

Experiencing the Hajj in an Age of Change: Tuning the Emotions in Several Hajj Accounts of Pilgrims Travelling from Morocco and Egypt in the First Half of the Twentieth Century

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The second half of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century were times of remarkable change around the world, also for Muslims (Gelvin and Green 2014). Revolutionary innovations in terms of steam, print, and empire had an effect on the hajj, the annual Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca and its surroundings (Chiffolleau 2015). Steamships and trains increasingly replaced the Egyptian and Syrian caravans, transporting larger numbers of pilgrims to Mecca from more remote locations such as South and South-East Asia and Morocco in a safer, cheaper, and faster way. Colonial empires such as Britain, France, and the Netherlands monitored, regulated, and, at times, prohibited the hajj journey for their Muslim subjects. International conferences imposed a period of quarantine on all pilgrims returning from the Arabian Peninsula. The publication and distribution of narrative and visual representations of the hajj in travelogues, guides, and photos were part of a global circulation of images and ideas, facilitated by cheap print technologies. These and other global processes and discourses inevitably also had an impact on the region of the Hijaz as well as on the regimes of governance there—first that of the Sharifs under the Ottomans and subsequently that of the new Saūdi rulers from the mid-1920s onwards.

Amidst these locally impacting global processes, Arab pilgrims travelled to Mecca in order to perform the hajj, which they often recorded in travelogues, as many of their predecessors had done. This chapter draws on a small set of these travelogues that were written in Arabic by pilgrims travelling through or from Egypt in the first four decades of the twentieth century in order to analyse their experience of the hajj. More specifically, I am interested in how these pilgrims assessed some of the great changes of their time, especially the obligation of quarantine for returning hajj pilgrims and the governance of the Hijaz by ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd (or Ibn Sa‘ūd). I also try to gauge their feelings about these changes—however elusive emotions might be to an historian.

The travelogues referred to in this chapter comprise a set of travel accounts that circulated in manuscript-form in the anti-colonial and revivalist context of a Moroccan Sufi order in Fes at the turn of the century. These texts describe the 1904 hajj journey of shaykh Muḥammad ibn ‘Abd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī, the leader of the Kattānī order at that time, and his party, as well as the journey of his cousin, hadith-scholar and biographer Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Kattānī and his son Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī (al-‘Amrānī 2010; al-Kattānī 2005).¹ The chapter also draws upon several texts originating in Cairo and dating to the first half of the twentieth century. These texts are highly diverse, ranging from a travelogue by the conservative journal editor Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Shādhilī published in 1904 (al-Shādhilī 1322AH); an account from the modernist travel writer Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī, who was part of the Egyptian ruler’s hajj entourage in 1909 (al-Batanūnī n.d.); an account of poet and translator ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ṣabrī from 1923 (Ṣabrī 1342AH); a travelogue written by the wealthy retiree Muṣṭafā Muḥammad al-Rā‘ī in 1931 (al-Rā‘ī n.d.), published by the ‘Azamiyya order (a reformist Sufi order established in the second decade of the twentieth century); a text by the journalist Muḥy al-Dīn Riḍā (nephew of Islamic reformer Rashīd Riḍā) in 1935 (Riḍā 1353AH/1935); and one by the legal official Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ḥabīb in 1938 (Ḥabīb 2014).

This chapter explores the diversity of hajj experiences articulated by pilgrims who encountered the new contexts of steam transportation, quarantine and Saudi governance. To be sure, many more travelogues were written in Arabic during this period (as well as in other languages)—as had been written before and would be written later—and studying these might reveal more variation of the hajj experience in relation to these changes. This chapter ends with a reflection on this variety, and relates it to the role the genre of hajj travelogues might play in preparing pilgrims for particular emotional states and ways of interpreting their experiences of the hajj.

1 Elusive Experiences and Emotions

Pilgrimage—leaving one’s familiar and familial environment behind in order to make a long-awaited journey to a place filled with meaning—is likely to

1 The two groups of the Kattānī family did not travel together, but occasionally met during their journey (in Medina) (al-‘Amrānī 2010, 223; al-Kattānī 2005, 153). The travelogue written by the son, Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī, seems not to have been published independently. Large parts are quoted in footnotes in the published edition of his father’s travel text, however. For this chapter, I relied on these citations.

constitute a very special experience that typically arouses intense feelings (on emotions and travelling, see Robinson and Picard 2016; El-Sayed 2016). Feelings and emotions have often been acknowledged as a central mode for believing, accessing, and practicing Islam, which includes performing the pilgrimage to Mecca (Bauer 2017; Gade 2007).² Despite this, scholars of the hajj have largely overlooked the experiential and emotional dimension of the hajj and the ways these experiences and emotions have been shaped and articulated.

Barbara Metcalf's 1990 chapter on South Asian accounts of the hajj makes clear that modern hajj travelogues are particularly rich sources for studying individual religious experiences and 'changing patterns of religious sensibilities' in a world of great transition (Metcalf 1990). Similarly, in his 2015-article 'The hajj as its own undoing: Infrastructure and integration on the Muslim journey to Mecca,' Nile Green discusses a corpus of modern South Asian hajj travelogues to argue how industrial travel radically transformed the experiences of and writings about the hajj journey for these Muslim authors—from a journey through a Muslim world to an itinerary through 'a world governed by ideas, peoples and technologies of non-Muslim provenance' (Green 2015, 193). Building on Metcalf and Green, this chapter considers two formative changes in the early modern international contexts and in the Hijaz by turning to Arabic hajj travelogues from that era in order to gain insights into how the changes discussed above impacted the experiences and emotions of pilgrims.

