THE HAJJ AS ITS OWN UNDOING: INFRASTRUCTURE AND INTEGRATION ON THE MUSLIM JOURNEY TO MECCA

I

INTRODUCTION

With the spread of steam travel through the Middle East and Asia from the 1850s, the world’s largest Muslim population zones rapidly came into closer contact than ever before. Yet the geography of this new transport infrastructure — the hard networks that bound steam hubs together — also intensified Muslim contact with non-Muslim peoples and places. And as the industrial transport revolution enabled a massive growth in travel among all classes of Muslims, no journey was more expanded and transformed than the oldest Islamic journey of all: the hajj.

By drawing on pilgrim diaries in several languages, this essay explores the nature of that transformation by demonstrating how the hajj became, paradoxically, a journey through an increasingly non-Muslim world, in both concrete and conceptual terms. To show the multiple dimensions of this process by which industrialized travel transformed the hajj as both a social and an intellectual rite de passage, the following pages focus on a sequence of interrelated developments, each predicated on the material structures of transport infrastructure. Methodologically, then, the essay shows the effects of the ‘hard’ globalization of industrial transport networks on the ‘soft’ globalization of sociability and knowledge.¹ For through its increasing integration into the infrastructure and the social and semantic geographies of steam travel, the hajj was transformed from a ritual movement through a long-familiar Muslim memory space into a journey through a world governed by ideas, peoples and technologies of non-Muslim provenance. In the pluralistic spaces of port cities and rail hubs, steamer decks and train carriages, the

¹ For fuller delineation of this task of global history, see Nile Green, ‘Maritime Worlds and Global History: Comparing the Mediterranean and Indian Ocean through Barcelona and Bombay’, History Compass, xi, 7 (2013).
journey to Mecca became a broker of intense cross-cultural contact, while the printed *hajj* diary introduced a pious reading public to a world beyond Islam. As the steam pilgrimage revealed to its passengers a world order in which Islam and Muslims had little evident place, here lay the paradox of the *hajj* as the means of its own undoing.

In recent years, the nineteenth-century expansion of the *hajj* has received much scholarly attention. Although a proportion of pilgrims continued to reach Mecca by more traditional means, it is now widely recognized that steam travel afforded a vast increase in pilgrim numbers. In 1853 the total number of pilgrims was estimated at about fifty thousand; by 1910 that figure had multiplied to 310,000, borne largely by steamers from South and South-East Asia. This vast increase created challenges for both European and Ottoman administrators of the pilgrims’ travel routes. In response, most of the scholarship has focused on this administrative dimension of the *hajj* by way of the policing, surveillance and quarantining of pilgrims. It is an

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analytical focus that has relied largely on colonial archives rather than pilgrim accounts, with the main variable of debate being the extent to which the imperial powers sought to prevent certain pilgrims from travelling or to enforce pilgrims en masse to move in more controlled, ordered and medicalized ways. Historians are certainly in agreement that the transport revolution changed the demography of the hajj, in terms of both sheer numbers and ethnic diversity. But inattention to pilgrims’ own writings has lent the impression that these steam hajjis undertook an essentially similar journey to that of their pre-industrial forebears. Rather than historians, it has been anthropologists and political scientists who have pointed to the ruptures and contradictions that the modern hajj has presented to its participants. Historians have quietly assumed that a ritually transcendent hajj continued as it had done before, with the industrial and imperial developments of the nineteenth century either enabling or disabling Muslims from making this timeless voyage. Even scholars who refer to accounts written by pilgrims themselves have tacitly accepted this continuity thesis, often through focusing on the end point, Mecca, rather than on the journey there. Yet it was that journey that was the very means and locus of transformation.

Empire certainly played a central role in enabling these transformations to take place. The new transportation technologies and, in most cases, companies were of European

(n. 4 cont.)


6 See, for example, the otherwise effective surveys of Michael N. Pearson, Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience, 1500–1800 (Princeton, 1996), and F. E. Peters, The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places (Princeton, 1994), chs. 6 and 7.


