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UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

Conference Book 11-13 December 2019

# *Narrating the Hajj*





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## Introduction

### **About the Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies, University of Groningen**

The conference “Narrating the Hajj” is organized to conclude the NWO funded joint Research project called “More Magical than Disneyland: Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca.” which is coordinated by Prof. dr. Marjo Buitelaar of the Faculty of Theology and Religious, University of Groningen, and Dr. Richard van Leeuwen of the Department of Religious Studies, University of Amsterdam.

Founded in 1614, the University of Groningen enjoys an international reputation as a dynamic and innovative centre of higher education offering high-quality teaching and research. Balanced study and career paths in a wide variety of disciplines encourage the 31,000 students and researchers to develop their own individual talents. Being among the best research universities in Europe and working alongside prestigious partner universities and networks, the University of Groningen aims to be an international centre of knowledge.

The Faculty of Theology and Religious Studies dates back to the University’s foundation. Being part of a public university, it aims to perform cutting-edge research and teaching in a wide variety of disciplines in the fields of theology and religious studies. We investigate religions as cultural phenomena and social forces in diverse contexts in the past and present. By generating and sharing scholarly knowledge, the Faculty aims to create impact and to contribute to a sustainable society, offering the public and government credible resources for reflection on religion and society.





## Programme

Venue: Court Room, Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies: Oude Boteringestraat 38, 9712 GK Groningen.

### Wednesday 11 December

- 19.00 hrs Welcome Dinner. You will be picked up at the lobby of the Martini hotel at a quarter to seven, from where we will walk to Restaurant Fatoush: Damsterdiep 15, 9711 SG Groningen

### Thursday 12 December

- 9.00 – 9.30  
Introduction:  
*Marjo Buitelaar*  
Opening of the conference by the Dean of the Faculty ThRs: *Mladen Popovic*
- 9.30 – 11.00 Session 1. Historical accounts of Female pilgrims  
Chair:  
*Kholoud Al-Ajarma*  
  
Presenters:  
*Thomas Ecker* - 'The Travelogue of Farhād Mīrzā'  
*Leila Karami* - 'Contradictory Emotions in The Pilgrimage-diary of Sakīna Sultān Waqār al-Dawla Kučak'  
*Piotr Bachtin* - 'Thrice other? Experiencing the Hajj as Iranian Shi'a women in the late 1800s'
- 11.00- 11.15 coffee break (faculty hall)

- 11.15 – 13.15 session 2. Historical Hajj accounts & art expressions

Chair:

*Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany*

Presenters:

*Tyler Kynn*

– ‘Imagining Space: A Mughal Pilgrim’s Encounter with Empire and the Islamic World’

*Björn Bentlage*

– ‘Arabic Hajj-Accounts of the Early Modern Period’

*Miguel Vazquez*

– ‘“Coplas del perigrino de Puey Monçón”: A 16th Century Spanish Poem about the Hajj’

*Neda Saghaee*

– ‘Discourse on the Sacred Pilgrimage of Hajj in Sufism and its Social Dimension’

- 13.15 – 14.15 lunch (faculty hall)

- 14.15 – 15.45 session 3. Contemporary Hajj & Umrah pilgrimage from Europe

Chair:

*Richard van Leeuwen*

Presenters:

*Göran Larsson*

– ‘Swedish Hajj-travellers – Perspectives from the North’

*Leila Seurat*

– ‘Between Mecca and the “bled”: Hajj, identifications and the colonial past’

*Jihan Safar*

– ‘Married couples from France performing Hajj and ‘Umra : New conjugalities, New markets’

- 15.45 – 16.00 tea break (faculty hall)

- 16.00 – 17.30 key note lecture *Séan McLoughlin* - ‘Returning from Hajj in a Late Modern Muslim Diaspora: Contested Narratives and Rituals of Crossing and Dwelling’

Respondent: *Kholoud Al-Ajarma*

- 18.00 dinner Restaurant XO: Folkingestraat 13, 9711 JS Groningen



## Programme

### Friday 13 december

- 9.30 – 11.00 session 4. Contemporary Hajj & Umrah pilgrimage from the U.S. And Canada

Chair:

*Yahya Nurgat*

Presenters:

*Nesrien Hamid*

– ‘Experiencing the new Mecca: Urban transformation and religiosity’

*Noor Zaida*

– ‘The Experience of Difference’: The Sectarianization of Hajj Amongst Shi’ite Muslims’

*Zahir Janmohamed*

– ‘Crowded Outlets: The Use of Technology by North American Khoja Shi’a Ithna Asheri Muslims on the Hajj’

- 11.00 – 11.15 coffee break (faculty hall)
- 11.15 – 12.45 session 5. Hajj and Social Media

Chair:

*Richard van Leeuwen*

Presenters:

*Zilya Khabibullinah*

– ‘Selfies in Mecca: Visual Hajj Presentation Practices in Islamic Discourse’

*Nadia Caida*

– ‘Curating the Muslim Self(ie): Performing Hajj in the Age of Social Media’

*Lena Rethel*

– ‘Hajj Hacks? Exploring virtue/al economies of Muslim pilgrimage’

- 12.45 – 13.45 lunch (faculty hall)

- 13.45 – 15.15 session 6 Modern Critical Hajj accounts

Chair:

*Marjo Buitelaar*

Presenters:

*Roswitha Badry* – ‘Among the Pilgrims, but not of them – Individualist Intellectuals on their Pilgrimage to Mecca’

*Peyman Eshaghi* – ‘Hajj and the Muslim Community (Umma): Re-Reading the Hajj Travelogues/Treatises of Iranian Religious Intellectuals of the 20th Century’

*Vladimir Brobovnikow* – ‘Entangled Soviet Islamic Discourses in an Atheist Account of the Hajj Pilgrimage by Fazliddin Muhammadiyev in 1963’

- 15.15 – 15.30 tea break (faculty hall)
- 15.30 – 16.30 Key note lecture *Maryam Ala Amjadi* - ‘Washing Away Fear, Bewitching the Saddle: Gender and Mobility in Safavid Hajj Narratives’

Respondent:

*Arjen Buitelaar*

- 16.30 – 16.45 tea break (faculty hall)
- 16.45 – 17.25 discussants *Richard van Leeuwen & Simon Coleman*
- 17.25 – 17.30 Conclusion *Marjo Buitelaar*
- 18.00 Farewell Dinner Restaurant Feithhuis: Martinikerhof 10, 9712 JG Groningen



## Abstracts & Bio's

### Maryam Ala Amjadi

#### **Washing Away Fear, Bewitching the Saddle: Gender and Mobility in Safavid Hajj Narratives**

The Safavid period (1501-1736) is distinguished as the era of the official establishment of Shiism in Iran. Mecca and Medina appear to be the primary travel destinations during this period. The majority of Safavid Hajj accounts discovered in the archives are authored by men and narratives by women who undertook the Hajj are seemingly rare. This paper will explore the Hajj as the site of self-image production in a travel narrative authored by an unnamed eighteenth-century Iranian woman who not only traveled from Isfahan to Mecca and beyond without any male or female relatives, but also wrote an account of it in twelve-hundred rhyming couplets. By examining the complex relationship between gender and mobility in this woman traveler's text in the context of Hajj accounts authored by male travelers and Shiite jurisprudential treatises, this paper will shed light on the founding tenets of modernity such as women's agency and autonomy during the Hajj in the pre-Modern era.

### **Biography**

Maryam Ala Amjadi (Independent Scholar) earned her Erasmus Mundus joint doctorate degree in July 2017 from University of Kent (UK) and Universidade do Porto (Portugal) in *Text and Event in Early Modern Europe* (TEEME) programme. Her research focuses on the complex relationship between mobility and identity in Persian Safavid travel narratives. She has previously worked as a translator at the *Iranian Students News Agency* (ISNA) and as a writer for the *Tehran Times Daily*, where she founded and wrote a weekly page dedicated to Iranian culture and society. Ala Amjadi is a published poet and translator of poetry. Her poems and translations have been anthologized internationally. She received the Young Generation Poet Award in the first International Poetry Festival in Yinchuan, China (2011) and was awarded Honorary Fellowship in Creative Writing by the International Writers Program (IWP) at University of Iowa, UNESCO City of Literature (2008). Her book chapter on poetry in Iran's contemporary theo-political culture will appear in the *Routledge International Handbook of Religion in Global Society*.

### **Kholoud Al-Ajarma**

Phd in the Research Project Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca at the University of Groningen.

**Piotr Bachtin**

**Thrice other? Experiencing the hajj as Iranian Shi'a women in the late 1800s**

This paper discusses three Persian-language prose accounts on the Hajj (*hajjnāmehs*) written during the late Qajar period by the following noble women from Iran: Mehrmāh Khānom 'Esmat al-Saltaneh (1880–81), an anonymous lady called Hājjiyyeh Khānom 'Alaviyyeh Kermāni (1892–94), and Sakineh Soltān Vaqār al- Dowleh Esfahāni Kuchak (1899–1901).

As we can learn from these personal narratives, three factors importantly informed their writers' experiences of pilgrimage journey. First, it was their cultural and language background: while describing their encounters with the Arabic-speaking camel drivers and inhabitants of the Arabian Peninsula, the women would express their strong belief in being culturally superior to Arabs. Furthermore, all three diarists belonged to a minority denomination of Islam (Imami Shi'ism) and their reactions toward the Sunnis tended to be colored by dislike and disdain, too. Therefore, these accounts seem to call into question a theoretically egalitarian nature of the Hajj which is supposed to obliterate the differences among believers within *umma*. Yet, the most important factor that determined the female pilgrims' experience of the Hajj was their sex. The diarists reveal that they are subject to constant control exerted over them by their male relatives who accompany them on the road: their mobility is restricted and most often they are forced to remain in their tents or palanquins.

The aforementioned constraints and the (often forcibly) private nature of women's travels may explain, at least in part, why the diarists considered focusing on individual experience rather than on perpetuating depersonalized, "objective" and highly conventionalized descriptions of places visited *en route*

—as it was often the case with the male-authored *hajjnāmehs* and, more generally, *safarnāmehs* (travelogues of any kind) written in Persian in that era.

