized pilgrimages described, Muslim pilgrimage in contemporary Western Europe may also arise from a *faqir*’s individual initiative. In all the three cases I present, these acts of pilgrimage by Muslims in Europe have been performed at Christian sites. Particularly interesting is the first case in which a Belgian-Moroccan *ʿAlawi faqir* undertook the pilgrimage of Santiago de Compostela to improve his knowledge of the Christian religion and Christian believers. The *faqir*’s visit to a well-established Christian pilgrimage site may come as a surprise, particularly since Saint James (Santiago) is also called the ‘Moor-slayer’, an epithet which could be assumed to be provocative, considering the pilgrim’s partly Moroccan origin. However, the *faqir* explained to me that he considered the persecution of Muslims on behalf of the Spanish kingdom and the Christian Inquisition to be something of the past. In response to my astonishment, he smiled and said, ‘Don’t you know? There is only one God.’ The comment suggests that his visit to the Christian pilgrimage site built on appropriating the Islamic understanding of there being only one God into a notion of an encompassing God.

The second case concerns an Italian-Moroccan Budshishi who, after a spiritual dream, paid a visit to the tomb of Saint Emiliano, a local saint in northern Italy. In this case, the visit was motivated by a personal dream, but it was supported by and rationalized through reference to Islamic sources. The *faqir* told
me that there is a hadith which encourages respect and prayer for local saints. Similarly, in the third case, a Budshishi faqira in Milan dreamt about a saint called Anthony. She inquired among her Italian friends whether there was a saint called Anthony, and this was confirmed. The following week she paid a visit to Saint Anthony’s basilica in Padua, which is one of the most important sacred places for Catholics in Italy.

These cases suggest that Christian pilgrimage sites can be perceived as powerful spiritual sites also for Muslims living in Europe. In conversations with the three pilgrims introduced here, they told me that in undertaking pilgrimage to Christian sites, they were inspired by two sources in particular: the universal love and open-ness taught by their Sufi masters and a direct, mystical experience which calls for interfaith pilgrimage. It is important to note that these fuqaraʾ are deeply engaged in Sufi-Islamic spiritual life. Their interfaith attitude cannot be explained as a form of syncretism or a New Age vision of Islam. Those who undertook the spontaneous pilgrimages, as described, framed themselves within well-established Islamic dogma and were convinced they were on the right path towards God. Situated within this world view, they believe that the oneness of God could be expressed in different ways.

The different ways of European Sufi pilgrimages

The turuq here presented stand in contrast to the ethnic and social homogeneity displayed in the Sufi orders studied by Geaves (2009) and Werbner (2003). Instead, the turuq I have presented are rather heterogeneous, from ethnic, social, and cultural perspectives, and have been influenced by different sources, especially migrant Islam, European esotericism, New Age culture, and intellectual research. Such heterogeneity is reflected in their pilgrimage practices, which take on multiple meanings for the individual participant rather than being a public celebration of collective identity (Werbner 2002) or a sacralization of territory (Werbner 2003).

Pilgrimage as a communicative tool: interfaith and intra-faith dialogues

From a conventional Sufi perspective, pilgrimage is a form of dhikr, a method for remembering God. Moreover, Sufi pilgrimage, in its present European understanding, can also be considered a tool which enhances the communication among different religions and among Muslims. As such, pilgrimages function as interfaith and intra-faith dialogue practices. For example, the ‘Alawiyya’s peace parades in Cannes and Assisi are co-organized with Christian, Buddhist, and Jewish movements. Similarly, Naqshbandi’s pilgrimages to Christian sacred places suggest adherence to the belief in the Islamic-Sufi universal spirit, which overrides cultural and religious boundaries. The Budshishi conference Rencontre Mondiale du Soufisme, which takes place during the Mawlid, is not only a religious celebration but also an activity of intra-faith dialogue connecting Sufi followers and sympathizers from all over Maghreb as well as from Europe.
**On the road to the living saint**

Visits or pilgrimages to the *shaykh* are particularly important for Sufi followers. An important characteristic of both Budshishiyaa and Naqshbandiyaa is the charisma embodied in the figure of the *shaykh*. The Sufi master is considered a living saint with remarkable powers and knowledge. In fact, for some *fuqaraʾ* the *shaykh* is the bearer of existence itself. To be near the *shaykh*, to exchange even just a glance with him, is for many *fuqaraʾ* extremely important. The experience often produces strong emotional expressions in the *fuqaraʾ*, such as crying out in the expression of joy. Thus, the spiritual transmission from master to follower is not limited to the use of language but is seen as conveyed from ‘heart to heart’ or ‘through the eyes’. The ‘Alawiyya’s case is, however, different from the two already mentioned. *Shaykh* Bentounes discourages devotional attitudes towards him. He neither wants to be called *qutb* or have his hand kissed by disciples, and in general he does not appreciate ceremonious attitudes. He refuses to embody the traditional Sufi charisma and instead encourages his disciples to find the ‘inner *shaykh*’ who lives in their hearts. Nevertheless, he still embodies a strong charisma which charms many people, whether followers or not.

**Communitas, pilgrimage, and mysticism**

My discussion of the Sufi groups established in Europe in the twentieth century shows that pilgrimage often engenders a turning point in a Sufi’s life. In fact, it is the moment in which the relationship between the *shaykh* and his follower is established, when the spiritual bond is either verified or vivified. Pilgrimage is also a way to put into practice the teachings received in European *zawaya*. During pious visits to sites outside Europe, European *fuqaraʾ* mix with the local followers of the *tariqa*, and the intellectual dimension of European Sufism, which is usually very important, is set aside on these occasions to participate in and fully enjoy the *zawiya’s* life. Many live and work together to support the *tariqa* and, above all, practise *dhikr* together. The Sufis join in a spiritual and social community, forgetting the social structures by which they are usually constrained. Thus, during pilgrimages, the *fuqaraʾ* experience the communal life of the *zawiya* and the feeling of brotherhood, which is a fundamental pillar of Sufism all around the world. For many European Sufis, pilgrimage is thus characterized by communitas and understood as anti-structural dynamics challenging established social meanings and relations among *fuqaraʾ*. At the same time, the experience suggests that communitas functions as a structuring force, creating a sense of common identity among the pilgrims, at least temporarily.

It should be observed, however, that pilgrimage is not only associated with the structural and anti-structural forces of communitas. Pilgrimage can also constitute a turning point in the life of Sufis that initiates a process of detachment from Sufism. Through pilgrimage to various sites, some European Sufis find the kind of Sufism practised in Europe through seminars and concerts to be very different from more conventional ways of Sufism. When confronted with such
diversity, especially when the issue of values is at stake, some European Sufis chose to abandon Sufism. For example, a Milanese Naqshbandi faqira confided in me that it was difficult for her to accept the gender separation and the hierarchies of the group encountered during her pilgrimage in Cyprus. After her visit, she felt betrayed by the Italian khalifa who, according to her, had ‘artificially sweetened’ Sufism to attract more disciples. In this case, the pilgrimage did not offer the experience of communitas but exactly its opposite. As such, the idea of communitas can be challenged through the pilgrimage experience.

Communitas has been understood as the result of collective rituals, for example, pilgrimage. But it has also been perceived of as a creative and anti-structural force generally inscribed in religion more broadly. According to Turner, ‘communitas is not structure with its signs reversed, minuses instead of pluses, but rather the fons et origo of all structures and, at the same time, their critique’ (Turner 1974, 202). As such, the effect of anti-structure, as stressed by Turner, can be compared with De Certeau’s description of mysticism as a revolutionary force (De Certeau 1982) and Halbwachs’s understanding of mysticism as a revivifying energy (Halbwachs 1997). The ethnographic material I have discussed in this chapter suggests that the connection between mysticism and communitas is expressed through the spontaneous pilgrimages performed by individual fuqaraʾ. Deeply religious and observant, they have performed a pilgrimage in a country in which they were foreigners and worshipped saints who were not of their own religion while framing the pilgrimage within the world view of their own religion.

As we have seen, the fuqaraʾ were motivated by an ecumenical will to seek knowledge and by the sacred dreams they experienced. In these cases, their experiences of communitas was not the result of participation in pilgrimage ritual but was motivated by a pre-ritual inner religious experience – a mystical experience – that called for the performance of pilgrimage. Yet, I do not think it is useful to deal with mysticism, communitas, and ritual in terms of cause and effect. Instead I concur with Bouyer (1980) and Bonaccorso (2005), who argue that mysticism and ritual are closely connected. Indeed mysterion – the etymology of mysticism – has been translated in Latin as sacramentum, that is, the ritual itself. In the present case, I suggest, mysticism runs through the religious and ritual experience, whereas communitas is not simply experienced in the liminal phase of ritual, as Turner has suggested, but also in the pre- and post-liminal phases.