provenance. Moreover, passenger transport on an industrial scale spread diseases (and potentially ideologies) that prompted imperial agencies to monitor and sometimes manage the very mobility that Europe’s commercial technologies had enabled.9 Herein lies what Valeska Huber has called the interplay between acceleration and deceleration of movement.10 Yet this very sequence of unintended consequences and ad hoc responses to technological and commercial innovations points to the contingencies and limits of colonial control.11 For even amid the screening for diseases and surveillance of pan-Islamism, by providing mobility as a market commodity the sale of steamship and train tickets meant that the impact of empire was as much commercial as it was disciplinary.12 Moreover, the colonists’ need to demonstrate their commitment to religious freedom rendered them relatively slow to respond to American and Ottoman calls to restrict the flow of pilgrims in reaction to the late nineteenth century’s epidemics of cholera and repatriation of pauper pilgrims. Officials in British India, for example, were far more reluctant than either their Ottoman or their non-imperial counterparts to increase quarantine regulations.13 Nor were Muslim pilgrims the exclusive subjects of such regulation, for lower-class Chinese, Japanese and European migrants were similarly subjected to new regimes of biomedical control.14 A similar point can be made about passport regulations, which, though eventually affecting pilgrims to Mecca, primarily regulated non-colonial movements in the Pacific, particularly between Asia and the Americas.15 As Radhika Singha has concluded with respect to

10 Huber, Channelling Mobilities.
11 The point is expanded in Gelvin and Green (eds.), Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print (editors’ intro.).
13 Low, ‘Empire and the Hajj’, n. 27.
colonial Indian controls, since ‘the pilgrim passport . . . was not compulsory’, it was ultimately ‘of limited value for political surveillance’. Overall, given colonial pressures to demonstrate freedom of religion, in the decades either side of 1900 the hajj was less restricted than Asian labour migration. Whether in terms of the expansion of cheap mass transport or of the regulations that responded to it, the global scale of these developments shows the analytical limits of a colonial framework.

Through the exigencies of the commercial market, the new technologies of mass transportation had consequences unforeseen by either their creators or their users. The outcomes of this vast congeries of human traffic could be controlled by neither imperialists nor pilgrims. Instead, the transformation of the pilgrimage emerged through its incorporation into a global transportation infrastructure that reached further than Islam and empire. As a journey between places and among people, the hajj was absorbed in the half century leading up to 1914 into the expanding geography of steam. Moving beyond the heuristic shades of empire that haunt so many recent studies of the hajj, this essay pursues a more uneven set of developments. The analysis builds on the pilgrims’ own diaries rather than on colonial records, which inevitably magnify the hand of empire. Rather than reifying rigid categories of Islam and empire or the dichotomous agendas of controlled Muslims and controlling colonists, the diaries show the steam passage to Mecca as a crucible in which the geographical, social and semantic alloy of the hajj was re-smelted. What rolled out of that industrial crucible was not the divided world of post-colonial theory, but a more integrated globe into which Muslims were incorporated even as they were unevenly controlled.

18 On other unintended outcomes of the intersection of Islam and the structures of empire, see Nile Green, Islam and the Army in Colonial India: Sepoy Religion in the Service of Empire (Cambridge, 2009).
The following pages draw on the diaries of Indian, Persian, Afghan and Tatar travellers along the new routes to Mecca that, as the steam *hajj* became a truly global phenomenon, encompassed even the United States and Japan. The focus is on pilgrims travelling from further away than the Mediterranean. For while North African and Levantine pilgrims also used steam transport, whether by train across Algeria and Egypt or by steamer through the Mediterranean and the Suez Canal, it was the rapidly growing numbers of longer-distance travellers who were most exposed to the *hajj*’s new infrastructural geography. The sample — comprising small-town traditionalists and urbane intellectuals, pious quietists and political activists, Shi’ites and Sunnis, women and men — forms a cross-section of the vast and diverse pilgrim traffic. Unlike studies that focus on pilgrims from one region, the comparative perspective presented here highlights patterns among travellers from different regions, both colonized and not. The aim is to avoid the predetermination of pilgrim concerns (with, for example, pan-Islamism or anti-colonialism) that emerges from either narrow samples or a focus on individuals. Some pilgrims in this period did voice the political concerns that scholars have recently highlighted; others voiced the commercial priorities to which scholarship has paid less attention. As Seema Alavi has noted of pilgrims and other itinerant Muslims in the Indian Ocean, their ‘transnationalism was not narrowly anti-colonial in tone . . . nor can it be reduced to an aspiration towards pan-Islam’. Instead, what emerges from the pilgrim diaries presented here is the impact of material transport networks in rendering the *hajj* a journey among non-Muslim places, peoples and ideas.