**Biography**

Piotr Bachtin, PhD Assistant Professor Department of Iranian Studies Faculty of Oriental Studies University of Warsaw, Poland PhD thesis (2019): *Female Pilgrims to Mecca: the Sacred and the Profane in Women-authored Hajj accounts* Main interests: travel and pilgrimage writings (in Persian), autobiography and women's writing in the Persianate world, women's history in Iran and in the Middle East.



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### Roswitha Badry

#### **Among the pilgrims, but not of them – Individualist intellectuals on their pilgrimage to Mecca**

How does an individualist and skeptical intellectual who is not religious in the usual sense experience the pilgrimage to Mecca in modern times, when he or she is only one among a huge mass of pilgrims? In order to offer an answer to this question, this contribution will look at two literary texts which are quite different in terms of author, time, and genre, but show a number of similarities in terms of observations, impressions, reflections, and feelings. The first is "Lost in the Crowd", the travel diary published by the Iranian thinker Jalal Al-e Ahmad (1923-69) in 1966 on his Hajj experiences in 1964; the second is the novel "Fitna" by the Emirati author Amira al-Qahtani, which appeared in 2007 and takes the pilgrimage as a frame-story. It will be argued that Al-e Ahmad established a discursive tradition that had an impact on religious doubters in Iran and beyond.

### Biography

Roswitha Badry is Professor of Islamic Studies at the University of Freiburg, Germany. Her publications and research interests center on the history of the MENA-region since the 19th century, the continued influence of classical ideas in contemporary discourses, Shiite Islam, gender issues, (auto-) biographies of religious scholars and intellectuals, and contemporary Arabic literature.

### Björn Bentlage

#### **Arabic Hajj-Accounts of the Early Modern Period**

This paper will discuss Hajj narratives by two prominent authors of Arabic travelogues from the early modern period, which I define as the 1530s to 1830s for the purposes of my post-doc research into a larger subset of such travelogues. By the end of the 16th century, the eastern provinces of Syria and Palestine, Egypt, and the Hejaz had been profoundly shaped by their integration into the Ottoman Empire. This political context had also affected the circuits of pilgrimage, travel, and cultural exchange and vice versa. The literary development of that period stands apart from its predecessors and successors in many regards. I hope to elicit some of the potential idiosyncrasies of the way that the Hajj was narrated within an important literary genre of that period.

For the conference, I intend to trim the argumentation developed in this paper, tidy up formatting and transcription, add a lot of missing references, and elaborate on the so far

undeveloped theme of the travelogues' social functions.

### **Biography**

Björn Bentlage is a post-doc research assistant at the Department for Arabic and Islamic Studies at the Oriental Institute of the Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg (MLU). His interests include pilgrimage and visitation among Arab Christians and Muslims in the early modern period, legal development in Arab countries, and entangled history.

### **Vladimir Bobrovnikov**

#### **Entangled Soviet Islamic Discourses in an Atheist Account of the Hajj Pilgrimage by Fazliddin Muhammadiyev in 1963**

In April-May 1963 Tajik writer, member of the Communist Party and atheistic propagandist Fazliddin Muhammadiyev performed his first and only hajj together with 17 Soviet pilgrims. This journey resulted in his autobiographical fiction *Journey to the Afterlife or the Tale of Great Hajj* republished as a Soviet best seller in Tajik and Russian languages in 1965, 1970, 1983, 1988. It was the unique detailed, emotional though blasphemous Soviet hajj account in the 1930s–1970s. However nobody yet studied it. This paper examines Muhammadiyev's case in terms of entangled Islamic discourses of academic Orientalists, Communist propagandists and Soviet Muslim officials during the early Cold war period when Islam was partly legalized in post-Stalinist Russia. It shows continuity and ruptures between Orientalist discourses of Islam in late tsarist and Soviet Russia, and sheds light on individual and collective religiosity of post-war Soviet Muslims compared to their foreign coreligionists in the Third World.

### **Biography**

Prof. Dr. Vladimir Bobrovnikov teaches history and anthropology at Higher School of Economics in St Petersburg and works at Institute for Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences. He specializes in borderland Muslim societies in tsarist and Soviet Russia, Islam, Arabic studies and Orientalism.

### **Marjo Buitelaar**

Programme Leader Research Project Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca. Professor in Contemporary Islam at the University of Groningen



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### Arjen Buitelaar

Arjen Buitelaar is an external Phd candidate at the Department of Culture Studies, Tilburg School of Humanities and Digital Sciences, University of Tilburg. His research concentrates on the role of religious rituals and symbols in identity formation of Shi'a Muslims in the Netherlands.