**Conclusion**

Sufis are often called, in a pejorative sense, ‘tomb worshippers’. However, among the new Sufi groups located in Western Europe, the role of Sufi tombs does not appear to be very relevant in their daily religious life. Among the majority of fuqaraʾ I have interviewed, they seem to discover the importance of these tombs as sources of baraka and karamat only when they are on pilgrimage visiting the shaykh. However, it is fair to say that the shaykh occupies the most central focus in such pious visits, and visits to tombs are of a secondary significance. Through an ethnographic analysis of ʿAlawiyya, Budshishiyaa, Naqshbandiyya Haqqaniyya, and
Jerrahiyya-Khalwatiyya, in the Western European context, I have argued that Sufi pilgrimages have multiple meanings and values. They are instruments of interfaith and intra-faith dialogue; they can be performed and experienced as fundamental turning points in a pilgrim’s religious life as well as a religious-touristic experience. Finally, through the example of spontaneous pilgrimages, I have argued that communitas may not simply be a result of pilgrimage but can be understood as an anti-structural and creative force inscribed within religion more generally and in particular within mystic movements like Sufism.

Notes

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2 It should be noted that Sufism is experiencing a new phase of expansion even in many majority Muslim countries such as Morocco (see Dominguez Diaz 2014), Indonesia (see Howell 2007), and Algeria (see Werenfels 2014).

3 René Guénon was a French intellectual and esotericist (1881–1951).

4 Shaykh Mehmet’s leadership is accepted in all of Europe and Turkey; on the other hand, in the United Kingdom and the United States the position is not clear, and many disciples have recognized Shaykh Hisham as the new shaykh.

5 The hadra is a Sufi ritual, an ecstatic dance.

6 Ethnographic fieldwork notes.

References


10 Pilgrimage to a shrine

The recreation of Sufi tradition in the UK

M. Amer Morgahi

Introduction

During my fieldwork in London on different Barelwi groups in 2004, I came across a poster about an urs (death anniversary of a saint) during a visit to a mosque. I decided to visit the urs, which later turned out to be held in Hijaz College near Nuneaton. On my arrival at Hijaz College, I was welcomed by a student who asked me where I came from. When I introduced myself as a researcher from the Netherlands, he replied in Dutch, ‘Welkom in gekkenhuis, letterlijk en figuurlijk’ (Welcome to the madhouse, literally and metaphorically). The literal meaning of the word gekkenhuis derives from the history of the place, which was once used as a sanatorium. Metaphorically it is now a deewanon ki jagha (place of devotees), of the people belonging to Hijaz College or Darbar-e alia Hijazia Naqshbandia (Exalted Place Hijazia Naqshbandia) – the name of the lodge that hosts the college and its affiliated institutions.1

Interestingly, the words ‘madhouse’ and ‘deewana’ or lunatic, as used by the student, correspond with the images of some ecstatic followers of ‘spiritual’ or ‘popular’ Islam in South Asia. The field of spiritual, devotional, or popular Islamic practices – used here interchangeably – is rooted in South Asian culture and is very broad and multifaceted. Popular Islam includes visits to shrines and the associated rituals. The ulama who justify these popular Islamic practices are called Barelwis, named after the north Indian city of Bareilly from where the founder of this interpretation, Ahmad Raza Khan, hailed. Their critics argue that they follow ‘local’ or ‘backward’ rather than ‘official’ Islamic practices. Some authors make a distinction between the organized Barelwis, who call themselves ahl-e sunnat wa jama’at (people of sunna and the community), and the unregulated syncretism of shrine-based ‘spiritual Islam’, which developed historically in South Asia (Sanyal 1996, 12). The ‘holy spiritual figures’ in devotional Islam (pir), who are buried and commemorated in shrines, are considered to be mediators between humans and the transcendent. They act as spiritual guides and guardians during their lives, and after death, their shrines, dargah (tomb), are thought of as places of baraka (blessings) (Ewing 1983, 254–5) and often become places of pilgrimage.

Whereas shrines and their saintly guardians, sajjada nishin, in rural Punjab traditionally depended on their followers through a complex network determined
by the clan, biraderi, or caste structures (Gilmartin 1979, 486), people in the urban areas increasingly took the initiative and chose pirs, who had no connection with historic shrines. Hence, some studies have examined cases of a ‘religious scholar turned spiritual sheikh’ (Werbner 2003, 28–9) who represents the ‘traditional pir’ and inhabits their shrines. This chapter deals with similar developments illustrated by the foundation of a Sufi shrine in the UK and how it exhibits various elements of pilgrimage for the followers.

In profiling the studies on Muslims in Europe related with the shrines, I question the attribution of the term ‘popular Islam’ since it is based on a false distinction between ‘High’ and ‘Low’ Islam. According to this distinction, the ‘High Islam’ of ‘urban scholars’ represents an urban orientation ‘towards puritanism and scripturalism’, which stresses the ‘nomocratic’ nature of Islam (Gellner 1981, 1992). ‘Low Islam’, on the other hand, which was also called Folk Islam, was assumed to be illiterate, based on ‘magic and ecstasy’ and mostly to be found in tribal settings. Opposition to popular saint cults and the festivals at shrines has come not only from anti-Sufi scholars but has also been part of an ongoing debate within Sufism (van Bruinessen 2009, 125–7). If Gellner’s rigid distinction between ‘High’ and ‘Low’ Islam has any value, it cannot simply be identified with urban versus rural and Salafi versus Sufi. Furthermore, it ignores the ‘internal differentiation of belief and practice within “local” societies’ (Eickelman 1982, 3).

Studies on the institutional formation of Islam in Europe tend to concentrate on Reformist and Islamist groups rather than popular Islam. The assumption is that practices related to popular Islam will disappear in the context of the diaspora. This assumption informs the explanation by Geaves (2000), for example, drawing on Gellner (1981) and Schiffauer (1988, 146–7), for the relative success of Islamists and Reformists vis-à-vis the Barelwis as far as institution building and youth appeal in the diaspora are concerned. He and others, while lamenting such developments, attribute them to the ‘unobtrusive’ character of popular Islam (Ahlberg 1990, 11) and its Sufi ramifications (Geaves 2000). In so doing, they implicitly deny agency to the followers of ‘popular Islam’ to interpret or rethink their positions within the tradition under changed circumstances. This chapter challenges these assumptions by looking at developments in popular Islam as a manifestation of devotional Islam and how its upholders are making their mark in their adopted homelands.

The chapter’s specific focus on the pilgrimage aspect of traditional Islam is meant to show how it contributes to new spaces of spiritual significance. The aim will be to show how the upholders of Barelwi Islam are adopting the traditional religious forms like shrines, ziyara or pilgrimage, and musical forms such as qawwali to adapt to new surroundings. For the followers, commemorating the anniversary of a saint, or urs, contains all the elements of pilgrimage such as spiritual renewal, remembrance, cultural festivities, and the fulfilling of promises to the buried sheikh. Thus, the focus here will be on cultural forms and how these were redefined through pilgrimage and the performance of urs. In describing the urs at (to my knowledge) the first Sufi lodge in the UK following the South Asian religious tradition, I focus on different events, such as the construction
of the tomb, the *qawwali* event, and the organization of a seminar, with the aim of revealing the broader meanings that the event is taking in its new location. I further locate the practices surrounding this event in a historical, local, and transnational context to show how they contribute to the emerging patterns of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe.

**Contextualizing pilgrimage**

Pilgrimage to a shrine is traditionally part of the popular Muslim religiosity. However, how these new forms of pilgrimage are undertaken, relived, and recreated in a modern context refers to the transformed nature of the pilgrimage. Similarly, whereas the actual foundation of the shrine may, to some extent, involve a recreation of structural elements imported from South Asia, the individual followers strive for a new identity that displays both modern and traditional or spiritual elements. Thus, the chapter deals with the events taking place during the *urs*, observations made during my participation, and the views of the participants to show how the event can be included in modern forms of Muslim pilgrimage.

The argument here is that exclusive and inclusive tendencies in ‘traditional Islam’, far from being inherent in ‘tradition’, are (re)defined through the processes where the devotional and syncretic elements play a key role in emerging patterns of inclusion. Let me elaborate this point. The basic idea is that the ‘traditional’ and the ‘modern’ are complementing each other. Whereas the construction of a spiritual lodge refers to the ingraining of ‘traditional Islam’ and its recreation in a new ‘Western’ setting, the evolving religious message of Hijaz College defines Muslim identity in ways which engage with the modern as well as the spiritual needs of the followers. Hence, this Muslim identity should not be defined through a dichotomy between Sufism and Islamism – rather, we should look at how the Sufi or spiritual forms live side by side with modernity through a personal manifestation (see Soares and Otayek 2007, 18). The individual followers see themselves as modern subjects and this modernity involves both ‘material and spiritual progress’ (Deeb 2006, 5).

It was also clear that in creating a Muslim identity for its followers through elements of popular Islam, the Hijaz Community adopted an eclectic and somewhat arbitrary approach. It did not shy away from taking up more popular cultural practices, such as organizing spiritual singing performances (*qawwals*) during *urs* gatherings. Given the competition for control over the religious public domain in the UK, increasingly defined by Reformists and Islamists, and the latter’s criticism of popular religious practices, the Hijaz College Community opted for more refined forms of the Sufi ritual around the shrine and during the *urs*. The organization of the rituals and the pilgrimage involves an attempt to create space for Muslim devotional forms that are open to all generations and genders. This inclusive space contests the exclusionary nature of the religious identities promoted through the Reformist and political Islam discourses. Pilgrimage to the shrine is an attempt to make other devotional forms of religiosity rooted in Muslim culture visible for the broader public in the UK.
I will also demonstrate how the tendency of Barelwis to ‘sacralise space’ (Werbner 2003, 30) – true to their inclination to ‘localize’ – actually plays out through pilgrimage. This sacralizing of space results from its association with certain historical or living ‘holy figures’ known for their human or charismatic interventions. The late Sheikh Hazrat Sahib was known for his lifelong educational work, which he thought necessary for the secular and religious recreation of the next generations of Muslims in the UK.