Triggered by the global expansion of industrial communications, the transformation of the pilgrim experience involved a sequence of interdependent developments. The first was geographic: the steamship and rail networks that pilgrims used were primarily developed to link Europe and the non-European world via the

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ports of the Mediterranean, the Indian Ocean and beyond. As a result, pilgrim journeys inevitably passed through non-Muslim regions, especially the cosmopolitan steam ports that were so prominent a feature of nineteenth-century steamship globalization. The second development was demographic: steam travel not only vastly increased the number of pilgrims but also introduced them to concentrated assortments of non-Muslim peoples in ships, trains and ports. In funnelling Muslims from the villages of India, Malaya, Russia and Persia through the pluralistic steam hubs of Bombay, Singapore, Odessa and Port Said, the *hajj* became a structured encounter with the non-Muslim world. The third of these interdependent developments was semantic: the steam *hajj* became a vector of new knowledge and meanings acquired in the diverse worlds-in-miniature of the steamship and train carriage. Such close encounters with non-Muslims involved intellectual exchange that led some passenger pilgrims to adopt new conceptual vocabularies from Russian, French and English.

In what follows, I pursue these geographic, demographic and semantic transformations as they resounded in the writings of pilgrims themselves. Throughout, the analytical focus is on the journey rather than the destination. For the *hajj* brought pilgrims not only to Mecca; the spatial networks of steam transport into which the pilgrimage was integrated exposed them to a world beyond the old memory spaces of the pre-industrial *dar al-Islam*.

II

**GEOGRAPHY: A PILGRIMAGE RE-ROUTED**

From the second half of the nineteenth century, the expansion of coal-based transport delineated the spatial re-formation of the *hajj*. The pilgrimage quickly became an itinerary of steam nodes, all the more so since steamship ports doubled up as railheads for their hinterlands. The great Indian Ocean *hajj* terminal of Bombay, where pilgrims from India, Persia, Afghanistan and South-East Asia crossed paths, was not merely

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the ocean’s largest steamship harbour, but also, from 1853, the starting point of Asia’s first railway. In 1858 the Oriental Railway Company, the first in Ottoman Anatolia, similarly began from the commercial port of Smyrna, one of the Mediterranean’s most cosmopolitan ports. The year 1858 also saw the crucial rail linking of Cairo with Suez, expanding the line from Alexandria that had been established a few years earlier by the ruler ‘Abbas I and the engineer Robert Stephenson. Under the aegis of such comfortably seated custodians as Ibrahim Rif‘at Basha, even so hallowed an act as carrying the Ka’ba’s mahmal, or velvet cover, from Cairo to Mecca would from 1884 be undertaken by train and steamer. Following the opening of the Hijaz Railway in 1908, some 29,000 pilgrims arrived by train in 1911.

From the Mediterranean to the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, steamship companies provided passenger routes from ports serving hinterlands for vast numbers of potential pilgrims. To name just a few, companies involved in transporting hajj pilgrims included the Peninsular & Oriental Steam Navigation Company (founded 1840); the Messageries Maritimes (founded 1851); the British India Steam Navigation Company (founded 1856); the Norddeutsche Lloyd Linie (founded 1857); the Stoomvaart Maatschappij Nederland (founded 1870); and, further east, the Japanese companies Nippon Yusen Kaisha (founded 1870, re-established 1885) and Osaka Shosen Kaisha (founded 1884). Though the decision of Thomas Cook & Sons to enter the hajj market proved short-lived, many other companies profited by entering what Michael Miller has termed ‘the business of the hajj’. Sources written by the pilgrims

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27 As Miller explains, ‘Europeans entered and conquered the Hajj business, and added to it in two crucial ways. First, their steamship services made mass transport by sea cheaper and more accessible than ever before . . . Second, major European companies introduced to the pilgrim trade the same business logic and structures (cont. on p. 201)
themselves bear out the centrality of the shipping companies. Addressing the logistics of the steamship passage in his Urdu diary from 1879, A’zam ‘Ali ‘Azimabadi described the fraught business of buying tickets, dealing with middlemen and choosing a reliable ship. The hajj was being absorbed into, and then transformed by, the larger framework of the ‘mass transportation business’, which Miller has rightly described as a global enterprise.