### Nadia Caidi

#### **"Curating the Muslim Self(ie): Performing Hajj in the Age of Social Media"**

This research explores the ways in which young Muslims (18-35 years of age) experience the life-altering event that is Hajj, and the ways in which information in its multiple forms (textual, spiritual, corporeal) has mediated and shaped their journey (spiritual, physical, and informational). While several bodies of academic research explore the many facets of the ritual of pilgrimage and the Hajj specifically (among them anthropology, religious studies, and Islamic studies), the intersection of religious studies and information science has only recently become the source of fruitful research although pilgrimage remains an under-explored context. Building on established theories of information behaviour, along with key ideas framing everyday lived religion (de Certeau, 1984; D. Hall (1997); M. Buitelaar (2015)), I examine the nature of information in the lived experiences of young Hajj pilgrims in a global, networked environment. In recent years, we have seen an increase in pilgrims posting pictures and videos of themselves while at Hajj and sharing these on social media. The importance of information sharing as testimonial ("I was there") and as a means of documenting one's journey is not new; yet, this research aims to demonstrate how an analysis of a specific genre of selfie, taken at the holy sites in Mecca and Madinah, provides a vocabulary and a set of techniques for examining the "work" of such selfies (as evidence, as conversation). Of particular interest is the extent to which these selfies might be assumed to be oriented toward non-Muslims as well as Muslims; in this sense, this paper questions the extent to which these selfies (and other digital artefacts) can be considered as contributing to an alternative regime of circulation of Muslim images. In doing so, this paper highlights how Muslim youth's pilgrimage to Hajj can be read, in a post 9/11 environment, as an important and multifaceted performance of Islam.

### Biography

Nadia Caidi is an Associate Professor at the Faculty of Information, University of Toronto. Trained in Linguistics and Communication, she also holds a Ph.D. in Information Studies

from the University of California, Los Angeles. Her work is situated in the context of global migration, specifically how diasporic communities negotiate the multiple and overlapping local and transnational information environments they navigate, and how these processes come to embody new kinds of knowledge. Current research examines the emergent practices of young Muslims' expressions of spiritual and religious identities online, specifically the contemporary manifestations of the pilgrimage tradition of Hajj, and how information in its multiple forms mediates and shapes the pilgrim's spiritual, physical, and informational journey.

### **Simon Coleman**

Chancellor Jackman Professor at the University of Toronto. He came to U of T in 2010 from the University of Sussex, where he had been Head of the Department of Anthropology. Prior to that, he had been Reader in Anthropology at the University of Durham, and Deputy Dean for the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health at Durham. He obtained his undergraduate degree and PhD from the University of Cambridge.

Simon is currently co-editor of the journal *Religion and Society: Advances in Research* and of the book series *Ashgate Studies in Pilgrimage*. Formerly, he was editor of the *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*. He has carried out fieldwork in Sweden (Word of Life Ministry, Uppsala), the United Kingdom (Walsingham pilgrimage; the Redeemed Christian Church of God) and Nigeria (Redeemed Christian Church of God). With Rosalind Hackett, he has just edited *The Anthropology of Global Pentecostalism and Evangelicalism* (New York University Press). With Dee Dyas (University of York) and Marion Bowman (Open University) he is engaged on an AHRC-funded project investigating past and present uses of English cathedrals.

### **Thomas Ecker**

#### **The Travelogue of Farhād Mīrzā**

In this essay I outline my analysis of the chapters about Mecca and Medina in the travelogue of Farhād Mīrzā, who travelled to Mecca in 1875. I assume that the horizon of expectation (Gadamer) is essential for readers to make sense of a text. This horizon changes over time therefore the meaning of a text changes, too. I try to understand the meaning for the original readers by attempting to reconstruct their horizon of expectation. At first, I look at possible literary conventions and influences in the milieu of the author, i.e. the court of Naḳīr ad-Dīn Šāh. Then I examine aspects of the content of the chapters and give an analysis of the context of the pilgrimage, the status of the author at court and how this translates to the content and



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narration of a poem, which was recited by the author at the grave of Muhammad in Medina.

### **Biography**

Thomas Ecker studied Islamic Studies in Heidelberg and Iranian Studies at Bamberg, Germany. He is currently a PhD candidate investigating Persian pilgrimage travelogues in Bamberg. His focus are two Persian pilgrimage reports, written by Qajar princes in late 19th century

### **Peyman Eshaghi**

#### **Re-Reading the Hajj Travelogues/Treaties of Iranian Religious Intellectuals of the 20th Century**

Due to the grave importance of Hajj to the Iranian Muslims, it has been at the center of many intellectual debates in modern Iran. Among those who have contributed to these discussions are intellectuals either with religious background or clergies with modern approaches to Islamic theology, who are generally called Iranian "religious intellectuals." For them, Hajj has been an essential Islamic ritual that should be simultaneously promoted, modified, and re-understood. Their Hajj travelogues are written not similar to the "traditional/conventional" ones who try to explain the very steps of the Hajj rituals but are intellectual "manifestos" to articulate the new Islamism based on the unity of Muslim experienced in Hajj and reconstruction of the Muslim community (Umma). These Iranian "religious intellectuals" travelogues usually entail scholarly implications and interpretations of the Hajj rituals to maintain an Islamic way of life and thinking in the modern world. In this article, I argue that the first finding of these a social one, which is the Muslim community (Umma), which forms them, politics plays an essential element in shaping it. They have both a positive and negative feeling toward what they consider as the very reality of the Umma and generally propose a political solution to advance its situation. As of last, I show that they do not provide any realistic plan to develop the Muslim community, but they try to use hajj to mobile it in terms of political action.

### **Biography**

Peyman Eshaghi is the Ph.D. student of anthropology and sociology of religion, at the Divinity School, The University of Chicago, USA. His main areas of research are pilgrimage and cult of saints in Islam, ritual and politics in the Muslim world and anthropology of Islam.