It is not always easy to distil pilgrims' experiences from hajj travelogues. This is particularly the case for discerning emotions, as Sylvia Chiffolleau and John Slight acknowledge somewhat regretfully in their histories of the hajj in colonial times (Chiffolleau 2015, 16; Slight 2015, 247). Evidently, it is impossible for historians to retrieve emotions themselves, since they can only study the mediated articulation of an emotional experience (Matt 2014, 43). So, when analysing pilgrims' experiences and emotions, this chapter has to carefully draw on narrative descriptions of feelings (anger, sadness, disappointment) and expressions that suggest an emotional experience (such as crying or laughing). In addition, it is also difficult to extract the experiential dimension, because the accounts discussed here do not always overtly display a great degree of emotionality and introspection. Dwight Reynold's analysis of pre-modern Arabic autobiographies and their particular ways of being introspective and self-

2 For the interior prerequisites of the hajj, for example, one might think of Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) and his discussion of the importance of the right intention (*niyya*). For a discussion of these ideas in relation to the entering of the state of *iḥrām*, see Peters (1994, 114–116).

interpreting is helpful in this respect.³ Reynolds refers to common practices—quoting poems, describing dreams, relating the emotional state of others, or describing certain actions (such as visiting a saint’s tomb to wish for success)—as alternative means to represent a writer’s emotional state (Reynolds 2001, 87–99). Reynolds’ analysis suggests historians ought to be attentive to alternative and subtle markers that signal an emotional response to something. Similarly, Barbara Rosenwein recommends historians to not only pay attention to overt emotions to things ‘assessed as valuable or harmful (for it is about such things that people express emotions)’ (Rosenwein 2010, 11), but also to ‘read the silences’ (*ibid.*, 17). In order to distil the experiential dimension from the travelogues selected here, this chapter focuses on descriptions and expressions of emotions, explicit in-text markers—such as the sudden and typically modern use of (several) exclamation marks for something scary, repulsive, angering, shocking, or wonderful—as well as instances when emotions were *not* expressed.

The articulation of emotions in the travelogues I discuss cannot be seen in isolation. Centuries of hajj travelogues and other textual and visual forms of hajj representation had prepared the authors for what to feel or how to express these feelings during their journey and their sojourn in Mecca. In turn, these travelogues reiterated and re-shaped what pilgrims experience and feel while on hajj. Following Birgit Meyer’s analysis of religions’ ‘making of awe’, these travelogues can thus be seen as one medium amongst other religious media that ‘tune the senses and induce specific sensations, thereby rendering the divine sense-able, and triggering particular religious experiences’ (cf. Meyer 2016; Meyer 2008, 129). In addition, while the hajj travelogues studied here were part of a chain of hajj narrations that prepare the pilgrims towards what to think and feel, they also had to respond to the highly variable context of the first half of the twentieth century. This chapter’s conclusion will further examine this interplay of change and continuity in the genre of hajj travelogues.

2 Journeying through a New World

Within the Hijaz region, most pilgrims continued to travel in caravans until the 1940s, whether by camel, donkey, or on foot—and only incidentally by car from the 1930s onwards. By then, the journey towards the Hijaz had changed

3 I thank El-Sayed for pointing me to Reynolds’ and others’ work on autobiography in her dissertation (El-Sayed 2016, 54).

radically with the introduction of the steam ship and train. Indeed, in the course of the 1880s, the official Egyptian *maḥmal* caravan abandoned the land route for steam trains (from Cairo to Suez) and boats (across the Red Sea to Jedda). Moroccan Muslims also used this route through Egypt, after British or French commercial shipping companies had taken them across the Mediterranean to reach Alexandria, docking at several ports along the way (Chiffolleau 2015).

For the narrators of the hajj travelogues studied here, travelling from Morocco and Egypt, this journey by steam ship and train presented a new reality that invariably invited commentary. Very frequently, the narrators describe in their travelogues the facilities, itineraries (stopping at several ports across the Mediterranean), and the remarkable speed of the new transportation they boarded—sometimes for the first time in their life (al-Kattānī 2005, 118, 322). At times, these descriptions seem to radiate a sense of pride—sometimes bordering on bragging—for example in the case of the Egyptian pilgrim al-Rāʿī, travelling in 1931, who never missed an opportunity to mention the luxury in which he and his wife travelled, commenting on the various ships, trains, and cars they experienced. He also included a photograph of himself in his travel outfit with accessories (al-Rāʿī n.d., 13–23, 29–39, 158–159 (photo), 212–218).

Even though pilgrims often appreciated the new ease with which they could travel to Mecca, they also considered these new travel conditions quite challenging. The Moroccan pilgrims Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, his son Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī, and ʿAbd al-Salām ibn Muḥammad al-Muʿī al-ʿAmrānī, all connected to the Kattānīya order in Fes and travelling between 1903–1904, pay specific attention in their travelogues to whether the steam journey was compatible with Islam. For example, they worried if it was permitted to travel on ships to Mecca that were owned by British commercial businesses and staffed with British crew. Furthermore, they wondered if they would be able to perform their religious duties, such as praying and fasting, on board (al-ʿAmrānī 2010, 147, 150; al-Kattānī 2005, 118, 119 n.1, 145–147, 327). They treaded carefully when mooring at European ports, such as Marseille, Naples, and Malta, trying to avoid imitating unlawful Christian European customs (*tashabbuh*) and sometimes simply refusing to disembark because of the unbelief (*kufṛ*) there (al-ʿAmrānī 2010, 152; al-Kattānī 2005, 121). At the same time, for Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, the new possibilities for going on hajj with steam transportation renewed the obligation of the hajj for Moroccan pilgrims, who had been considered exempt from this obligation by some Islamic scholars because they concluded that Moroccans lacked the possibilities to travel that far, and because Moroccans had to prioritise jihad due to their frontier position (al-Kattānī 2005, 107; see Hendrickson 2016).