From Munazar-e Azam (great debater) to Hazrat Sahib

Abdul Wahab Siddiqui, or Hazrat Sahib as he is known to his followers, was the son of a famous religious scholar in Lahore, Omar Ichravi. The latter originally came from Sheikhupoura, a small town near Lahore, but he later moved to Qasur (Farooqi 1987, 386–7). Abdul Wahab Siddiqui was born in 1942. The Hijaz College website provides a family link to the renowned sheikh of Qasur, Mohayuddin Qasuri, whose family taught the famous eighteenth-century Punjabi poets Bulleh Shah and Waris Shah.³ Later Abdul Wahab Siddiqui took a bai’t or oath of allegiance with another Naqshbandi pir, Syed Ismail Bukhari, in Okara.

Abdul Wahab Siddiqui may have felt inept in the face of a towering figure such as his father, whose educational encouragement, guidance, and religious stature had no small influence on Siddiqui’s move to the UK. He came to Blackburn in the north of England during the early 1970s at the invitation of a small Pakistani community, whose members mostly hailed from Gujarat and Lahore. Apart from his personal reputation as an eloquent young alim (scholar), his father’s religious stature and origins in Lahore were significant factors for establishing his position in the UK (Tabassum 2002, 46–7). Three years later he moved to Coventry, which has a large Pakistani-Kashmiri community connected to the wider Midlands region. In addition to establishing a mosque, he opened a madrasa in an old factory building.

Apart from religion, Siddiqui was also engaged in the social and political activities of the 1960s. The hagiographic accounts at the Hijaz College website provide an account of his wide interactions with religious and political figures in Pakistan.⁴ After moving to the UK he helped establish a Barelwi umbrella organization in the UK, the World Islamic Mission (WIM). The WIM was the initiative of Pir Maroof, and it was an effort to stem the influence of the Muslim World League – a Saudi-based Muslim organization promoting Saudi or ‘Wahhabi’ causes.⁵

With the financial support of local communities and their network in the Netherlands and the Caribbean, Abdul Wahab Siddiqui purchased larger premises in neighbouring Nuneaton in 1994 as a venue for Hijaz College. He died the same year and was buried at Hijaz College, where his shrine was later erected. Both his and his father’s urs – recently titled ‘Blessed Summit’ – are held annually at this location. He extended the organizational network to the Netherlands and established a branch in The Hague that helped increase his religious and spiritual links across the UK and the Netherlands, where he is revered like a pir, or spiritual figure’.⁶ Hazrat Sahib’s charisma was based on the combination of two aspects which his followers
still remember: his emphasis on creating Muslim educational institutes in Europe where the younger generation would receive religious and secular education. This idea, first tried with his own sons, was based on Hazrat Sahib’s philosophy that ‘there is no such distinction between the Islamic and secular sciences’ (quoted in Asif 2006, 23). Students at Hijaz College thus receive both a secular and an Islamic education and, for example, sit for the General Certificate of Secondary Education exams (Geaves 2007, 150).

**Establishing the ‘Hijaz Community’**

The educational and spiritual services of Hazrat Sahib were enlarged and sustained through an organizational structure that his sons carried out. His four sons were all educated in the West (a barrister, a surgeon, and two solicitors) and trained in traditional religious education. The most articulate is Faizul Aqtab Siddiqui, and he heads the organization at the Hijaz complex. He is acting president of Hijaz College and the saintly successor, *sajada nishin*, of Hazrat Sahib, whose title he inherited. His picture is now next to his father’s on the Hijaz website and in the literature. The four sons set up a broad complex of organizations at Hijaz College, converting it into a centre of spirituality and guidance for Muslim communities and a centre for broader engagement with British society.

Besides maintaining an educational institute and a shrine, Hijaz College took yet another step and established the Muslim Arbitration Tribunal (MAT) in 2007. As an informal body that includes Faizul Aqtab and a civil judge, MAT distinguishes itself from the existing London-based Islamic Sharia Council, which consists solely of Islamic scholars. The establishment of MAT occurred at a time when the debate on ‘sharia councils’ regained media attention through a statement by the archbishop of Canterbury in February 2008 and later by the lord chief justice of England and Wales. The latter argued that English law should recognize the right of Muslims to settle personal affairs among themselves according to *sharia*, the body of Islamic law.

In the summer of 2004, the annual spiritual gathering at the college was proclaimed an *urs sharif* or ‘blessed meeting’. More recently, the newly launched Hijaz College website (www.blessedsummit.com) referred to the *urs* programme as a ‘blessed summit’ and contained an introduction to the gathering. This introduction and the launch of other activities by Hijaz College, now known as the ‘Hijaz Community’, depicts the group as comparable to New Age groups, with a new emblem pasted on each Hijaz Community initiative. The website introduction to the ‘blessed summit’ began (2012) as follows:

> How often do we spend a moment reflecting upon the purpose of our being? Many of us live our lives today without stopping to reflect upon its direction or purpose. In doing so, we forget who we really are, and lose ourselves in our daily lives. Are you looking to embark upon a journey of change and self-discovery? If so, this may be what you are looking for. Secret of Secrets
unveils the tools through which a person can bring a new direction and meaning to their life.8

The launch of the Hijaz Community concept has transformed the message of the organization to the outside world and made it more inclusive. Through the idea of ‘community’, they have created a network of hundreds of professionals who get together under their platform to discuss social issues pertaining to the Muslims. The message and socialization processes of the group show the broader individual building process where modernity and spirituality go hand in hand and how a new civic responsibility is created to contribute to the efforts of creating a responsible social individual in a modern social context. These individual and group identities are created through rituals, devotions, and the process of sacralization.

The shrine

To inform the people about the urs anniversary celebration in 2004, posters were distributed in English and Urdu at ahl-e sunnat mosques across the UK. Interestingly, the posters in the Netherlands, which were distributed only in Dutch language and were available in the Noorul Islam mosque in The Hague, also detailed the schedule of the urs journey or ziyara or pilgrimage. The posters in London advertised the urs gathering at the spiritual centre astana alya (elevated place) of the Naqshbandiya Hijazia order. The invitation was extended on behalf of the ‘sons and khulafa’, or disciples, of the darbar, or lodge. For the period of the urs, men were accommodated in tents and women in rooms at the college, thus everybody was asked to bring sleeping bags. After my arrival and registration at the reception, I was invited to meet Hazrat Sahib, as Faizul Aqtab, the eldest son, was generally called. He inquired about my journey and asked me to visit the mausoleum and look around before attending the evening programme.

The Hijaz College bought the building and its adjoining area, consisting of 97,000 square feet, for £5m. The shrine is located in the grounds close to the main building and looks like a miniature mosque with a green dome. The words mujadid-e dor-e hazir, hazrat pir Abdul Wahab Siddiqui (mujadid or reformer of the present, pir Abdul Wahab Siddiqui) is written above the entrance to this octagonal structure. Work was still going on inside the tomb and in the surrounding area. The interior design of the mausoleum shows evidence of the Indo-Pakistani architectural tradition. The grave in the middle is covered by a green cloth bearing the words Ganj Bakhsh-e faiz-alim mazha-e nor-e khuda, a replica of the inscription on the tomb of Data Ali Hijvairi in Lahore. A cement pole was erected at one end of the grave, apparently indicating the position of the head. The white marble walls and floor of the mausoleum contrasted with the rest of the Hijaz College complex, which is built of red brick. Three marble plaques on the inner walls of the mausoleum illustrate Siddiqui’s spiritual and genealogical lineage. The upper part of the walls bears a series of ceramic tiles, ornamented with the ninety-nine attributes of Allah, and three wooden ornamentations containing religious dogmas.
and salutations of the Prophet Muhammad. Several strings of beads and litanies for recitation lie on a shelf next to a donation box. An iron gate leads to a vault – supposedly to the real grave of Abdul Wahab Siddiqui – reserved for the family and special visitors (cf. Asif 2006).

I identified some of the people, who worked around the mausoleum, as coming from Surinam. They included the imam of the Surinamese mosque in The Hague and members of his family. They were in the process of cleaning and decorating and generally preparing for the activities in the days to come. A newly constructed building next to the parking lot was turned into a kitchen run by the Surinamese, where preparations for the ritual feast or langar were under way for the entire event. Pakistani and Bangladeshi groups began to arrive by bus from places such as Bradford and Sheffield and the neighbouring Midland area. All arrivals at Hijaz College followed a similar pattern: visitors first paid their respects to Hazrat Sahib and then visited the shrine, where some took photographs as a souvenir of their visit.