**Nesrien Hamid**

**“It’s in the air:” Pilgrims’ Perceptions of a Transformed Mecca**

The ongoing urban transformation of Mecca, specifically the area surrounding the Grand Mosque, has given the city a radically different topography. A hilly, arid desert, where the only significant structure was the Kaaba, Mecca is now a flashy modern city with skyscrapers and shopping malls, akin to its counterparts around the world. In recent years, the city’s rapid reconstruction has largely been driven by the Saudi state’s neoliberal goals of diversifying the economy. In that calculus, Meccan space is being reconfigured into a vast resource for property speculation and profit. For most pilgrims, however, Mecca is the holiest city of Islam and the symbolic center to which they turn every day and yearn to visit. There is thus an evident tension between the Saudi neoliberal project and the motives and expectations animating the imaginaries and journeys of many pilgrims. Both logics, nevertheless, have to occupy the same space, one Mecca. How then do they sit together? This present examination begins answering this question by outlining the ways American and British female pilgrims perceived Mecca’s urban makeover. Building on the assumption that space is complex and variously constituted, I asked my interlocutors about what their expectations of the city were, how they made sense of its transformation, and the role space played in their spiritual journeys.

**Biography**

Nesrien Hamid recently completed his MA at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The MA thesis was titled: “The Room with a View: Fatwas, Space, and Ritual in Contemporary Mecca.” This project will be expanded in Hamid’s doctoral degree, which is planned to begin in Fall 2020.

**Zahir Janmohamed**

**Crowded Outlets: The Use of Technology by North American Khoja Shi’a Ithna Asheri Muslims on the Hajj**

Much of the Shia pilgrimage experience on the Hajj, I argue, is about experiencing, negotiating, and ultimately, pushing up against the Saudi government’s attempt to monopolize definitions and parameters of religious expression. But how does your experience of Hajj change if you can wall of the Saudi state by plugging in your headphones and listening to a Shia prayer or even a Shia preacher of your own choosing? How does this change, if at all, the minority Muslim’s narrative of being an “outsider” in Mecca, especially given that Shias have long enjoyed a tenuous relationship not just with the Saudi state but also with other pilgrims?



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Finally, how do these new technologies have a capacity to change the power relations between Shia pilgrims and Saudi religious authorities in Mecca and what limits are still there on Shia religious performativity through prayer and bodily postures?

### **Biography**

Zahir Janmohamed is a Rackham Merit Fellow at the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan, where he is pursuing an MFA in fiction. He is currently working on an inter-linked short story collection based on the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, Saudi Arabia. He previously worked in the United States Congress, where he was a senior foreign policy aide, and at Amnesty International, where he served as the Advocacy Director for the Middle East and North Africa.

### **Khadija Kadrouch-Outmany**

Postdoc in the Research Project Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca at the University of Groningen

### **Zilya Khabibullina**

#### **Selfies in Mecca: Visual Hajj Presentation Practices in Islamic Discourse**

The report is devoted to visual practices of Hajj presentation on the Internet, of which the selfie practice stands out for ambiguous interpretations in the Muslim community. Despite the fact that selfie is an invariable attribute of virtual life that accompanies the events and travels of many Internet users, there is an Islamic discourse about the admissibility of selfie presentation in holy places – Mecca and Medina. Fascination of selfies in the Hajj became popular regardless of age, nationality and place of residence. A clear attitude to this phenomenon has not yet been worked out; we plan to consider opinion groups – the place of selfie in anthropological research, in the verdicts of Saudi authorities and theologians from other countries, in the judgments of ordinary Muslims on the Internet. The report is based on the materials obtained during an ethnographic study of the Muslim segment of the Internet – content analysis of textual materials, photos of the Hajj. According to the study, in the month of Dhul-Hijjah Muslims organize themselves not only in real life, but also online.

### **Biography**

PhD (History), Senior Researcher of the Department of Religiology R.G. Kuzeev Institute for

Ethnological Studies – a Subdivision of the Ufa Federal Research Centre of the Russian Academy of Sciences (EES UFRC RAS), Senior Researcher of the Peter Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography (Kunstkamera) Russian Academy of Sciences. Statement of her research interests: Islam in Russia, leadership in Islam, pilgrimage, Hajj, ethno-confessional relations.

### **Tyler Kynn**

#### **Imagining Space: A Mughal Pilgrim's Encounter with Empire and the Islamic World**

This paper, a section from one of my dissertation chapters, examines the text and images of the seventeenth-century pilgrimage narrative of the Mughal pilgrim Safi ibn Vali Qazvini. I argue that Qazvini's narrative provides scholars with a clear example into the ways in which the hajj encounter provided pilgrims with a unique space in which understand the peoples and empires of the Early Modern Islamic World. Qazvini's encounter with the hajj provided the basis for his proto-ethnographic pilgrimage narrative which presents us with Muslim modes of Early Modern self-fashioning, difference-making, and imperial hierarchies. I argue that the hajj and encounters, like those found in Qazvini's pilgrimage narrative, should be understood as parallel to better known stories of European early modern encounter and identity formation vis-à-vis the New World. The paintings of Qazvini's hajj provided his readers with a clearly defined articulation of his imagination of the early modern Islamic World and the hierarchies of difference produced by his encounter with other Muslim pilgrims.