One of the most salient features of the challenges that came with these changes in transportation was the necessity for pilgrims to undergo a period of quarantine in special facilities. This quarantine was implemented in order to detect and separate those carrying infectious diseases and thus prevent diseases from spreading further towards Europe (see Huber 2016; Chiffolleau 2015; Slight 2015; Low 2008; Roff 1982). The cholera pandemic of 1865 had made many European colonial powers acutely aware of the risk of contagious diseases spreading from India to Europe through Mecca during the hajj season.⁴ Initiated by France, an international conference in Constantinople in 1866 imposed a period of quarantine for pilgrims, targeting pilgrims travelling by sea from India (on the island of Kamaran) and Egypt (near the village of al-Ṭūr on the Sinai Peninsula). These quarantine camps were first placed under Ottoman control and were later governed by Egyptian and British authorities (as Egypt was a de facto protectorate of the British Empire since the mid-1880s). Furthermore, these camps were mainly staffed by medical personnel of European origin. The obligation of quarantine considerably slowed down the newly steam-powered pilgrims en route to and from Mecca, until the quarantine obligations were gradually relieved for hajj pilgrims in the middle of the twentieth century—first on the route to and from India in the 1930s and then, yet only in the 1950s, on the route to and from Egypt (Chiffolleau 2015, 199; Slight 2015, 250).

Several travelogues studied in this chapter elaborately discuss the quarantine facilities in al-Ṭūr (as the pilgrims studied here came through the Egyptian route).⁵ For the Moroccan Sufi hadith-scholar Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī, his fourteen-day stop at the quarantine station at al-Ṭūr in 1904 was quite disturbing. In his introduction, he announces that he wanted to avoid it at first by residing in Medina for a longer time—a more common strategy for affluent pilgrims (al-Kattānī 2005, 107; see also Chiffolleau 2015, 196). Furthermore, he includes an Islamic legal verdict (*ḥukm*) on the quarantining of hajj pilgrims in his travelogue, in which he considers the establishment of quarantine not permissible for several reasons. First, al-Kattānī writes that it is unlawful that Christians and Jews govern these quarantine facilities, as this elevates ‘people of false religions’ over Muslims. In addition, he states that quarantine is not in the

4 Incidentally, Mecca was not only seen as a hotbed for diseases like cholera, but also for the spread of potentially subversive, anti-colonial and pan-Islamic ideas. See Chantre 2013.

5 Some of the travelogues indicate other quarantine-stations frequented by the pilgrims travelling to North Africa: in Beirut (for Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī and his party), Marseille (also for Muḥammad ibn Jaʿfar al-Kattānī) and Algiers (for al-ʿAmrānī in the entourage of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Kabīr al-Kattānī).

pilgrims' best interests, since he considers these sanitary measures useless as is indicated by the many flies and foul smells in the quarantine camp. Instead, al-Kattānī writes that quarantine is a plot of the Christians to hinder the ritual of the hajj and weaken the power it has over Muslims. He finds the quarantining practices particularly harmful to Muslims, mentioning that pilgrims are scolded and scowled at, cursed, abused, and insulted. In addition, they have to take off their clothes and are made to wait for a long time (al-Kattānī 2005, 231–233).

Al-Kattānī's evaluation does not include reflections on his personal experiences and emotional states. Yet, his strongly worded assessment of the absolute impermissibility of quarantine for Muslim pilgrims and his use of multiple exclamation marks accompanying his description of Muslims being scolded and insulted seem to signal that it was a humiliating and also an anger-invoking experience for him personally. Historians, relying on other travelogues and eyewitness accounts, similarly describe al-Ṭūr as ill-facilitated, chaotic, depressing, and humiliating, for example because of the indiscriminate mixing of sexes and classes—especially in the first decades of the camp (Chiffolleau 2015, 193–197; Stratkötter 1991, 103).

In that same year, others coming from the same Sufi circles in Morocco did not detail the experience of quarantine in equally negative terms. The Moroccan jurist 'Abd al-Salām ibn Muḥammad al-Mu'ṭī al-'Amrānī, travelling in the entourage of al-Kattānī's aforementioned cousin, the shaykh of the Kattāniya, in that same year, writes that the quarantine regime was not 'too heavy on the pilgrims' since, he explains, there was no major outbreak of diseases in that year (1903–1904). This brief statement is the only words he devotes to this experience (al-'Amrānī 2010, 281, 283 n.1).

The descriptions and evaluations by others are actually very positive and seem to aim at stirring up their readers' pride in these technological and medical advancements, marking them as signs of the high level of Muslim progress and civilisation. The Egyptian Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī, travelling in the entourage of Egypt's ruler 'Abbās II Ḥilmī in 1909 as an official travel writer, reported about the good organization of the quarantine facilities at al-Ṭūr—such as their abundance of medical and technological means, including neatly separating those diagnosed with different diseases.⁶ He states that this quarantine facility under Egyptian care is the best quarantine in the world, which does not come as a surprise given his function in the entourage of the Egyptian

6 I am not completely sure al-Batanūnī travelled to al-Ṭūr himself, as the khedive and his following seem to have taken the northern land route and then the boat to Alexandria from Haifa. This route took pilgrims along the quarantine facility of Tabūk.

ruler. While he acknowledges that there are some difficulties with the quarantine, he considers these inevitable and sees no reason to abandon the efforts (al-Batanūnī n.d., 358).