The urs trip to Hijaz

Given the visible presence of people of Surinamese origin in the Netherlands, I will begin with an account of their participation in the urs gathering. Approximately 45,000 Muslim Surinamese live in the Netherlands, and most reside in The Hague (Choenni 2003, 17). A month before the urs gathering I came across a pamphlet at the Noerul Islam mosque in The Hague, which is the centre of IMO in the Netherlands. It revealed that al-Nidjah, a women’s foundation at the mosque, was organizing an urs trip to Hijaz. Rooms were booked in a Birmingham luxury hotel for the participants of this five-day urs trip, during which two visits to Hijaz College were planned. In addition, a lottery ticket sponsored by the local slaughter house, Al-Baraka, would be drawn among the participants for next year’s urs trip. On other occasions these religious trips among the Surinamese included a visit to Southall, which contains the largest Asian shopping centre in the London area (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005, 207).

The fact that the pamphlet on the urs trip was distributed via this women’s network calls for some comment about the involvement of women in the Bareli repertoire or devotional Islam, more generally. Devotional Islam, particularly practices surrounding shrines, was considered a space where ‘women blossom best and most’ as the rites of passage celebrations there contribute to their social roles as mothers and wives (Ahlberg 1990, 249). Thus, it was not unusual for the urs trip – a devotional Islam event – to be organized by a women’s group. It indicates, however, that Ahlberg’s concern that migration was encouraging the ‘masculinization of religion’ and the loss of shrine-related practices (1990, 249) was premature. Women’s organizations, such as al-Nidjah, testify to a new trend among the followers of devotional Islam in migration communities.

The women, who came to the Hijaz College ceremony, were ethnically diverse – they hailed from Surinam, Pakistan, and Bangladesh. During the urs gathering,
men and women were housed separately, although segregation was not strictly observed. Some women, for example, set up makeshift shops outside the compound along with men and sold devotional material. While colourful South Asian dresses were visible during the urs, the Hijaz Community encouraged more conservative attire for women, such as long dresses like abaya and covering scarf hijab. My limited access prevents me from discussing specific female rituals around the mausoleum during the event, but male and female practices were equally, albeit separately, observed during the major ceremony at the shrine.

The urs invitation of the Al-Nidjah foundation, including the various offers for visitors, indicates the middle-class sensitivities of shrine visitors and links them to the broader objectives of the Hijaz Community, which in turn promotes a combination of ‘spirituality and material affluence’ as observed among these new Sufi followers and those elsewhere (Hasan and Mufid 2002). Thus, the blend of sacralized practices in local spaces and material affluence is related to the emerging religious imagination of these communities. As some observers have noted, deterritorialization is an ongoing phenomenon among ‘Hindustanis’. ‘Hindustan’, the common identity that South Asian Muslims share with Hindus, and based on a common belief that their ethnic identity is no longer based on their country of origin, reflects the multi-ethnic religious life developing in the countries where they have settled (Bal and Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005, 210). As the ‘myth of return’ among South Asian Muslims in the UK (Anwar 1979, 5) fades, the emergence of the lodge located in the centre of the UK reflects the fading of identities based on countries of origin. Through this new centre of religious practices a process of re-territorialization has begun where Muslim subjects are created in a novel spatial setting.

**Qawwali and the ambiguity of rituals**

Hazrat Sahib was subject to various Sufi influences, but his foremost affiliation with the Naqshbandi order defined his religious position, which he also transferred to his descendants. The Naqshbandi order is known for its sobriety to the extent that it is forbidden to recite dhikr in a loud voice. How then can the spiritual songs of qawwali be reconciled with the urs event for Hazrat Sahib? The sporadic adoption of Sufi music, such as qawwali, points to an adaptation of various modes of believing and forms of cultural practice within the group in the diaspora context. It further relates to my broader argument that new popular cultural forms have been introduced into Sufi practices of ‘religious scholar turned spiritual sheikh’. Members and followers of the Naqshbandi order justify these developments on the grounds of a general tolerance for music in Sufism. In the words of one participant ‘although it is not within the naqshbandi tradition, it is still part of the tassawuf, so that there should be no harm in organizing it’. It was the second time that qawwali had been organized at this event and it was meant to serve other practical needs, for example, the pooling of financial resources for the groups. The qawwali celebration was specifically used to collect funds for building projects.
Moreover it was a way of raising awareness about the urs gathering among other Muslims, mostly youth.

The ambiguities and uncertainties of the rituals around the mausoleum became more obvious in several workshops and during the large public gathering, jalsa, which concluded the urs programme. A wide range of ulama were invited to speak on these occasions, confirming the religious authority of Hazrat Sahib’s sons. The ulama gave powerful presentations of the Barelwi or ahl-e sunnat practices with regard to the position of Sufi holy men, auliya, or friends of Allah, in Islamic dogma. Significantly, the tone of these accounts was inspiring and without bias. The workshop topics included ‘self-control in dealing with the self (nafs)’ and ‘reality of an elemental creature (jinn)’, whereas the speeches covered topics such as why there was a need for a sheikh in contemporary society and the meaning of death for holy men or friends of Allah. The speakers reflected a broad spectrum of scholars, including traditional Barelwi ulama, British converts of African Sufis, and young British scholars who studied in traditional schools in Syria. The focus of the speeches and programmes, such as dhikr, ‘Islamic body-building’, midnight prayers, and nasheeds or spiritual songs was on educating youth in the traditional knowledge of Islam.

Thus, the aim of the rituals around the mausoleum and the teachings at the urs gatherings was to spread the message of traditional Sufi-based scholarship within Britain. The organization of the event and its attendance endorsed the scholarly and spiritual credentials of the heir to Hazrat Sahib. Furthermore, the religious authority of the latter was determined by the religious services that Hijaz College provides as well as its broader social engagements in Britain. At the same time, participation in the urs and making ziyara or pilgrimage for that was an event of spiritual enhancement. In the last section I deal with the changing nature of pilgrimage in the new contexts as reflected through the anecdotes of some visitors.

The Hijaz visitors

Discussions with visitors to the Hijaz College, mostly young people, revealed a more nuanced picture of people’s sense of belonging to the place. A number of common themes such as migration and dislocation, generational change, and the religious education of youth emerged in conversation with people affiliated with the Hijaz Community. A familiar topic was the educational structure of Hijaz Community. In the course of meetings with these young people, the conviction emerged that more religious-based education might help them adjust better to British society. As for the elders, some spoke about their concern for the next generation, and they consulted Hazrat Sahib on marriage choices for their children, how to make their children more disciplined, and advice about financial or work-related issues. They showed their ‘reverence’ for Hazrat Sahib’s guidance on these matters and for his ‘commitment to the ideal of training a future generation of Muslims in Britain’. Thus, the place was a centre of spiritual and educational activity and of guidance to visitors of the complex. The following accounts by three visitors clarify this:
Imran’s search for discipline

Imran, who belongs to a Hindustani family, was born and raised in Rotterdam. He told me about his ‘previous’ life:

I did all kinds of gek or weird things. Some years back, in 1998, my father took me to a pir . . . and told him ‘to remove shaitan from him’, but it didn’t help; shaitan and I went on liking each other. Then I did my military service but that didn’t help to discipline me either. Some years later Aqtab Sahib was in the Netherlands and my father and I went to one of his lectures. It was just meeting him and talking to him that attracted me; then I got a bai’t from his hands.

Ansari – a dedicated murid

Not unlike Imran’s story, first-generation elders had their own difficulties following the ‘experience of dislocation’. The guidance of the pir or saints traditionally plays a key role in socio-economic concerns, for example, or children’s upbringing and marriage. The migration experience serves to exacerbate these concerns. The narratives of these followers display the more traditional approach to the pir, that is, that of a murid or disciple. As Ansari, an elder of Pakistani origin who lives in The Hague, recalled:

I come to this place regularly during the urs; I came to the funeral of Hazrat Sahib and also when he was reburied here from Coventry. Everybody was touched with the fragrance coming out of the grave when it was opened for his reburial.

Ansari’s account shows the structures of traditional pir-murid, master-disciple relationships that developed between him and Hazrat Sahib. His account of the reburial of Hazrat Sahib was found in other accounts of mostly the first-generation follower. They also had a longer affiliation with the Hazrat Sahib and often recounted how Hazrat Sahib came to their dreams to guide them on different issues. Out of these descriptions one can understand the establishment of Hazrat Sahib’s charisma in the context of migration. On the other hand, Imran’s story emphasizes religious communication and guidance as the predominant feature of his ‘reverence’ for the place. Thus, with generational change we see a shift in the content of ‘reverence’: Hazrat Sahib acts progressively as a ‘guide’ for these young Muslims. This shift was even more evident in the accounts of another young visitor to Hijaz College.

Sohail – a new murid

Sohail was responsible for parking on the day of the urs. He was born and brought up in Bradford to a Pakistani family from Mirpur and works in a chemist shop
there. He recently took a *bai’t* or oath of allegiance to Hazrat Sahib, Faizul Aqtab. When I asked him about the need for a *pir* or guide, he replied: ‘I think that the way we Muslims live in this society, with all its opportunities for corruption, it is important to have someone behind you for your spiritual betterment’. This description of the world outside as ‘bad’ came from Hijaz College students (Asif 2006, 47) and was generally shared by Muslim youth and the older generation.