### **Biography**

Affiliation: Yale University (History Department), PhD Candidate

BA University of Minnesota (Twin Cities)- History Department

MA Central European University (Budapest, HU)- History Department

### **Göran Larsson**

#### **Swedish hajj-travellers – perspectives from the North**

The aim of this chapter is to present data from the first empirical study of Swedish hajj-travellers. For example, how do Swedish Muslims experience the hajj; how do they prepare for the trip to Saudi Arabia; how is the pilgrimage organized by Swedish Muslim organizations (i.e. hajj travel agencies) and is the pilgrimage only perceived as a religious journey? Answers to these and similar questions were collected during 2016 and 2017 and they are all included in the book, *Voices about the hajj (Röster om hajj* in Swedish).



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### Biography

Göran Larsson is professor of religious studies at the university of Gothenburg, Sweden. His research focuses mainly on Islam and Muslims in Europe in both past and present times, but he has also conducted research on theoretical and methodological questions within the field of religious studies. Larsson is current the deputy dean at the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Gothenburg.

### Richard van Leeuwen

Co-applicant & team member in the Research Project Modern Articulations of Pilgrimage to Mecca. Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Department of Religious Studies. University of Amsterdam.

### Seán McLoughlin

#### **Returning from Hajj in a Late Modern Muslim Diaspora: Contested Narratives and Rituals of Crossing and Dwelling**

In this lecture I draw on my experience of (intermittently) researching British Muslim experiences of Hajj during the last two decades (McLoughlin 2002; 2009ab; 2013abc; 2018; 2019). I begin by reflecting on the publication of Eickelman and Piscatori's (1990) landmark collection, *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, offering brief remarks on how the study of lived experiences of the great Islamic pilgrimage has developed in the last 30 years. I then unpack my main arguments, which rehearse the ongoing importance for my work of foregrounding the Hajj in terms of wider developments in anthropological approaches to the study of Islam (e.g. Mahmood 2005; Schielke 2008), as well as pilgrimage and other forms of mobility (e.g. Coleman 2002; Coleman and Eade 2004), and most especially in terms of migration, diasporas and transnationalism (e.g. Tweed 1997; 2006; Vásquez 2011). The final part of my presentation experiments with Tweed's spatial metaphors of 'crossing' and 'dwelling', exploring their ability to illuminate my respondents' experiences of just one aspect of their journey: the return to everyday life. My discussion will encompass: i) embodied individuals' sustenance of a connection to piety through practiced and more spontaneous remembering of the Hajj; ii) intimate sharing of blessings through the giving and receiving of Hajj souvenirs; iii) the changing status of being a Hajji/a in a diasporic public now accustomed to mass pilgrimage; and iv) an ongoing felt absence of the

holy places which in turn feeds a spiritual 'homing desire' for a return there. Attention to pilgrims' contested narratives and rituals in these ways reveals how (in Tweed's terms) they continually move horizontally and vertically, physically and metaphorically, through space and (re)make a sense of home at the scales of the body, wider territories and ultimately the cosmos.

### **Biography**

Seán McLoughlin is Professor of the Anthropology of Islam in the School of Philosophy, Religion and the History of Science at the University of Leeds. He is co-editor of *European Muslims and the Secular State* (Routledge 2005); *Diasporas: Concepts, Intersections, Identities* (Zed Books 2010) and *Writing the City in British Asian Diasporas* (Routledge 2014). During the last decade Seán has had a leading role in pioneering research on Hajj-going amongst Muslim minorities in the West. In 2011-12 his team recorded 30 in-depth interviews with pilgrims which fed into the British Museum's exhibition, *Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam* (2012). During a British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship in 2013-14 he began to explore the cultural and political economy of Hajj in the UK. In 2018-19 an Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) Impact Acceleration Account Award saw him publish *Mapping the UK Hajj Sector: Moving Towards Communication and Consensus* (2019). This 30,000-word work is the first independent report on the British Muslim pilgrimage industry and was launched at Parliament by the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Hajj and Umrah.

### **Yahya Nurgat**

Phd candidate at the Faculty of History, University of Cambridge. Research title: 'Space, Ritual and Religious Experience in the Ottoman Hajj, 1660-1760.'

### **Lena Rethel**

#### **Hacking Hajj? Exploring virtue/al economies of Muslim pilgrimage**

This paper explores contemporary entanglements of Hajj/Umrah and global capitalism. Hajj/Umrah have not been spared the triple onslaught of neoliberalism, consumerism and financialisation. At the same time, Islamic (internet) entrepreneurs are seeking new ways of 'delivering' Hajj. Building on Rume Ahmed's (2018) idea of 'hacking Islamic law', this paper develops the notion of "hajj hacks" to refer to a range of novel Hajj-related virtual economy practices. It looks at two case studies: the Hajj Hackathon hosted by Saudi Arabia in 2018 and Hajj/Umrah virtual reality (VR) apps. On this reading, hajj hacks emerge as attempts to



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paper over the cracks that perhaps are inevitable components of religious pursuits in an age of market-driven hyper-globalisation. One (unintended) consequence of the growing popularity of hajj hacks is that it reduces to a matter of technological alignment the big questions that should be provoked by the encounter with global capitalism.

### Biography

Lena Rethel is Associate Professor of International Political Economy in the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Warwick and Senior Associate at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. Her current research Trust explores the emergence and of Islamic economies and their governance and is funded by a research fellowship from the Leverhulme. She is an editor of the *Review of International Political Economy* and a founding editor of the pedagogic resource *The International Political of Everyday Life*.