Two decades after al-Batanūnī, the Egyptian businessman and retired government official Muṣṭafā Muḥammad al-Rā'ī was equally impressed with the quarantine facilities. Al-Rā'ī describes the delight he took in seeing al-Ṭūr for the first time: the clean and well-functioning hygienic facilities, the private accommodation he stayed in with his wife, the 'lenient and brotherly' personnel, and the smoothness of even the smallest details in the overall organization (al-Rā'ī n.d., 219–224).

Even so, being held in these facilities was not an easy experience for al-Rā'ī or for others, and many were ambivalent about it.⁷ Al-Rā'ī expresses joy when he is told he could leave this 'prison', for example, because, he writes, freedom is man's natural right and he misses his loved ones at home (ibid., 225).⁸ In addition, it seems clear from his descriptions that he was uncomfortable with the mixing of social-economic classes. He describes himself as playing 'the role of hero' (*dawr al-baṭal*) in this 'story of equality' (*riwāya al-musāwāh*) for taking a disinfecting salt shower together with others of his company, even though the quality and cleanliness of his clothes gave his high status away. He hastens to add that his wife did not shower together with the other women, but instead waited in the changing room (ibid., 222).

Even though he found the experience in some respects clearly uncomfortable, he boasts that he endured the period of quarantine patiently and even heroically—unlike some of the other pilgrims who protested against the waiting period. He complains that these pilgrims were protesting merely for the love of protesting and the joy of hearing oneself only, reminding his readers that courage actually consists of patience (*ṣabr*) and self-control (ibid., 224). In this way, al-Rā'ī's travelogue provides insight into the virtue of a non-display of emotions for hajj pilgrims. While he notes that feelings of discomfort and anger are justified, he conveys the importance of regulating and suppressing these

7 Also consider the somewhat ambiguous impression the account of Ibrāhīm Rif'āt Pasha—commander of the Egyptian hajj delegation in the early twentieth century—gives with regard to al-Ṭūr. In his analysis of the photos in the travelogue of Ibrāhīm Rif'āt Pasha, Stephen Sheehi argues that his photos present an orderly and progress-filled image of the quarantine facilities, matching the discourses of science and order of the Arabic progressivist and modernist Nahḍa elite of that time (Sheehi 2016, 175–192). Yet, according to Rita Stratkötter, Ibrāhīm Rif'āt Pasha—commander of the Egyptian hajj delegation in the early twentieth century—lists numerous complaints in his travelogue in the first year he commanded the hajj, even though he sees improvement in the following years (Stratkötter 1991, 103).

8 cf. a pilgrim's account similarly likening quarantine to a prison, referred to in Slight 2015, 250.

emotions. In addition, al-Rāī's call for patience and his sharp rejection of the overt anger of his fellow pilgrims are a reminder that pilgrims can also employ emotions and the control over emotions as modern markers of difference in their narratives, distinguishing composed Muslims like themselves from their passion-driven counterparts (cf. Pernau 2014).⁹

For many (but not all) pilgrims travelling through al-Ṭūr at the beginning of the twentieth century, quarantine seems at least worthy of (elaborate) commentary—albeit in a large variety of ways. One explanation for the differences in quarantine experiences are the varying political loyalties of each narrator. During this time, the 'steam geography and demography' (see Green 2015) and the quarantining facilities represented multiple levels of colonial and Egyptian politics. It seems not particularly surprising that an Egyptian official, such as travel writer Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī, wrote a strongly positive and proud evaluation about the Egyptian governance of the camp in Tor. Vice versa, Muḥammad bin Ja'far al-Kattānī's sharply negative assessment of al-Ṭūr as 'a conspiracy of the Christians' (al-Kattānī 2005, 233) fits well with his own anti-colonialist ideas and those of his cousin Muḥammad 'Abd al-Kabīr (shaykh of the Fes-based Kattāniya order at that time) (see Bazzaz 2008; 2010; Munson 1993).

One might also think of the way pilgrims' experiences in al-Ṭūr were coloured by the privileges (such as private rooms) pilgrims such as al-Batanūnī and al-Rāī enjoyed, related to their official status as well as their wealth. Another explanation would refer to the pilgrims' varying participation in discourses of health, technology, and science. Al-Batanūnī's praise for the organization of the camp in al-Ṭūr fits in well with his well-ordered and factual travelogue that radiates a positivist belief in science and orderliness, while al-Kattānī's disbelief in the benefits of quarantine matches his own trust in medical treatments he deems Islamic and his aversion to customs or knowledge he considers European (al-Kattānī 2005, 285, 313–314).

Pilgrims' experiences in quarantine camps were thus coloured by their political loyalties, class status, and particular situatedness in global discourses on health and science. But the international-colonial imposition of quarantine was not the only change that affected pilgrims' hajj experiences in several ways

9 One might also think of Duncan Black Macdonald's scholarly description of the emotional aspect of the hajj, with overt racist and sexualised overtones, marking the distance between Muslims (and others) and Protestants (like himself): 'These [the pilgrimage to Mecca and the many imitation pilgrimages [sic] all over the Muslim lands, AK] are the scenes of orgasms of ecstatic emotion comparable in many ways to those at negro camp-meetings.' (Macdonald 1909, 215–216).

at that time. The next section addresses regime changes within the Hijaz and how these changes impacted the hajj experience.