The impact of steam travel was not limited to allowing more Muslims to cross the oceans more quickly and cheaply. It also transformed the geography of the hajj as a journey. Of the many ports that became so prominent in late nineteenth-century pilgrim itineraries, few had played a role in the pre-industrial hajj. In earlier times, the main hajj routes had linked together inland pilgrim nodes, whether famous cities such as Baghdad and Sana’a or obscure staging posts such as Buraydah and Thughrat Hamid. Those ports that were previously significant, such as ‘Aydhab in Egypt and Surat in India, were bypassed by the new itineraries of steam, which focused on what were effectively new hubs at Aden, Bombay, Batumi, Mombasa and Singapore. The older ‘stages’, or manzils, of the hajj did not so much cease to channel pilgrims as fail to keep up with the vast numbers carried by steamer and train. Hajj diaries, such as the Persian account of Mehdi Quli Hedayat, reveal the extent to which the transport revolution entered — indeed, preoccupied — pilgrim concerns. Hedayat dwelt in detail in his diary on how the railways he used (including the great Trans-Siberian) had been funded and constructed, and how conditions varied on

(n. 27 cont.)


29 For detailed coverage of the hajj’s various pre-industrial routes, see Peters, Hajj, 71–108.
the different steamships he used, by, for example, comparing Japanese with Russian carriers.\textsuperscript{30}

For much of Asiatic Russia, as well as neighbouring Persia, the expansion of the Russian rail network carried Central Asian and Persian pilgrims to such Russian steam ports as Batumi and Odessa on the Black Sea, from where they could sail west through a string of ports to Arabia.\textsuperscript{31} One of the many pilgrims drawn into this new infrastructural geography of the \textit{hajj} was the Persian Muhammad Reza Tabataba’i, who in 1880 began his pilgrimage from Tabriz. From there, he travelled through the north-west of the country by animal transport and crossed the border into Russian territory, passing through Yerevan and Tbilisi before reaching Batumi. At the time of his arrival there, this obscure Georgian port was being transformed into an important steam node. Having been annexed by Russia two years earlier, it was rapidly expanding its steamship traffic to render it an important new pilgrim stopover. Between 1883 and 1900 the Russian railway system expanded to link the port with Baku and Tbilisi, both within easy reach of Persians from across the border as well as rail \textit{hajjis} from across Asiatic Russia. As the Persian pilgrim Muhammad Husayn Farahani explained in his travelogue of 1886, the Russians ‘built the railway line and Batumi became the transit port’; he added a list of the Austrian, French, Russian and British steamship companies that operated from the port, noting that there was ‘a very good harbour . . . a wooden pier at which the large steamers can dock’.\textsuperscript{32}

While Farahani’s compatriot Tabataba’i reached Batumi too early for the railway, he did use its steamship links, which now connected northern Persia to the bustling ports of the Black, Mediterranean and Red seas.\textsuperscript{33} Having boarded at Batumi the

\textsuperscript{30} Mehdi Qu’i Hedayat, \textit{Safarnama-ye Tasharruf bih Makka-ye Mu’azzama} [Travelogue on a Visit to Mecca the Magnificent] (Tehran, n.d.), 17–18, 140.


\textsuperscript{33} Muhammad Reza Tabataba’i Tabrizi, \textit{Hidayaat al-Hujjaj: Safarnama-ye Makka} [Gift of the Pilgrims: Travelogue to Mecca] (Qum, 1386/2007); on the departure from Batumi, see 103–4.
steamship *Vesta* of the Norddeutscher Lloyd Linie, Tabataba’i called at Trabzon, Samsun, Istanbul, Izmir and Rhodes, before reaching Alexandria. Not only did his journey introduce him to the diverse populations of these ports, it also impressed on him the organizational achievements of the Lloyd Linie.\(^{34}\) His diary praised the superior quality of the Bremen-based company’s steamships, 120 of which, he explained, sailed through the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. Pointing to the commercialization of the *hajj*, Tabataba’i also commented on the price of tickets, while advising readers on the best way to avoid the unsettling experience of sea-sickness (*ranj-e dariya*).\(^{35}\)

Showing how steam ports also served as railheads, Tabataba’i disembarked in Alexandria for a train across Egypt to Port Said, where he boarded another commercial steamer (this time a British ship, the SS *Asia*), which took him down the canal to Jiddah. There, on Arabian soil, he left the steam network to ride a camel for the final fifty miles to Mecca, that unique Muslim space that till the 1900s lay virtually untouched by mechanization. Encompassed by the industrial underpinnings of a non-Muslim world, as though in a kind of ritual quarantine Mecca was the last place on the journey to retain the old sacred space-time of the *hajj*. But as Ottoman developmentalism introduced to the Hijaz the telegraph (from 1899) and rail track (from 1900), by the turn of the twentieth century, Mecca was also being integrated into the industrial world order that from the 1930s would see the holy city being rebuilt on the profits of oil exports.\(^{36}\)