Sohail was keen to be educated at Hijaz College. At this point, however, he could not afford the fees and was saving to participate in classes in the following year. I asked him if he had experienced change after taking a *bai’t*.

I would say we were not a religious family – a normal religious one. We are still not, but what I see is that I have become a kind of regular person in my prayers and other duties; I also do the *wazifa* or extra prayer/meditation, that is given to me regularly and so it affects you in that sense. In bringing about this change, I received guidance from Hazrat Sahib.

**Conclusion**

This analysis of a pilgrimage to a shrine contributes to the study of Muslims in Europe both in terms of the specific case study and more broadly. It describes the development of Hazrat Sahib, the buried *sheikh*, as that of a ‘religious scholar’ turned ‘spiritual *sheikh*’. His ‘vision’ of a ‘mega educational project’ for the coming generations, his activism, the selflessness of his drive, and his moral standards accounted for his almost charismatic appeal for different generations of followers. Of no less significance, of course, is how this charisma-building process was maintained and continued by his sons, who continued the project, revitalizing it in their own image. They deemed it necessary to rebury Hazrat Sahib at Hijaz College and construct a mausoleum, thus making Hijaz College and the shrine the ‘centre of the UK’ for its followers.

The deep respect for Hazrat Sahib and his sons, and the educational activity at Hijaz College, jointly created an image for followers at the college, creating a new religious space. This sacralizing of place impacted on how religious authority is discussed in the study of Islam in Europe. Hazrat Sahib’s vision of an educational institution in the UK, where religious and secular education would be provided, was greeted with respect. In different accounts of the followers, a change is observed where the first generation of migrants attributes transcendental powers to Hazrat Sahib. However, many of the young followers spoke in respectful tones about Hazrat Sahib and the guidance they received from his sons, thus pointing more to a teacher-student relationship. We can speak of a shift, then, from a transcendental to a material-transcendental relationship towards the custodians of the shrine among the followers.

In this way the chapter shows how the sacralizing of place enabled the followers of devotional Islam, in this case at Hijaz College, to transform the space in accordance with the religious traditional they inherited. Thus, this case study illustrates the ‘reinvention of tradition’ in a new location, which involves both internal and
external changes. Hijaz College, as an example of the Barelwi or ahl-e sunnat tradition that is seen as socially more passive, actively engages in British social debate, primarily with respect to Muslim tribunals. On another plane, being in competition with the Islamist and Reformist groups at the public level, the members of the college adopted a more moderate approach to Sufi ritual practices. Nevertheless, they did not lose touch with the devotional nature of practices associated with shrine traditions, as witnessed in their eclecticism at the urs celebration, which is often reflected in the terms like ‘madhouse’ that they use for the pilgrimage place.

More generally, the chapter deals with the institutional foundation of Islam in Europe by highlighting pilgrimage and related devotional aspects of the Muslim religiosity. Such a focus refers to the other venues of institutionalization of Islam in Europe. The chapter challenges earlier notions of observers that the migration process favours Islamist and Reformist Islam in terms of institution building in the diaspora. The assumption behind such notions was that devotional Islam in new locations had lost its cultural embodiment due to migration and dislocation. The example of Hijaz College shows how devotional Islam can ‘reinvent’ itself in the diasporic context and become an instrument for religious renewal and social adaptation. A significant point for future studies would be to look at the contribution of pilgrimage and the related devotional practices to the debates concerning Muslim ‘integration’.

Notes

1 Hijaz College is referred to by several names, for example, Darbar-e alia Hijazia Naqshbandia, Hijaz Community, or Hijaz College Islamic University. I use Hijaz College or Hijaz Community here for convenience as these are the most common names for the Hijaz establishment.

2 I use the term ‘traditional Islam’ throughout the paper to distinguish a brand of Islam that acknowledges 1,400 years of tradition as authoritative alongside the teachings of the Qur’an and sunna and recognizes the contribution of Sufi spirituality, the legal interpretations of the ulama, and the four schools of law. The label ‘traditional Islam’ operates in opposition to neo-orthodoxies that deny the previous statements and assert that Muslims have degenerated since the first three generations (cf. Geaves 2007).

3 www.al-hijaz.co.uk (accessed 6 September 2007; site now discontinued).

4 In her otherwise interesting and informative thesis on Hijaz College, Iram Asif seems to support this, in my reading, by overreliance on the hagiographic accounts provided by the Hijaz College website to substantiate her arguments about the historical and spiritual background of the Hijaz founders (Asif 2006).

5 WIM was established in Mecca in 1972. Abdul Wahab Siddiqui played a more prominent role in the Dutch branch of WIM. See Lewis (1994, 81–9) and Landman (1992, 228–9).

6 Interview Ansari, see what follows, on 4 June 2004.

7 For a detailed study on recent discussions about the issue of sharia arbitration in Europe and North America, see Bowen 2009.

8 www.blessedsummit.com/ (accessed 17 December 2012; article no longer available here, but can be read on www.therevival.co.uk/forum/eventsannouncements/3888, accessed 24 August 2016).

9 The Surinam population in the Netherlands includes people of Indian origin, Muslims and Hindus or Hindustani, as well as Javanese and Afro-Surinamese. Here I use Surinamese or Hindustani to mean the Surinamese of Indian origin.
10 IMO, ‘International Muslim Organization’. This is the official name under which the Hijaz groups work in the Netherlands.
12 My interview with Saqib on 5 June 2004, see what follows.
14 My interview with Ansari on 4 June 2004.
15 My interview with Sohail on 5 June 2004.

References

11 Muslim pilgrims in Brittany
Pilgrimage, dialogue, and paradoxes

Manoël Pénicaud

Why do Muslims go on pilgrimage to Brittany (North-western France) every year at the end of July? What has drawn them to a little Catholic shrine dedicated to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus for the last sixty years? This unusual and not well-known phenomenon is a unique case of Muslim pilgrimage in Europe. First of all, it is totally different from the hajj to Mecca and from the ‘traditional’ visit to a saint’s shrine (Arabic: ziyara). Secondly, this is not originally a Muslim pilgrimage but a Christian one, where Muslims join Catholics for the purpose of inter-religious dialogue. In that sense, it is often considered as a ‘Christian-Muslim pilgrimage’. In that sense, it is often considered as a ‘Christian-Muslim pilgrimage’.2

The gathering takes place the fourth weekend of July. It opens with conferences in the village of Vieux-Marché and continues with rituals at the Sept-Saints hamlet, where the shrine is located. At the hamlet, we can distinguish among three main venues: firstly, the chapel which was built in the beginning of the eighteenth century. Secondly, there is the crypt over which the church is erected. Originally, the church was built over a Neolithic dolmen, and this old megalith was once considered as the Seven Sleepers’ Cave. Thirdly, there is the sacred fountain of the hamlet, which has seven holes. This is where an imam recites Sura (or Chapter) 18 of the Qur’an, called ‘The Cave’, and it has been the epicentre of this ‘Christian-Muslim’ gathering since 1961.

This interreligious pilgrimage was initiated in 1954 by Louis Massignon (1883–1962), a French Islamologist and teacher at the College de France in Paris. He invited immigrant Muslims to a local Catholic and Breton pilgrimage, called a ‘pardon’, dedicated to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. These saints are also known in Islam as ahl al-kahf (People of the Cave). In the two religions, the miraculous reawakening of the Sleepers – that I will present below – has an important eschatological meaning: their reawakening is interpreted as prefiguring the final resurrection, and Massignon wished to contribute to the spiritual ‘reconciliation’ between Muslims and Christians to prepare the final gathering of the Last Judgement. More than sixty years after its founding, the pilgrimage still exists and is considered to be one of the earliest attempts at Christian-Muslim dialogue in France.

This chapter will examine the origin and development of the interreligious pilgrimage with particular attention to Muslims’ attendance, motivations, and discourses. The event was created to strengthen Christian-Muslim relations, but
how does the pilgrimage facilitate or not facilitate interreligious dialogue? Here it is necessary to specify that the pilgrimage has two aspects: on the one hand, it appears as a Christian-Muslim gathering, but on the other hand, it is a local Catholic ‘pardon’. These aspects follow different ritual practices and promote their own perspectives, which lead to different points of view concerning the purpose of the pilgrimage. How do these two aspects coexist and interact at the pilgrimage site? Whereas my study seeks to throw light on a unique Muslim-Christian dialogue initiative through joint pilgrimage, I also examine what this case can reveal about ‘Islam in France’ and the ‘Islam of France’ (Zeghal 2005).

From a theoretical perspective, this chapter contributes to the study of sanctuaries and holy places shared by believers from different monotheistic religions in the European and Mediterranean contexts. Several recent studies show that religious boundaries are often crossed and shrines become shared because of the power and efficiency of holy sites officially affiliated with only one religion (Albera and Couroucli 2012; Albera, Pénicaud, and Marquette 2015; Barkan and Barkey 2014; Bowman 2012; Depret and Dye 2012; Valtchinova 2010; Zarcone and Hobert 2017). This Breton pilgrimage is, however, unique because of its component of interreligious dialogue. Consequently, this research not only contributes to Pilgrimage Studies, but also to the emerging field of Interreligious Studies (Cornille 2013; Hedges 2013; Lamine 2004; Leirvik 2014).