3 The Hijaz Experience Reformed

Between 1924 and the beginning of 1926, ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Āl Sa‘ūd (or Ibn Sa‘ūd) conquered Mecca and the rest of the Hijaz region in addition to already being sultan and later king of the Najd region. His conquest of the Hijaz ended Ottoman rule of Mecca, replacing Sharīf Ḥusayn al-Hāshimī (r. 1916–1924) and his son ‘Alī (r. 1924–1925), thereby ending the Sharīfian dynasty that had ruled the Hijaz for centuries. Protecting and propagating a Wahhābī interpretation of Islam, Ibn Sa‘ūd’s hajj governance entailed a reform of hajj procedures and experiences. Under his rule, pilgrims were prohibited from performing rituals or customs that committees of Wahhābī jurists considered incompatible with the doctrine of *tawhīd* (asserting that God is one and unique). This meant that pilgrims were corrected if their utterances and ritual movements during the hajj deviated from the Wahhābī opinions of that time. Sa‘ūdi soldiers redirected the pilgrims as well as newly trained hajj guides (*mutawwifs*), who for ages had been employed by pilgrims upon their arrival in the Hijaz in order to help pilgrims navigate practical and ritual matters. The pilgrims’ behaviour was also regulated beyond the rituals, prohibiting swearing, making music (also as part of the *maḥmal* celebration), smoking, or wearing perfume in public. In addition, many historical structures, domes, and tombs of companions or family of the Prophet Muhammad (Cf. figure 7.1 below) were demolished in 1926 by the Wahhābī militia. This was done in order to prevent pilgrims from touching tombs, venerating the buried, or asking for their intercession. Soldiers and *mutawwifs* were also instructed to correct these types of veneration, which were considered to be a form of *shirk* (polytheism) or *bid‘a* (unlawful innovation)—even though some soldiers were more lenient or more amenable to bribes than others. The implementation of these reforms varied in degree. They were strongest in the 1920s and were slowly loosened in the 1930s when Ibn Sa‘ūd subdued an insurrection started by the particularly puritan Wahhābī militia and felt the need to attract more pilgrims in order to provide a greater income to the kingdom after the global financial crisis of 1929 (Willis 2017, 358–368; Al-Sarhan 2016; Chiffolleau 2015, 316–322; Slight 2015).

The demolition of the Hijaz’s historical landscape was not entirely novel in its history. The Egyptian travel writer Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī describes the destruction of domes and tombs during the first Sa‘ūdi conquest at the beginning of the nineteenth century in addition to late-nineteenth-century

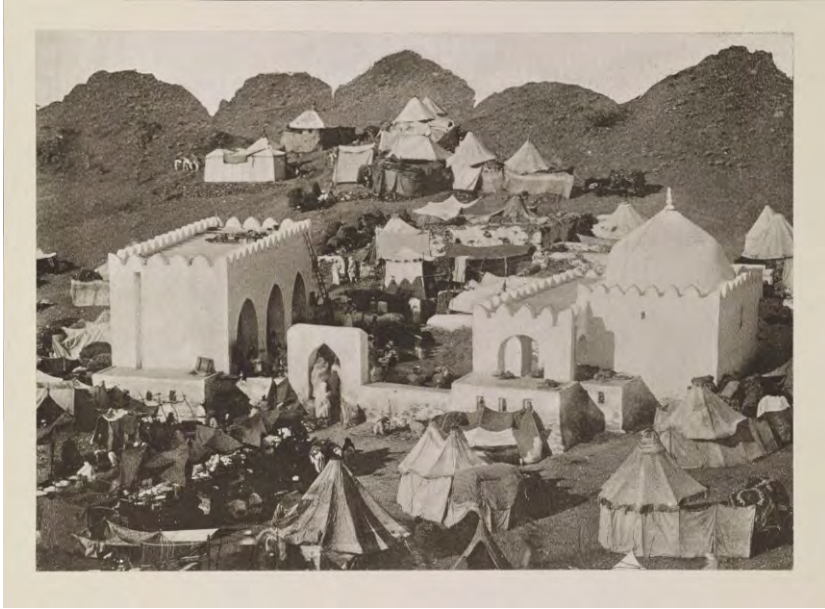


FIGURE 7.1 Majmunah's Grave (c. 1886–1889)

PHOTOGRAPHER: AL-SAYYID 'ABD AL-GHAFFĀR [9R-B] (1/1), BRITISH LIBRARY: VISUAL ARTS, X463/10, IN QATAR DIGITAL LIBRARY [HTTPS://WWW.QDL.QA/ARCHIVE/81055/VDC_100023510750.0X000026](https://www.qdl.qa/archive/81055/VDC_100023510750.0X000026) [ACCESSED 18 APRIL 2022].

sharīfs' emulating the Wahhābī zeal, destroying several tombs and domes (Al-Batanūnī n.d., 81, 146, 148). He does not comment on any of these measures in his travelogue, although he labels the Wahhābī creed one of 'great excess' and considers Eve's grave—which was also nearly destroyed—in Jeddah a legitimate place to visit (*ibid.*, 78–79, 146).

In spite of these historical precedents, the 'Wahhābization' of the hajj and its landscape from the mid-1920s onwards drastically changed the hajj experience for many pilgrims. Visiting holy places (*ziyāra*) was a common feature especially for Egyptian and North African pilgrims (as well as others) travelling to and within the Hijaz. Pilgrims visited shrines, tombs, and mosques as well as other sites connected to Islam's sacred history in order to collect blessings (sg. *baraka*) and ask for the intercession of saints as well as family and companions of the Prophet Muhammad (al-'Amrānī 2010; al-Kattānī 2005).