As steam transport expanded its reach, Muslims from even the most isolated and landlocked regions of the planet were enabled to make the *hajj*. The opening of the Trans-Caspian Railway (completed 1888; extended 1901) and the Trans-Siberian Railway (first completed 1904) allowed Muslims from Central Asia and even Siberia to make the pilgrimage.\(^{37}\) Conversely,


\(^{36}\) On late Ottoman and early Saudi development policies, see Michael Christopher Low, ‘Ottoman Infrastructures of the Saudi Hydro-State: The Technopolitics of Pilgrimage and Potable Water in the Hijaz’, *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (forthcoming).

since the pilgrimage’s global traffic was multidirectional, the Trans-Siberian also afforded Middle Eastern pilgrims the opportunity to use the *hajj* as an excuse to take the long way round, visiting Japan and the United States on their leisurely world tours, adding radically new stages to the itineraries of old.\(^{38}\) For the Persian party that accompanied Mehdi Quli Hedayat to Mecca in 1904 (including the former minister ‘Ali Asghar Khan Atabak), the pilgrimage served as a deliberate means of studying the non-Muslim world.\(^{39}\) As a form of tourism for Muslims, the *hajj* had paradoxically become an excuse to investigate a world beyond Islam. When Hedayat’s group departed from Tehran, they set off on a circuit of the entire world en route to Mecca. Described in detail in Hedayat’s diary, their global *hajj* took them from the Caspian port of Bandar-e Anzali to Baku, where they entered the Russian rail network.\(^{40}\) There they boarded a train for Moscow, where they transferred onto the Trans-Siberian Railway (with many stops along the way) to Vladivostok. From there they turned south towards Moghdan in Manchuria and thence to Port Arthur, where they stumbled into the opening salvos of the Russo-Japanese War. From Port Arthur they journeyed on to Yantai; then to the treaty port of Tianjin, from where, after a touristic detour to Beijing, they moved on to Shanghai, whence they caught a steamer to Nagasaki. Then they paid visits to Kobe, Kyoto and Tokyo before embarking on another steamer at Yokohama to cross the Pacific to San Francisco.\(^{41}\) After a tour of northern California, they took a train to Chicago, then a second to New York, followed by a steamship to Cherbourg, a train to Paris and another to Brindisi, where they boarded a steamer for Alexandria and thence moved on to Cairo and Port Said by train. Having taken one more steamer down the Suez Canal, they finally


\(^{39}\) On Hedayat’s career, see Mehdi Bamdad, *Sharh-e Hâl-e Rejâl-e Iran dar Qarn-e 12 va 13 va 14 Hijri* [Biographical Accounts of the Men of Iran in the Twelfth, Thirteenth and Fourteenth Hijri Centuries], 6 vols. (Tehran, 1363/1984), ii, 455–9; iv, 184–7; vi, 196–8.


\(^{41}\) *Ibid.*, 112–14. With the exception of the well-known Port Arthur, I have supplied here the more familiar modern names for these places, replacing, for example, Hedayat’s ‘Chifu’ with ‘Yantai’.
reached Jiddah, where their steam pilgrimage neared its end as they mounted camels for the final forty miles to Mecca. Through both choice and necessity, such pilgrims used mechanized transport to travel far beyond the old *dar al-Islam*. Here was a kind of *hajj* with no pre-industrial precedent — indeed, in this particular instance, with no precedent before the opening of the Trans-Siberian Railway just months before Hedayat’s departure.

Reaching deeper still into Eurasia, the Chemins de fer de l’Indo-Chine et du Yunnan, built by the French between 1904 and 1910, linked the Vietnamese port of Haiphong with the Chinese city of Kunming in Yunnan province, where many Hui Muslims lived. These too were new stages on the journey, as was the port of Rangoon, through which Chinese and Burmese Muslims now passed en route to Bombay, Aden and Jiddah. It was only with the completion of the Hijaz Railway in 1908 that rail tracks finally snaked into the holy land itself, albeit stopping some two hundred miles short of Mecca at Medina. By then, such was the infiltration of steam travel into both the material and cultural fabric of the *hajj* that the Hijaz Railway’s opening was celebrated in a book-length panegyric which, in a pointer to the railway’s wide potential market, was published jointly in Arabic and Urdu. By the early twentieth century, the only significant Muslim regions not traversed by rail tracks were Persia, Afghanistan and Chinese Central Asia. And from the 1860s travellers from Arabia, Persia and Afghanistan were accessing steam networks that reached as far as their borders. In the case of Arabia, this meant the steamship services that called at Muscat, Aden and Jiddah; in the case of Afghanistan, the railway that linked the border towns of Peshawar and, in 1925, Landi Kotal to the Indian rail network; and in the case of Persia, the steamships that connected the southern port of Bushire with Bombay or the railheads that connected such Caucasian towns as Yerevan to the Russian rail network. In these ways, even before the brief working life of the Hijaz Railway in the 1910s saw steam carry pilgrims to the heart of Arabia, the industrial transport