My approach is based on a diachronic analysis from the 1950s onwards and on ethnographic fieldwork from 2003 to 2010. In addition, I have had access to the private archives of several protagonists including those of the founder of the pilgrimage, Louis Massignon. This documentation, composed of hundreds of letters, confidential notes, newspapers, budgets, and so on, permitted me to examine the background of this interreligious experimentation.3

**Historical perspectives: the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage foundation**

Louis Massignon is often considered one of the greatest French scholars in Islamic studies of the twentieth century. He held the chair of ‘Muslim Sociography’ at the *College de France* in Paris from 1926 to 1954, and he dedicated his whole life to studying and understanding Islam. He was a Catholic, but few people know that he was secretly ordained as a priest in 1950, in the Catholic Melkite Rite, by a special dispensation from Pope Pius XII. When he died in 1962, Ibrahim Madkour said that Massignon was ‘the greatest Christian among Muslims and the greatest Muslim among Christians’.4 In 1951, Massignon learnt of a local Catholic pilgrimage in Brittany dedicated to the Seven Sleepers of Ephesus. At the time, he was doing comparative research on these saints in Islam and Christianity (Massignon 1954–1963, 2009).5 According to the Christian legend, the Seven Sleepers were Christian youths who, at the time of the persecutions in the third century, fled to a cave near the ancient city of Ephesus (Asia Minor), where they were immured alive by the Roman Emperor Decius before they fell into a miraculous sleep for almost two centuries.6 They then awoke in the middle of the fifth century without
knowing that the Roman Empire had become Christian. They were discovered but returned to sleep, awaiting the Last Judgement. This miracle was seen to have an eschatological meaning because it attested to the resurrection of the body. The legend became very popular and spread throughout the entire Christian world. Eventually, the Seven Sleepers myth also came to Brittany in North-western France (Massignon 1992).

In the seventh century, this narrative passed into Islam. The Seven Sleepers story is central in Chapter 18 of the Qur’an, which is called ‘The Cave’, but here the sleepers are named ‘Companions of the Cave’, or ashab al-kahf. The narrative in the Qur’an is similar to the Christian version but shorter and less detailed. For instance, the Qur’anic version gives an imprecise number of sleepers (three, five, or seven). Moreover, they have a dog that protects them during their sleep (often associated with al-Khidr, ‘the Green One’, a great mystical figure revered in Islam). Their sleep is held to have lasted three hundred years plus nine, and their location is not specified. This last point can explain why many sites in the Islamic world, from Andalusia to China, are considered as the original and miraculous Muslim sleepers’ cave, generating local forms of narratives and devotions (Zarcone and Loubes forthcoming). Sura 18 is known to Muslims as a very beneficial text to read. Several hadiths attributed to Muhammad recommend believers to read this Sura every week: ‘If anyone recites sura al-Kahf on Friday, a light will shine brightly for him till the next Friday’, or ‘Whoever recites “The Cave” as it was revealed will have light on the Day of Resurrection’. With respect to the interpreted eschatological significance of the Seven Sleepers’ miraculous sleep, Massignon called this Sura the ‘Apocalypse of Islam’ (Massignon 2009).

The purpose of this chapter is, however, not to explain when and how the story of the Seven Sleepers spread and developed but to study the contemporary effects and representations of its presence in France. The 1950s saw the end of French colonialism in Northern Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, and Algeria). Earlier in his life, Massignon had been involved in the colonial system but turned progressively into a supporter of decolonization. The transition to independence for the French protectorates (Morocco and Tunisia) was much less conflictual than in Algeria, where a bitter conflict developed between 1954 and 1962. Seeking platforms for ‘reconciliation’ Massignon chose the Seven Sleepers as a link between the parties, addressing both political and religious issues between Christians and Muslims, Christianity and Islam. Linking up with an already established Catholic pilgrimage centred on the Seven Sleepers tradition, he decided to organize the first Christian-Muslim pilgrimage in Brittany in July 1954 ‘for a serene peace in Algeria’, as he said. As an interreligious dialogue entrepreneur, in the following years he invited Muslim workers from Paris as there were no Muslims in Brittany. In addition to drawing attention to the political relations between France and Algeria, the initiative was a way to integrate Muslim immigrants in French society, where they were not well accepted. Massignon was an adept of the non-violence attitude of Gandhi’s Satyagraha. He saw a joint pilgrimage between Muslims and Christians as a spiritual and political method to promote peace during the war in Algeria. This war divided French society, and the joint pilgrimage between
Christians and Muslims was a peaceful way to condemn the war and to hold out a hand to Muslims living in France. In this sense, the pilgrimage played a political role in the process of decolonization.

Massignon worked to make known his Christian-Muslim pilgrimage initiative in the whole of France as well as abroad. His private archives reveal that he wrote dozens of letters each day to promote it to intellectual colleagues and to politicians (several ministers and even the president of the French Republic, Charles de Gaulle). He also tried to mobilize the senior clergy of the Catholic Church because he had many connections in the Vatican. Last but not least, he invited the media to publicize this unusual pilgrimage in Brittany. From 1954 to 1962, many reports were published in newspapers as well as on radio and television (Pénicaud 2016). All these initiatives contributed to position Massignon as an interreligious entrepreneur working on the ‘dialogue’ of religions even before the ecumenical initiative launched by the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965).

To reshape the already existing pilgrimage to the Breton and Catholic shrine into a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage site, Massignon invented several new rituals. From 1955, Muslims started reciting the *Fatiha* (the first Sura of the Qur’an) in front of the dolmen located under the chapel in the hamlet. The same year, Massignon added a Christian Melkite mass to be performed before the Latin one on Sunday morning. His aim was not to convert Muslims to Christianity but to sensitize them to the Christian liturgy in the Arabic language. However, contrary to its interreligious purpose, this celebration – which persisted until 1983 – was perceived as ‘strange’ by the local Breton people.

Another example of interreligious collaboration occurred in 1959, during the Catholic procession to the traditional bonfire (Breton: *tantad*) lit in the centre of the hamlet after the Saturday evening mass. Muslim pilgrims joined the cortege, with a special banner on which the first part of the *Ave Maria* was written in Arabic. This banner had been blessed during a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage to Lourdes in 1958. At the Sept-Saints, it was carried along with the Catholic ones until the middle of the 1970s. Massignon continued to innovate, and in 1961 he created a ritual in which the Qur’anic Chapter 18 is central. On this occasion, he asked his friend *Shaykh* Amadou Hampate Ba to recite ‘The Cave’ at the sacred Fountain just after the Sunday mass. This sequence has become the most emblematic ritual of the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage until today.

Despite such innovative rituals, this pilgrimage is not a syncretic phenomenon. There is no fusion between Christianity and Islam giving birth to a third belief. Throughout and after the pilgrimage, believers keep their own religions, and religious borders are not transgressed. My observation here coincides with the pilgrims’ points of view. Based on my conversations with many of the pilgrims, I think it is correct to define them as ‘anti-syncretists’ in line with Stewart and Shaw, who define the concept of ‘anti-syncretism’ as ‘the antagonism to religious synthesis shown by agents concerned with the defence of religious boundaries’ (Stewart and Shaw 1994, 7). In Brittany, participants in the pilgrimage refuse categorically the idea of ‘syncretism’. To them, syncretism is a pejorative word, synonymous with impurity and depreciative mix (Albera 2008).
Figure 11.1 Louis Massignon reciting the Fatiha in front of the dolmen, 1957.
Source: Photo by Louis-Claude Duchesne and courtesy of Janine Duchesne
Massignon died in November 1962, a few months after the ratification of the ‘Evian Accords’, which ended the war of independence in Algeria. Nevertheless, some of his followers maintained the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage in Brittany. After a troubled period of transition, it increased in terms of attendance due to the stimulating context of the Second Vatican Council and its opening up to other religions. In 1967, around sixty Muslims joined the pilgrimage, which was a ‘record’, and even the local Catholic clergy, who had not been very cooperative during Massignon’s lifetime, developed interreligious experiments. For instance, in 1970 the local Catholic priest of Vieux-Marché proposed two processions, one for Christians and one for Muslims, joining at the fountain, where they would shake hands before the recitation of ‘The Cave’ from the Qur’an. This choreography was conceived to symbolize the gathering visually and spatially. Moreover, from 1967, debates were organized in the context of the first interreligious dialogue initiatives after the Second Vatican Council (Lamine 2004; Pénicaud 2016). Despite these innovations the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage declined in the 1980s with the aging of the last supporters of Massignon. In contrast, the second element of the pilgrimage – the Breton Catholic ‘pardon’ – was never interrupted. However, in the 1990s the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage was reborn. It is to this new phase in the Seven Sleepers pilgrimage as an interreligious dialogue gathering that I turn, with a particular focus on the participation of Muslims.