Travelling in 1931, the Egyptian pilgrim Muṣṭafā Muḥammad al-Rā'ī mentions on several occasions in his account that his *muṭawwif* or the deputy of his *muṭawwif* was constantly with him and his party, but did not guide them to Islamic 'sacred antiquities' or 'holy places', like the birthplace of 'Alī. Some

of these places he found closed, such as the house of al-Arqam where the earliest community of Muslims had convened. Alternatively, Sa‘ūdi soldiers blocked the entrance to the cave of Ḥirā’, where the Prophet is considered to have received his first revelations, and they prohibited pilgrims from touching the fence around the tomb of the Prophet in Medina, telling them it was merely green copper from Istanbul and that the man in the grave had fulfilled his duty and then died (al-Rā‘ī n.d., 67–68, 99, 122, 169–170). Al-Rā‘ī also describes how the house of Khadija—the first wife of Muhammad and the first Muslim—as well as the graves in the graveyard of al-Baqī’ in Medina were completely levelled to the ground (ibid., 68).

Al-Rā‘ī seems surprised as well as deeply upset about these new circumstances. In the passage on the house of Khadija, he calls upon God and asks in disbelief: ‘The house of *sayyida* Khadija, daughter of Khuwaylid, is erased without a trace?’ In various wordings he repeats that this was the very house from which God’s message spread (ibid., 68). This type of repetition might be another indication of his shock and distress. On another occasion, he writes that he was deeply moved after finally having located the house of al-Arqam, one of the companions of the Prophet Muhammad, in a small alley, only to find it closed. He perceives its closure as a ban on being blessed, because it prevents him from rubbing its doorsteps with his hands and its ground with his forehead (ibid., 99). Similarly, reminiscing about what happened to him at the cave of Ḥirā’ (or rather, what did *not* happen there due to the presence of soldiers), he writes that he strongly wished to have rubbed his cheek at the place where the Prophet’s footsteps once were (ibid., 124).

This type of yearning (in vain) seems to build on existing emotional patterns in Arabic hajj travelogues, because yearning for the hajj and especially for being close to the Prophet in the City of Light (al-Madīna al-Munawwara) and being in proximity to his tomb is a common theme in many older hajj travelogues (Al-Samaany 2000, 84–87, 138).¹⁰ For example, Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī, son of the aforementioned Moroccan Sufi scholar Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Kattānī, describes in his hajj travelogue from 1903–1904 that he and his party went to the mosque straight away upon arriving in Medina to quench the pain of their passions and their burning desire to meet the Prophet (al-Kattānī 2005, 191, n.1; cf. Slight 2015, 251–252). Similarly, the Egyptian travel writer Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī writes about his pilgrimage in 1909 how

10 Yearning in vain as well as crying is also what John Slight and John Willis describe for particularly Indian, Sufi and Shī‘ite pilgrims travelling to Mecca in the wake of its Wahhābization (Willis 2017, 359–362, 363–364; Slight 2015, 236, 251–252). cf. Peters on Eldon Rutter’s observations in the Hijaz in 1925 (Peters 1994, 358–359).

he and his travel companions stretched their necks at the first sight of the minarets of Medina, filling the heart, body, and soul with joy, pleasure, and excitement (al-Batanūnī n.d., 300). For centuries, pilgrims had been able to satisfy this type of yearning. Because of Ibn Sa‘ūd’s Wahhābī governance of the Hijaz in the mid-1920s and 1930 and his prohibitions on certain practices, the desire of pilgrims who wished to touch the Prophet’s grave (as well as visit other sacred sites) remained at least partly unfulfilled.

In addition to lamenting this new situation, al-Rā‘ī seeks to defend the banned practices and pleads for the preservation of the closed or demolished sites. He argues that Islamic antiquities and graves should be adorned with precious stones and that impressive buildings should be erected around them. This would remind the pilgrims of their great past and make them emulate the Prophet Muhammad and his companions—similar to the way Europeans erect grand memorials for their heroes (al-Rā‘ī n.d., 71). In this way, al-Rā‘ī writes, these antiquities would instil Muslims with zeal and lead to future progress and civilisation. According to him, such a reverence for Islamic antiquities is not a matter of unlawful worship. These structures are not erected and revered for the purpose of worship, but as lawful ‘markers of civilization’. Given this symbolic and commemorative function, al-Rā‘ī also writes that touching and rubbing these antiquities or graves is not strictly necessary, because there are sufficient blessings emulating from the great men and women being commemorated (ibid., 68–72). Yet, he also explicitly states that he does not see *kufṛ* or hypocrisy in this practice, and he expresses a desire to do so himself on occasions. Similarly, in response to the soldiers preventing him and others from touching the grave of the Prophet, he writes that no Egyptian would think that the Prophet or saints are divine, yet their body is still full of *baraka* (ibid., 68–72, 99, 121–123, 170; cf. Slight 2015, 247). Moreover, in a final call to the Sa‘ūdi government, he asks it not to deviate too far from the religious opinions of the masses and to heed the preservation of Islamic antiquities (al-Rā‘ī n.d., 156).