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42 Michael Dillon, *China’s Muslim Hui Community: Migration, Settlement and Sects* (Richmond, 1999), 87.
The massive Muslim population of India was one of the largest providers of pilgrims funnelled to Bombay and Aden through the subcontinent’s vast rail network. They published many pilgrimage diaries in Urdu, creating a genre that Barbara Metcalf has rightly described as a ‘modern phenomenon . . . related to the changes engendered by British domination and western technology, including the printing press’. One was written by the provincial pilgrim A’zam ‘Ali ‘Azimabadi, who left his village of Mughalpura on 26 September 1879. From the outset, his pilgrim’s progress was entirely a sequence of railway stations, his slough of despond no more challenging than the negotiation of platform changes. For his hajj comprised an itinerary of trains and stations — from Mughalpura to Patna, from Begampur to Bankipur, from Jabalpur to Bombay — which he described with the keenest precision. Given that ‘Azimabadi published his diary on his return home, packed with practical information on steam routes and ticket touts, he clearly saw his journey as a new model hajj. Yet the reader of his diary could be forgiven for thinking it a celebration of steam as much as of the Meccan House of God, for it obsessively detailed every stage of the rail journey: departure times, the duration of journeys, the price of tickets, the quality of food at different stations. Unlike his forebears of even a generation earlier, his hajj was calculated to the minute, with a new attention to timing unknown to the pre-industrial pilgrim. His emphasis on the precision of train schedules reflects the railway’s effect not only on the standardizing of Indian time, but also on the standardizing of hajj time. For, in practice, the pilgrimage now proceeded not according to the mythic rhythms of the Muslim calendar, nor to the natural seasons of the monsoon, or mawsim, of the old Arabic geographies. Instead, it followed the godless timetables of the Great Indian Peninsular Railway. The Jada-e Haqq, or ‘Highway of Truth’, evoked in the published title of ‘Azimabadi’s diary was in substantive terms a road of steam and iron, a mechanical highway more visible in his prose than the intangible ‘Truth’ it led to.

46 ‘Azimābādī, Jāda-e Haqq, 262–76.
As public texts, many hajj diaries voiced critiques, fears and disappointments — particularly on reaching Mecca — that undermined the mystique of a journey that had previously been guarded by the small numbers making it. After a Persian woman, ‘Ismat al-Saltana, reached Jiddah in 1880, she recorded in her diary how all the way to Medina her ‘group was continuously subject to highway robberies of all sorts, as well as extortion by local gangs’. Reported in almost all hajj diaries of the period, such encounters with touts and bandits were worse in Arabia than anywhere on the journey. As late as the 1920s, the overland caravans linking Mecca with Medina were still being robbed by Bedouins; in 1924 none reached Mecca at all. There remained, then, a crucial dissonance built into the new infrastructure that many a diary recorded. This was the tremendous underdevelopment of Mecca — indeed, its squalor, disease and disorderliness — in comparison with the more orderly, clean and controlled cities through which pilgrims now passed along their way. Here was a juncture between the acceleration and deceleration that, Valeska Huber has argued, was central to Middle Eastern globalization. Consequently, structured into steam itineraries was an unavoidable and unfavourable comparison between Mecca and the ports of call that led there. As the Indian pilgrim Sikandar Begum commented as early as 1864, ‘the city of Mecca is wild and melancholy-looking and . . . has a dreary, repulsive aspect’; its air was bad owing to ‘the stupidity and carelessness of the inhabitants, who allow accumulations of dirt to taint and vitiate it’; and ‘the majority of the people are miserly, violent-tempered, hard-hearted and covetous’.

47 Mahallati, ‘Women as Pilgrims’, 838. For official documentation regarding Bedouin attacks on pilgrims around this time, see Records of the Hajj, iv, 139–80, 569–612, 675–86.