### Jihan Safar

#### **Couples from France performing the Hajj and 'Umra: Reconfiguring conjugalities, transforming markets**

More and more young Muslim couples from France are performing the Hajj within the first years of marriage. Young brides are also asking the pilgrimage as their dower (*mahr*). Travelling to Mecca in couple attests today of a gender egalitarian approach in terms of religious obligations and financial sharing compared to older generations. This is mainly the result of shifting religiosities ; emergence of a new middle class ; and changes in women's status. In addition to that, travels to Mecca after marriage have been stimulated by the Hajj and 'Umra markets in France. Travel agencies are proposing new touristic products to couples ; and are establishing partnerships with Muslim matrimonial agencies to promote pilgrimage after wedding ; benefiting thus from a growing and lucrative niche.

What do the couple's pilgrimages tell us about the evolution of Muslim marriages, gender relations and Islam in France ? This article analyzes the complex relation between pilgrimage and marriage ; revealing how individual and familial characteristics, intertwined with markets evolutions and Saudi measures, contribute to shifting pilgrimage and marriage practices.

The results of this paper are based on semi-structured interviews conducted in France between 2016 and 2019 with pilgrims and managers of travel agencies as part of a broader project on the Hajj and 'Umra markets in France, financed by the Bureau Central des Cultes (Ministry of Interior, France). Additional interviews were conducted for the purpose of this paper.

### **Biography**

Safar earned her Phd at Sciences-Po (Paris) in 2015 on Marriage and Procreation in Oman and Kuwait, and subsequently carried out postdoctoral research financed by Georgetown University (Qatar) about the mahr (dower) in Oman. In addition to research on marriage in the Gulf; Safar has been working on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The first study 'The Hajj market in France' was carried out in 2016; and the second one is currently conducted on the 'Umra market in France. Both studies are conducted with Safar's colleague Leila Seurat and funded by the Bureau central des cultes (France). The project is hosted at IISMM-EHESS.

### **Neda Saghaee**

#### **Discourse on the Sacred Pilgrimage of Hajj in Sufism and its Social Dimension**

The paper studies the rites of pilgrimage to Mecca not only through a symbolic interpretation but also from its social features among Sufi pilgrims. Primarily, it turns attention to the secrets of rituals, internal aspects of stages, and the hidden meaning of the Hajj as an attempt to understand why the Hajj is regarded as one of the five pillars of Islam from a mystical perspective. In Sufi analysis, the Hajj metaphorically is a journey from the world of multiplicity toward union with the divine beloved. What must be considered here is that Sufis know the external aspect of this journey, since it is corporal and the pilgrims interact with others and return to the society from which they came after the pilgrimage. From this point of view, the relationship between the Hajj and other topics such as etiquettes on the journey and residence at home (*ādāb-i safar wa hazar*), or etiquettes on companionship and fellowship (*ādāb-i hamnishīnī wa suhbat*), must be considered for the reason that the Hajj is against seclusion. In addition, it is necessary to factor in personal spiritual influences. Therefore, from a socio-political point of view, the paper investigates the interrelationships between Sufi pilgrims with others during the journey toward Mecca and during their residence in Mecca. It is assumed that the pilgrimage was very constructive since it expanded the pilgrim's network and was influential to spread mystical teachings. In addition, the paper scrutinizes some mystical rituals before the Hajj such as visiting the great masters' tombs. The text will analyze such rituals as swearing allegiance to the earlier masters and revisiting their teachings, although it also pays attention to practices that have been labeled innovative and unIslamic by other religious groups with a strict sharī'a inclination.



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### Biography

Dr. des. Neda Saghaee Education • 2018: PhD in Islamic studies, Erfurt University, Erfurt, Germany. • 2007: MA in Islamic Mysticism, Imam Research Institute, Tehran, Iran • 2004: BA in Comparative Study of Religion and Mysticism, Al-Zahra University, Tehran, Iran.

### Leila Seurat

#### Young France Muslims traveling to Mecca

#### Belongings and Discriminations between Past and Present

In my postdoctoral research dedicated to the young French Muslims performing the Hajj, I argued that the big pilgrimage reinforces both religious and national belongings since the pilgrims travel exclusively with a group of national fellows. In continuity with my previous research, this proposal analyses the “belongings” of young French Muslims vis-à-vis their country of origins.

If it is clear that Islam has increasingly disconnected from culture and in particular its culture of origins as Olivier Roy has shown several years ago, the relation the young French Muslims have with their country of origins remains complex both disavowed and convoked. On the one hand, they disapprove the religious practices of their parents, perceived as ignorant Muslims for following popular practices inherited from the “bled”; on the other hand, as being re-appropriated by the young generation, the “bled” still remains central in the construction of their own “identities”.

The Hajj illustrates several connections the pilgrims establish between the holy sites and their country of origins (choosing the proper agency or the city to travel from; collecting money for welfare associations in North Africa; formulating hijra project to North Africa at their return from the Hajj). In itself, the motivation to perform the Hajj cannot be fully understood without taking into account the discriminations perceived or experienced by the citizens with an immigration background.