Besides triggering feelings of shock and unfulfilled yearning, Ibn Sa‘ūd’s governance also invoked a sense of contentment at the level of progress as well as a sense of safety for many pilgrims travelling in the late 1920s and 1930s—even though there was the risk of heavy physical punishment for transgressing the new religious rules.¹¹ For example, al-Rā‘ī was very pleased that people who were late for morning prayer were punished under the new Sa‘ūdi regime. Al-

11 Colonial authorities reported a similarly positive evaluation of Ibn Sa‘ūd’s reign in the Hijaz by colonial authorities. The British, for example, extensively praised the improvement in justice, physical safety and health, although they also worried about the Wahhābī

Rā'ī considers this harsh, but also just. It is in the public interest, he writes, as prayer prevents crime (referring to a Qur'anic text) and also kills bacteria (because of the required ritual cleansing beforehand). With admiration, he writes that there is no theft even when owners abandon their shops at the time of prayer (*ibid.*, 75–76). Similarly, al-Rā'ī is very pleased with the improved traffic safety in Medina as compared to an earlier visit (*ibid.*, 202). He calls upon Muslims from all over the world to support the development of Mecca even further, for example by funding newly paved streets (*ibid.*, 155, cf. *ibid.*, 111, 113, 118, 156).

Al-Rā'ī thus combines two types of sentiments in his travelogue. His ambivalent appreciation of the Sa'ūdi regime and its reforms seems to fit a branch of modernist Sufism he might have been sympathetic to. The press that published his travelogue was connected to the 'Azamiyya, a Sufi order established in 1915 by Muḥammad Māḍī Abū al-'Azā'im, who became very critical of both Wahhābism and Salafism in the course of the twentieth century. Similar to al-Rā'ī in this travelogue, this order combined an appreciation of modern reform with a renewal of (popular) Sufi practices, for example by introducing discourses of rationality, order, and discipline into Egyptian celebrations at the *mawlid*s for saints (Schielke 2006, 132–133; see also Luizard 1991, 31).

Al-Rā'ī was not the only pilgrim who positively reported on Ibn Sa'ūd's orderly governance of the Hijaz. Several other Arab pilgrims, such as journalist Muḥyi al-Dīn Riḍā in 1935 and legal officer Ibrāhīm Muḥammad Ḥabīb in 1938, were similarly content with the progress, revival (*nahḍa*), and reforms (*iṣlāh*) made by the renewer (*mujaddid*) Ibn Sa'ūd and other government officials in the realms of public health, justice, organization (*niẓām*), physical safety, and morality. Some of this praise went hand in hand with a defence of Ibn Sa'ūd's religious reforms (Ḥabīb 2014, 21–22; Riḍā 1353AH/1935, 33–34, 43–61, 92–95). Ibn Sa'ūd himself also actively sought to portray his government as one furthering safety and progress. He invited pilgrims to see for themselves and report back positively in their hajj accounts (Slight 2015, 232–237).

This assessment of progress and successful reforms presented a break from the way the governance of the Hijaz was often evaluated at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century. Many pre-Sa'ūdi reform-minded Arabic travelogues complained that the Hijaz under the *sharīfs* was in great need of reform. For example, Muḥammad Labīb al-Batanūnī laments

religious interventions in Mecca and Medina as well as the harsh punishments (Chiffolleau 2015, 316–321; Slight 2015, 228–243).

the inadequate schools, libraries and hospitals in 1909 and is disgusted by the unsanitary practices of his fellow pilgrims (al-Batanūnī n.d., 132–140; see also Kateman 2020).¹²

In particular, several pilgrims at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century report that they deeply feared the hardship and danger of the journey in the interior of the Arabian Peninsula—especially the attacks made by Bedouin tribes along the strenuous route to Medina (al-‘Amrānī 2010, 187; al-Kattānī 2005, 189–191, n.2; cf. Peters 1994, 281–282, 298–300). For the conservative journalist Aḥmad ‘Alī al-Shādhilī in 1904, the lack of physical safety in the Sharīf-governed Hijaz was actually the main reason to write his travelogue, according to his introduction (al-Shādhilī 1322AH, 2–5). The Moroccan pilgrim Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī, who travelled with his father Muḥammad ibn Ja‘far al-Kattānī in 1903–1904 and whose diary notes are quoted in the published edition of his father’s travelogue, also reports the great fear he felt on his way to Medina. He relates how one of the Moroccan pilgrims was accused of killing a local camel driver. The camel driver’s tribe then came to the Moroccan pilgrims’ camp demanding compensation from his father who represented the group of Moroccans. Even though al-Kattānī and his group denied any involvement, they were left to choose between handing over the murderer, paying blood money, or all be considered free game on their way to Medina. In the end they paid, but felt great fear that these ‘ferocious barbarians’ (*al-wuḥūsh al-dārīya*) would not keep their word (al-Kattānī 2005, 189–191, n.2).

It is clear that Muḥammad al-Zamzamī al-Kattānī found this emotional moment worth describing in quite some detail. His father, however, did not say a word about this undoubtedly scary experience in his account. On the contrary, Muḥammad bin Ja‘far al-Kattānī praised the conditions of the road, the sufficient amount of food, the honest governance of the hajj, and the lack of diseases in 1903–1904, considering them *karāmāt* (miracles, favours) from God (al-Kattānī 2005, 186–187). Similarly positive, the Egyptian poet and translator ‘Abd al-‘Azīz Ṣabrī actually lauded the developments in public health and science (which he called a *nahḍa*, or ‘renaissance’) in his travelogue dedicated to Sharīf Ḥusayn in 1923–1924 (Ṣabrī 1342AH, 193–215). Perhaps coloured by an allegiance to the Sharīf or a desire to emphasise the blessed nature of the experience, the sanitary conditions and safety under the administration of the Sharīf were not articulated negatively in these hajj travelogues.