49 To state this is not to celebrate the achievements of colonial administrators: Ottoman Smyrna, for example, also developed effective municipal regulations to maintain order and hygiene in this period: see Zandi-Sayek, Ottoman Izmir, ch. 2. For the fullest study of the holy cities at this time, see William Ochsenwald, Religion, Society and the State in Arabia: The Hijaz under Ottoman Control, 1840–1908 (Columbus, 1984), esp. ch. 3 on pilgrimage and health.

50 Huber, Channelling Mobilities.

Sikandar Begum was far from alone in her critique, and such complaints continued even in the wake of the grandest Ottoman attempt to improve the Arabian stage of the hajj, the Hijaz Railway. After travelling from Tara in Siberia to Singapore and thence to Bombay, the Tatar pauper pilgrim ‘Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim described himself finally begging his passage on a steamer to Jiddah, whence he finally approached Mecca in 1909. Having reached the holy city after so long a voyage through non-Muslim parts of the planet, the developmental disparity he observed forced him into a critical view of Mecca. Whether in terms of services or administration, it compared very badly with the orderly cities he had seen from Russia to Japan to Singapore. Too many pilgrims were admitted for its size; its administrators could not cope; there were no toilets for the many thousands of pilgrims, and its streets and public places were everywhere filled with excrement.\textsuperscript{52} Like the countless pilgrims before him who succumbed to the plague and cholera that the pilgrimage vectored worldwide from the 1860s, both Ibrahim and his converted Japanese companion Yamaoka fell ill.\textsuperscript{53} Disillusioned and debilitated, they departed on the newly opened Hijaz Railway. If Mecca had nearly killed them, then they were rescued by the intervention of rail.

As Seema Alavi has noted, many other pilgrims carried home stories that ‘juxtaposed the corruption of the Caliph’s administration and his callousness to visitors with the influence wielded by brokers’.\textsuperscript{54} In such ways, the industrialized hajj of the masses — and its counterpart, the printed hajj narrative — became vehicles of critical comparison. Different travellers certainly took different lessons from their experiences. From the early twentieth century, the contrasts drawn by some pilgrims fuelled attempts to explain Muslim under-development through anti-colonial forms of dependency theory or to remedy it through pan-Islamic solidarity projects that culminated in the


\textsuperscript{53} On disease in Mecca at this time, see Pistor-Hatam, ‘Pilger, Pest und Cholera’; Tagliacozzo, \textit{Longest Journey}.

\textsuperscript{54} Alavi, ‘Fugitive Mullahs and Outlawed Fanatics’, 1357.
pan-Islamic Pilgrimage Congress of 1924. Underlying these new ideologies was the new industrial geography of the steam *hajj*. For as the pilgrimage was integrated into a global system of mass transportation, its itineraries ordered its passenger pilgrims into a voyage between two world systems, between a fading Islamic ecumene and an imperial–industrial world order. Far from focusing the pilgrim’s vision on the singularity of Islam, the geography of the steam *hajj* was innately, and problematically, comparative.

III

DEMOGRAPHY: UN-ISLAMIC ENCOUNTERS

Such comparisons were the outcome of the pilgrimage’s transformation into an itinerary of steam hubs. For, unlike its aeronautical successor a century later, whose more direct routes and Muslim-run agencies substantially ‘re-Islamized’ the pilgrimage, the steam *hajj* was an indirect journey of multiple ports and railway towns. Muslims sailing west from India or Persia would first call at Bombay or Karachi and later dock at Aden, then Jiddah; those travelling the northerly route from Central Asia or Afghanistan would pass through the Black Sea ports of Odessa and Batumi on to Izmir, Beirut or even Valletta in the Mediterranean before entering the Suez Canal at Port Said. Since these rapidly expanding ports were highly cosmopolitan centres, they rendered the pilgrims’ voyage less an experience of an Islamic world than at any point in history. Certainly, pre-industrial *hajjis* might occasionally encounter a Venetian or Armenian merchant in Alexandria or Smyrna, but before the nineteenth century the impact of such others was diluted by the political and cultural power of Islam. Besides, this pre-colonial pluralism nowhere near matched the scale, distribution and sheer diversity of non-Muslims (and not only Christians) who were scattered through the ports of the steam *hajj*. This intensified exposure to non-Muslims was no less the case when pilgrims reached the supposed ‘core’ of Muslim memory space in the Middle East. For the opening of the Suez Canal — the *qanal al-Suwis* — in 1869 was accompanied by the building of

European-style towns in Suez, Port Said and Ismaïlia, populated by French and Italian workers who staffed the canal and its railway and the many Hindus, Greeks, Maltese and Africans employed on ships and in the docks. The canal ports especially presented pilgrims with confusing medleys of people from far and wide. Confronted with the lower-class Arab and African Muslims who performed manual duties at the docks, for middle-class pilgrims the encounter with port Muslims was no less unsettling than non-Muslims. What with its pauper pilgrims and proletarian dockhands, compared with the former prestige of the title of *hajji*, the pilgrimage had gone disturbingly downmarket.