The idea that young citizens with an immigration background would be more faithful to Algeria, Tunisia or Morocco rather than to France still dominates the discourses in the public sphere. Alongside the existing critical academic literature, this contribution aims at demystifying these misconceptions by taking the Hajj as an object of research. Indeed, the big pilgrimage throw into question assumptions according to which the construction of national identities depends on strong and permanent geographical roots. Following the work developed by many scholars like Appadurai, I argue on the contrary that sedentarisation is no longer an accurate criterion to measure national belonging.

### **Biography**

After completing a Phd at SciencesPo Paris in 2014, Leila Seurat started a research project a on the Hajj market in France with her colleague Jihan Safar in 2016. This project is both part of a collective project and a personal academic research hosted at the EUI in Florence during the academic year 2017-2018.

### **Miguel Ángel Vázquez**

#### **“Coplas del peregrino de Puey Monçón”: A 16th Century Spanish Poem about the Hajj**

This paper presents and contextualizes a poem written towards the end of the 16th century in Aljamiado (Spanish of the 16th century rendered with the Arabic alphabet). In it, written in Spanish “coplas,” the author describes different aspects of his journey from Spain to Mecca: his difficulties, as well as details of what he saw in Mecca and Medina. It is a statement of the author’s hybrid identity (a traditional Spanish poetic form to express a Muslim message), and a testament to the poet’s (and his community of coreligionists’) resilience at remaining Muslim in the face of an administrative policy that had forbidden any and all expressions of Islam in Spain. As such, it is an act of counter hegemony in the face of the persecution of Moriscos and Islam in 16th century-Spain. For all Muslims, performing the pilgrimage to Mecca is an achievement, for a Morisco, it was a more than that, since the Christian authorities attempted against the Moriscos’ sense of Muslim identity.

### **Biography**

Miguel Ángel Vázquez, Associate Professor, Florida Atlantic University. Miguel studies the secret literature of the last Muslims in Spain. In the 16th century, they produced a number of manuscripts written in Spanish but rendered with the Arabic alphabet instead of the Latin alphabet. He is also interested in the comparative study of Spanish and Arabic literary traditions, and, in that context, he has produced Arabic to Spanish translations.

### **Noor Zehra Zaidi**

#### **“The Experience of Difference”: The Sectarianization of Hajj Amongst Shi’ite Muslims**

In April 2019, Libya’s grand mufti called on Muslims to abstain from performing a second hajj or *umrah* to Mecca. Sadiq al-Ghariani could not stand in the way of Muslims undertaking their first hajj, but he argued it was incumbent on Muslims avoid enriching the Saudi regime beyond the one hajj required by Islam. That money, he opined, was used to help Saudi rulers “carry



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out crimes against our fellow Muslims.”

The fatwa was a striking example of the politicization of hajj and the link increasingly being made between the politics of Saudi Arabia, their self-emphasized role as the custodians of the holy sites of Mecca and Medina, and the commercialization and sky-rocketing cost of hajj. This discontent with the Saudi regime is particularly pronounced amongst Shi'a Muslims, for whom undertaking this central tenant of Islam means reconciling their faith as Muslims with a sectarian solidarity they feel is threatened by Saudi policies and Wahhabi doctrine.

This paper will explore attitudes toward the hajj amongst Shi'a Muslim communities within the United States and the sectarianization of discourse around this collective ritual. It will analyze how Shi'ite Muslims articulate the tension between the immersive goals of hajj, the desire to be firmly tied to the broader Muslim *ummah* and feel connected to the 'home' of Muslims with the *experiencing* of difference in ritual and identity. Discussions of hajj are tied to anger at the destruction of Jannat-ul-Baqi' and their emotions at this negation of their history, the lectures against *bida'* and *shirk* that Shi'ite Muslims claim they are subject to in Masjid-e-Nabawi, the experiential difference between hajj and Arba'een pilgrimage to Iraq, and the perceived anti-Shi'a bias of the Saudi regime.

This ambivalence towards hajj also coincides with renewed vigor for *ziyārat* to Shi'ite shrine cities and the massive increase in pilgrimage groups to these sites. Since 2003, the rise in *ziyārat* has reoriented the religious 'homing desire,' as described by Sean McLoughlin, from Mecca to these Shi'ite shrines.

### Biography

Dr. Noor Zaidi is an Assistant Professor of History at the University of Maryland Baltimore County. She completed her PhD in 2015 at the University of Pennsylvania with a dissertation entitled, "Making Spaces Sacred: The Sayyeda Zaynab and Bibi Pak Daman Shrines and the Construction of Modern Shi'a Identity," which explores the evolution of pilgrimage to two female shrines in Syria and Pakistan. She is currently working on a new manuscript on sites of sectarianization in Saddam Hussein's Ba'athist Iraq, which explores shrines as sites of memory-making and the construction of an identity of resistance amongst the Shi'a Muslim community of Iraq.





Map inner-city Groningen



**Faculty of Theology & Religious Studies**  
Oude Boteringestraat 38

**XO**  
Folklingestraat 13





**e-mail:** [faculteit.ggw@rug.nl](mailto:faculteit.ggw@rug.nl)  
**tel:** 050-36 38017  
**address:** Oude Boteringestraat 38  
9712 GK Groningen, The Netherlands



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