12 One might also think of the visual ‘staging’ of the backwardness of the Meccan nobility (as an anti-image of his own progressiveness) by the Egyptian hajj-commander Ibrāhīm Rif‘āt Pasha in his photos, as analysed by Stephen Sheehi 2016, 177–179.

4 Conclusion. Tuning the Emotions: Change and Continuity

This chapter explored Arabic pilgrims' hajj experiences and emotions in the first half of the twentieth century, linking these to central events of that time that had a transformative effect on the hajj and its journey. These changes did not have a uniform or univocal effect on pilgrims' experiences and emotions. Some experienced the quarantine as humiliating and upsetting, especially because it was being governed by non-Muslims. Others saw it as a symbol of order and hygiene, something that at times invoked pride while at other moments patience was prescribed—even if it was not easy. Pilgrims often appreciated the safety and ease of the steam journey, but the new means of travelling also presented pilgrims with new challenges. Similarly, the reforms Ibn Sa'ūd introduced were met with feelings of shock and sadness, but also of contentment and safety—sometimes at the same time.

Nevertheless, this chapter does not go as far as Nile Green, who, in his article 'The hajj as its own undoing' concludes that:

the *hajj*'s integration into the new geography of steam rendered it, paradoxically but axiomatically, a journey among infidels. Far from placing the Ka'ba at the centre of a ritualized universe, through the spaces of industrial transport the *hajj* introduced hundreds of thousands of ordinary pilgrims to a world system in which Islam and Muslims were evidently marginal.

GREEN 2015, 224

For Muḥammad bin Ja'far al-Kattānī, as we have seen, the new possibilities for going on hajj by way of steam transportation actually renewed the obligation of the hajj for Moroccan pilgrims.

The hajj experience in an age of steam was not completely renewed, however. In many of the travelogues analysed for this chapter, the pilgrims also relate their reflections and feelings in a similar manner to earlier travelogues, for example their stories about the experience of standing at the plain of 'Arafa or seeing Medina or the Ka'ba for the first time. The Egyptian travel writer al-Batanūnī describes his encounter with the Ka'ba in a particularly sensorial and emotional passage:

The whole assembly stood there in the greatest reverence before this highest majesty and most powerful inspirer of awe before which the greatest souls become so little as to be almost nothing. And if we had not been witness of the movements of the body during the salat and the rais-

ing of the hands during the prayers, and the murmuring of the expressions of humility and if we had not heard the beatings of the hearts before the immeasurable grandeur we would have thought ourselves transferred to another life. And truly we were at that hour in another world: we were in the house of God and in God's immediate presence, and with us were only the lowered head and the humble tongue and the voices raised in prayer and weeping eyes and the fearful heart and pure thoughts of intercession.

AL-BATANŪNĪ n.d., 103, in the translation of Wensinck 1993, 588¹³

In fairly similar terms, but much less elaborately, the Moroccan jurist al-'Amrānī, travelling in 1904 in the entourage of his Sufi shaykh, reports feelings of humility and insignificance and a sense of submission at the sight of the Ka'ba. He also describes how people started crying and uttering prayers of supplication (al-'Amrānī 2010, 228).

Centuries of hajj travelogues and other textual and visual forms of hajj representations had prepared pilgrims such as al-Batanūnī and al-'Amrānī for what to feel and how to express these feelings when encountering these much-anticipated parts of the hajj ritual. In turn, these travelogues repeat what to experience and feel. These travelogues might be considered part of a tradition in which the pilgrims' senses are tuned: they are prepared for feeling specific emotions and sensations (at times also by *not* displaying certain types of emotions that did not fit this emotional regime), as conceptualized in Birgit Meyer's analysis of religions' 'making of awe'.

In addition to informing prospective pilgrims what to think and feel when going on hajj, these travelogues also specifically prepared readers for what to expect of the hajj in the new world of the first half of the twentieth century. These new contexts required new ways of tuning the pilgrims' emotions and senses, as there was no century-old tradition of travelogues and other media in place to shape the pilgrims' experiences in a similar way as there were to prepare pilgrims for certain emotions and thoughts when standing at the plain of 'Arafa or seeing Medina or the Ka'ba for the first time. This might be part of the reason why the assessments and feelings experienced with regard to international and domestic politics and the effects thereof defy uniformity. New contexts invite a new round of tuning the emotions, with various and sometimes ambiguous results—this observation probably applies not only to modern times.

13 See also al-Batanūnī n.d., 176 for a fascinating description of pilgrims in fearful awe.

As much as new contexts had an impact on aspects of the journey and the pilgrim's stay in Mecca and Medina (including ritual aspects, such as the visitation of the Prophet's grave), centuries-old modes of experiencing may have also impacted the experience of these new contexts. For example, al-Rā'ī articulated the age-old trope of yearning in a slightly new way under Ibn Sa'ūd's rule. He expressed a great desire to visit the Prophet's grave—as well as other graves and sites connected to figures and events in Islam's sacred history. But where this type of yearning used to be quenched during the hajj journey, al-Rā'ī's desire could not be fulfilled under the new regime, or at least not completely, which only intensified and elongated his desire. Similarly, al-Rā'ī's use of the term *ṣabr* (patience) when calling Muslims to endure quarantine patiently and heroically may indicate a continuation and re-application of older Islamic emotional rules to new contexts (also see Buitelaar and Kadrouch-Outmany in this volume). His travelogue is an example of how some pilgrims articulated their experience of the new through existing tunes in their travelogues, for which they had been prepared over and over, in travelogues, stories, and other hajj accounts. It was one of the ways in which Arabic pilgrims travelling from and through Egypt experienced new contexts of the hajj in the first half of the twentieth century.

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