Figure 11.2 Muslim pilgrims in the courtyard of the chapel, 1967.
Source: Photo by Louis-Claude Duchesne and courtesy of Janine Duchesne
The revival of the pilgrimage: Muslim attendance and motivations

In 1991, a new local association revived the Christian-Muslim gathering initiated by Massignon. Named ‘Seven Sleepers’ Springs’, Sources des Sept Dormants, it began organizing interreligious debates based around the values of dialogue, peace, coexistence, and social cohesion. In France the question of Islam was growing in the public debate (Zeghal 2005). Paradoxically, the ‘reawakening’ of the pilgrimage was mainly launched by non-believers. Some organizers were members of the Communist municipality, which was much more involved in this new interreligious initiative than the Catholic clergy. Although still linked to the interreligious pilgrimage, the aim was now more broadly humanistic and political in a secularized context. In other words, the rituals seemed to become more ‘relational’ (to allow human beings to interact) than strictly devotional (to try to interact with the divine). This ‘relational approach’ is a fundamental characteristic of contemporary interreligious enterprises according to Oddbjørn Leirvik (2014), and this reorientation is an important difference compared with Massignon’s period.

The pilgrimage has become an arena for dialogue between Christian and Muslim speakers to discuss religious and social themes. Among the many topics that have been debated are ‘Europe and the Muslim World. A Necessary Dialogue’ (1992), ‘Hospitality, Social Cohesion and Spirituality’ (2002), ‘Conversion in a Multicultural World’ (2008), ‘The Universal Fraternity’ (2011), and ‘Music and Sharing: The Crossing of Christian and Muslim Spiritualities’ (2015). The conferences always take place on Saturday afternoon in the village of Vieux-Marché, four kilometres from the Sept-Saints hamlet. Despite being intended as a meeting place for Muslims and Christians to discuss topics evolving from the new French social realties, most of the audience – around two hundred people – is Catholic and retired. Moreover, most of them are not from the local area but come from far away. Local people are not interested in the intellectual debates and are not concerned with Christian-Muslim topics.

However, the most significant point is that very few Muslims (around ten) are present during the conference, and most of them come from big cities (Paris and Rennes). These Muslims can be characterized as being liberal, ‘open-minded’, and familiar with interreligious dialogue. How can we explain this low attendance on the part of the Muslims? Although there is a Muslim community in the nearby little town of Lannion, no Muslims from there attend the pilgrimage. To them, the event remains a Catholic gathering organized for Catholics to meet with Muslims, but it is not for Muslims. When questioned on the issue, the Muslims whom I met in the mosque of Lannion replied that they had not really been invited by the organizers. On the other hand, members of the association Sources des Sept Dormants tried to justify the low Muslim attendance by arguing that many go to Morocco, Algeria, or Tunisia during the summer. Yet this explanation cannot explain the general lack of interest among the Muslims; in France, Muslims are less involved in interreligious dialogue than Christians. Most Muslims are indifferent to these questions and do not consider them as integrative factors (Lamine 2004), whereas more orthodox
Muslim pilgrims in Brittany

Muslims often reject these kinds of initiatives, fearing they represent a disguised and subtle evangelization project. This fear of proselytization is an example of the misunderstandings concerning interreligious dialogue in general.

However, the younger generation of Muslims displays more interest in this interreligious pilgrimage. Every year, some young people come to find a space for speaking, discussion, and dialogue. They often ‘assume’ their Muslim faith more than their parents, and they need to conciliate their ‘double culture’ in the French society. To them, this is also a way to get to know the Breton and Catholic traditions. They often know about the Islamic *ashab al-kahf* but are not familiar with the Christian Seven Sleepers. In the words of Anne-Sophie Lamine – in my translation from French – these young Muslims have quite a strong religious identity and do not suffer from social failure. [They] see in interfaith relations a possible implementation of religious plurality, a possibility to give a place and relevance to religion in society, but also to gain recognition of their religion, and to improve its negative image.

(Lamine 2005b, 135–6)

More educated than the previous generations, they want to rehabilitate Islam and their rights as French citizens. At the same time, these young people are not involved in the organization of the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage.

Christian-Muslim couples form another category of pilgrims. They experience the general problems of interreligious interaction in their everyday lives. Some come to talk about their way of living together and to meet other couples who are in a similar situation. They used to remain relatively discreet during the pilgrimage, but in 2009, the organizers of the conference gave them space in the programme to speak in public.

On the Saturday evening of the pilgrimage, all the participants go to the Sept-Saints hamlet for a mass in the chapel. Most are Breton Catholics, although the few Muslims who arrive at the hamlet remain outside the chapel during the mass, except for the guests of honour, such as members of the association *Sources des Sept Dormants*, speakers of the conference, and the imam who will officiate on Sunday reciting the Qur’an. The priest giving the sermon always has a personal link with the Muslim world. In his sermon, he speaks about dialogue with Muslims and refers to the Seven Sleepers narrative. The mass held inside is wired for sound so that the Muslims remaining outside can hear the speech and liturgy. To them, it is often the first time that they attend a Catholic ceremony. After the mass, the traditional procession – with crosses, banners, and a statue of Mary – leaves the chapel to reach the hamlet’s square – called ‘Louis Massignon’ – where the bonfire (*tantad*) is lit.

On Sunday morning, at the end of the Great Mass, the same priest calls on the assembly to partake in another procession to the Seven Saints spring, three hundred metres away, where the main Muslim ritual of the pilgrimage takes place. There, an imam invites the Muslims to join him in reciting the *Fatiha* and then Sura ‘The Cave’. Surrounded by priests and organizers, Muslims are now at the
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centre of the gathering. This is the emblematic moment of the Christian-Muslim pilgrimage and everybody listens with attention, sympathy, mystical attitude, or curiosity. I must emphasise that this is not a ‘syncretic’ prayer but an interreligious ritual observed by Muslims and non-Muslims for the purpose of dialogue.

The theme of the visibility of Islam is important to the understanding of this pilgrimage. If the visibility of Islam in public space is a problem in the French society in general, it is on the contrary valued during the pilgrimage as a kind of ‘positive visibility’. This attitude raises, however, questions about the ‘display’ and ‘spectacularization’ of Muslim attendance (Lamine 2005a). The archives of the pilgrimage that I have studied reveal that since Massignon’s time, the presence of Muslims has been ‘highlighted’ to underline the pilgrimage’s Christian-Muslim dimension, but this was not well received locally during the war in Algeria. Today few Muslims make themselves visible through what we may call ‘dress markers’, whereas the organizers of the pilgrimage ‘highlight’ them by placing Muslim guests at the first ranks in the church during the Catholic mass. As already mentioned, during the ceremony at the fountain, Muslim pilgrims are invited to join the imam in the middle of the clearing, and this is a moment that many photographers want to capture. Hence, Muslims become the ‘icons’ of the interreligious pilgrimage and dialogue initiative.

Some archives (letters and press) show that taking pictures during the pilgrimage rites – except for the journalists – was pejoratively associated with ‘tourism’. It was perceived as an improper gesture of ‘curiosity’ in contrast to the supposed ‘sincere’ and ‘authentic’ interreligious devotion of the pilgrims. Today,

Figure 11.3 Christian-Muslim gathering in a clearing around the sacred fountain, 2009.
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this distinction is fading away. The visibility of Muslims is still pivotal, but everyone can photograph or film this choreography as he or she pleases.

Despite efforts to promote the pilgrimage, most French Muslims do not know about it, apart from a few curious participants or activists engaged in interreligious dialogue. In addition, I must mention the non-presence of ‘official Islam’, in particular the Regional Council of the Muslim Faith (CRCM) in Brittany (founded in 2003). Catholic clergy consider the absence of such a significant representative institution in the pilgrimage as problematic. Its only partner is the association Sources des Sept Dormants that does not have a real and direct relationship with the ‘Islam of France’, which should be officially represented by the CRCM.

The asymmetry between Christian and Muslim participation in the pilgrimage raises questions with regard to the pilgrimage being an interreligious dialogue project and to the spontaneity of Muslims’ attendance. Certainly some Muslims attend spontaneously out of curiosity or interest, but most of them belong to a certain ‘elite’ who are involved in the dialogue or are specifically invited by the organizers. This lack of spontaneous attendance by Muslims obliges the organizers to send out invitations to legitimate the pilgrimage’s ‘Christian-Muslim dialogue’ approach. The consequence is that Islam becomes the ‘invited religion’ to an ‘invented pilgrimage’. The lack of genuine and spontaneous support from various groups of Muslims in particular, but also from Christians, makes the pilgrimage as an interreligious dialogue project rather fragile. Yet, this can change if more people from both sides become actively involved.

Figure 11.4 An imam reciting the Sura ‘The Cave’, 2009.
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Ambiguous dialogue

The Seven Sleepers pilgrimage is an event that still generates innovation. Since 2006, a French Muslim, who is a member of the association *Sources des Sept Dormants*, has initiated a new ritual in which he offers the pilgrims dates and milk. These are, according to the Qur’an, Heaven’s food. The handing out of the food takes place after the solemn recitation of the Sura ‘The Cave’. Actually this kind of ritual is not specific to this pilgrimage because it is also performed during other Christian-Muslim dialogue events (Lamine 2004). The main intention is to thank Breton people for their hospitality.

Commensality is always presented as the strength of the pilgrimage. As early as 1956, Massignon introduced a *mechoui* (North African meal) after the mass. Intended for all the pilgrims, in practice it was mainly for the ‘visitors’, both Christians and Muslims, and most of them from Paris, because the local people had their meals with their families. Then, in the 1990s the *mechoui* was revived to include Muslims in the pilgrimage community, and the initiative was successful for many years. However, my investigation revealed that since 2008, the meat was no longer certified halal (‘licit’ according to the Qur’an). By then, the organization of the meal had been taken over by another local association called ‘People of the Sept-Saints’ (Breton: *Tud ar Seiz Sants*). The members’ justification for not offering halal meat was the difficulty in finding a certified halal slaughterhouse. Upon further investigation, I found that this was not correct since there is a certificated halal butcher less than thirty kilometres away. The following year, things had not changed, and due to my inquiry, some participants of the pilgrimage started questioning the organizers about this inconvenient lacuna. Even the imam, who comes every year, was unaware of the facts. It is thus fair to say, I suggest, that Muslim needs were not well respected during the pilgrimage. As a consequence, some Muslims did not come the following year.

The issue of the halal meat demonstrates a serious ambiguity in this invented interreligious gathering: Muslims are welcome guests, but they are not very well hosted. Consequently, the positive hospitality emphasized by the promoters must be relativized. The hospitality is, in fact, contradicted by the hostility towards Muslims, which was expressed by some of the local participants. My fieldwork revealed a latent Islamophobia and a local resistance to Muslims, who are perceived as the radical ‘other’. Despite the intent to promote values of dialogue during the pilgrimage, many local people conflate Islam and ‘terrorism’, and some of them are afraid of losing control of their local pilgrimage and chapel. For example, a local inhabitant whom I interviewed feared that the chapel would become a mosque in the future. Despite the inclusiveness constantly promoted by the organizers, there is evidence of local resistance towards the global scope of the gathering. My explanation is that the local and parochial ‘pardon’ has become a global and highly symbolic event with universal scope. As a result, there is a kind of cleavage between the two spheres. This divergence reminds us of the point made by Jonathan Z. Smith about religion, ‘Here, There, and Anywhere’, which has been underlined by Oddbjørn Leirvik (Smith 2004; Leirvik 2014). The pilgrimage of the Seven Sleepers not only concerns the locality (‘Here’), but also the
civic level (‘There’), and a more universal and global framework (‘Anywhere’). This combination of different scales involves a matrix of ambiguities.

The Christian-Muslim organizers of the Seven Sleepers pilgrimage promote the *vivre-ensemble* (‘living together’), which has become a kind of meta-value in the interreligious system (Lamine 2004). The weekend is supposed to be a time characterized by equality and fraternity in faith, echoing the communitas concept in the Turners’ pilgrimage model. In the 1970s, the anthropologists Victor and Edith Turner defined communitas as a temporary and alternative spatio-temporal system opposed to the ‘structure’ of the society (Turner and Turner 1978). Building on the rites of passage theory of Arnold Van Gennep, they suggested that pilgrims would enter into the communitas governed by specific values. This representation would correspond to the ideal and ‘official’ vision promoted by the Christian-Muslim organizers, who are the inheritors of Massignon’s utopia (Pénicaud 2011; Pénicaud forthcoming). Yet, in fact, my fieldwork demonstrates that this pilgrimage is also a place of competition among pilgrims, where social and religious statuses are still played out. Moreover, the gathering generates tensions and Islamophobic reactions within the local community. These observations confirm Eade and Sallnow’s (1991) metaphor of ‘arena’ to define the pilgrimage phenomenon, not as a harmonized field characterized by communitas but as a space of competition where social differences are still profoundly at work, as in the rest of the society. As I have shown, Islamic traditions are not so well accepted despite the good intentions expressed concerning hospitality, peace, and coexistence.

Another point that must be underlined involves the heterogeneity of the Seven Sleepers pilgrimage. Nowadays, it attracts not only Christians and Muslims but also people with very different intentions, practices, and representations. Since the 1990s revival, humanist agnostics for example, attend the event, and from 2005 a non-believer has officially participated in the dialogue conference with Christians and Muslims. He also gives a speech during the Sunday celebration at the fountain. This ‘openness’ towards people of no faith is an attempt to overcome interreligious differences and promote intercultural dialogue, which is perceived to be less sensitive or contentious than interreligious activities. Furthermore, it is important to mention the more discreet presence of other categories of pilgrims such as Neo-Celts, Neo-Druids, Neo-Shamans, dowsers, or magnetic healers, who venerate the dolmen under the chapel. Drawing on another metaphor proposed by Eade and Sallnow, this pilgrimage centre appears to be an ‘empty vessel’ that pilgrims fill with the meanings of their choice, even when they seem to be contradictory (Eade and Sallnow 1991).

**Conclusion**

In the context of Muslim pilgrimages in Europe, the Seven Sleepers gathering in Brittany is a unique case. Indeed, this chapter demonstrates that this multidimensional and complex phenomenon is a Christian-Muslim pilgrimage invented in the 1950s. Its founder, Louis Massignon, wished to ‘reconcile’ Islam and Christianity
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to prepare – according to him – the eschatological and final reconciliation of humanity before the Last Judgement. Yet from its beginning the pilgrimage has been influenced by political and geopolitical circumstances: the war in Algeria, the decolonization process, the Gulf War, racist conflict in France during the 1990s, the attacks on the Twin Towers in New York in September 2001, the Iraq War, the conflict in Syria, the attacks in Paris, and so on. Nowadays, Massignon’s slogan ‘for a serene peace’ is still valorized to justify the spiritual and civic necessity of this unusual pilgrimage as an antidote to the growing fear of the Other.

More than sixty years after its invention and establishment, the multifaceted phenomenon reveals some difficulties and challenges with regard to Christian-Muslim dialogue in general. Despite good intentions to bring Christians and Muslims together in Brittany, Muslim attendance is very low. In practice, the pilgrimage is led by Catholics with the intention of meeting Muslims and developing interreligious dialogue, but they are unable to attract many Muslims. One explanation, I suggest, is that the pilgrimage is isolated from the Muslim community network in France and, therefore, from ‘official’ Islam in the country. It is animated by dynamics that drive the French society and ‘Islam of France’ in general despite the unanimous quest of social and peaceful coexistence.

This case study also shows that interaction with ‘the religious other’ can sometimes lead to hostility, the antonym of hospitality according to their common etymology (Latin: hospes). I must emphasize that this hostility is not extensive, and it concerns mainly local people who are worried by Islam in general. Some are afraid that the chapel of the Seven Sleepers will become a mosque, and they perceive Islam as an ‘intrusion’. This kind of fear is growing in the context of geopolitical crisis in the Middle East, the influx of refugees, and terrorist attacks. Yet, these developments also generate interest in the Seven Sleepers pilgrimage and the relevance of interreligious dialogue more generally. In other words, there is potential for change in various directions.

The case study reveals that unlike certain contemporary cases observed in the Mediterranean area (Albera and Couroucli 2012; Barkan and Barkey 2014; Albera et al. 2015; Zarcone and Hobert 2017), the interreligious interactions in Brittany are neither popular nor spontaneous but quite artificial. The pilgrimage is elaborated by an elite, according to an intellectual perspective of interreligious dialogue, which paradoxically, also produces the opposite effect, such as local resistance and even Islamophobia. However, the pilgrimage is undoubtedly a place for experimentation and bricolage involving ritual, liturgy, and peripheral initiatives. Indeed, many artistic activities during the pilgrimage are supported to bridge cultural differences, such as a lecture on Islamic calligraphy and a concert by a Christian-Muslim couple. People from other religions and even non-believers are invited to the debates.

Over the years, therefore, the event is becoming more a locus of dialogue among multiple groups than a place of devotion. Is the pilgrimage changing from an interreligious to an intercultural one? This is a question we cannot resolve here, but what is remarkable is the pilgrimage’s vitality. Despite the crises, tensions, and ambiguities, it continues changing and adapting year by year.
Notes

1 In interreligious studies, there is a terminological debate about which adjective is the more appropriate: ‘interfaith’, ‘interreligious’ or ‘transreligious’. In this chapter, I will use the more general and acknowledged term ‘interreligious’.

2 This chapter was elaborated in the laboratory of excellence LabexMed – Human and Social Sciences at the Heart of Interdisciplinarity for the Mediterranean with the reference 10-LabX-0090. It is a continuation of my PhD on this subject (2003–2010).

3 Most of the 1950s data about the founding of the pilgrimage comes from the private archives of Louis Massignon, kept by his family until 2012, when they were transferred to the Bibliothèque Nationale de France in Paris.

4 Tribute to Louis Massignon delivered in Cairo by Ibrahim Madkour, president of the Academy of the Arabic Language, 20 December 1962.

5 Massignon knew about the story in the Islamic tradition through his research on the Muslim mystic Mansour Al-Hallaj (Massignon 1922).

6 How long this sleep lasted varies depending on legend versions.

7 Among the Christian sources of the myth are the homilies of Jacobus of Sarug (fifth – sixth century), De Gloria Martyrium by Gregory of Tours (sixth century), and The Golden Legend by Jacobus of Voragine (thirteenth century).

8 The dog’s name is not mentioned in the Qur’an, but Islamic scholars and commentators named him ‘Katmir’.

9 Al-Bayhaqi, Sunan Al-Kubra, Number 5856.

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