One Suez canal cruiser was the Shi‘ite pilgrim ‘Abd al-Husayn Khan Afshar, who left his home town of Urmia in Persian Azerbaijan in 1882. From the Iranian frontier he entered the Russian rail network, passing from Tbilisi to Batumi, where he boarded a steamer for Istanbul and thence to Port Said at the mouth of the canal. Though Afshar was far from sympathetic to Europeans and their ideas, he was nonetheless exposed to them by the hard structure of the steam *hajj*. His diary shows how the new pilgrimage’s exposure of its participants to non-Muslim peoples was not dependent on a pilgrim’s desire for such encounters. This is clear in numerous sections, such as his shock in Alexandria at finding a European city in the heart of ‘Muslim’ space. As he moved on to Suez, he entered one of the great bottlenecks of the pilgrimage, through which passed vast numbers of pilgrims from North Africa, the Ottoman provinces, Persia and the Russian empire. Yet, to the surprise of the pious Afshar, even though it was in Egypt, Suez was not a Muslim city but a *Ferengi*, or European, one. Accentuating this European geography was his account of the canal’s construction by ‘the French engineer De Lesseps’ and of the European currencies such as ‘French riyals’ that pilgrims had to use. Yet there was a vexed admiration in Afshar’s disappointment. For most striking was the city’s cleanliness, which was for many

other pilgrims a troubling point of distinction from the Muslim spaces they did visit (not least, as we have seen, Mecca).\textsuperscript{59} Filled with well-kept parks where European women strolled, and with large numbers of shops owned by Italians and Frenchmen, Suez was an enticing choke point of pilgrim contact with non-Muslims.

For the thousands of Indian Muslims sailing from Bombay who did not need to pass through the canal, Aden served as the crucible of contact. When they first touched Arabian soil there, their first glimpse of the dwellers in Islam’s holy land was typically not of an Arab kinsman of the Prophet, but of a Hindu merchant or a British official. When it was a fellow Muslim, it was often one of the impoverished and dark-skinned Somali boys who swam out to greet ships and ply trinkets, encounters that affronted the class and ethnic prejudices of middle- and upper-class Muslims who sailed in the upper decks. After an upsetting encounter with a gang of such youths on his first moments in the holy land he had long dreamed of, Shibli Nu‘mani described in his Urdu account of reaching Aden in 1892 the port’s Arabs as being unable to understand his own classical Arabic. Only on meeting a German traveller could he converse in what he had formerly conceived as the common language of Muslims.\textsuperscript{60} When another Indian, Sulayman Nadwi, arrived in Aden, in the Urdu letters he sent home he described hearing Bengali being spoken but no Arabic. Wandering through its Arabian streets, Nadwi saw only Somalis and Indians; the only Arab he met in Aden turned out to be an Arab-descended Indian from Bombay.\textsuperscript{61} Here was a confusing new world in which, even in the ports of Arabia, Arabs seemed unable to speak Arabic, while Germans spoke the language of Islam just fine. Further integrating non-Muslims into the demography of the \textit{hajj}, by the later nineteenth century Mecca’s own port of Jiddah had become home to large numbers of merchants and bureaucrats from Italy, Britain, Greece, France and the Netherlands.\textsuperscript{62} Even in Arabia, the \textit{hajj} was unable to provide an enclosure of Muslim

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 152–4.
\textsuperscript{60} Shibli Nu’mānī, \textit{Safarna¯ma-e Ru¯mu¯ Misr u¯ Sha¯m} [Travelogue to Turkey, Egypt and Syria] (Azamgarh, 2010), 11–13.
encounters, while the dishevelled, non-Arab Muslims whom pilgrims did meet there often caused disillusionments that, for some, fed sectarian agitation or political awakening.

Along with Aden and the ports of the Suez Canal, Bombay was another important port of call where pilgrims faced the pluralistic demography of imperial globalization. Such pluralism not only involved non-Muslims: it also brought together different sectarian, ethnic and linguistic communities of Muslims. The industrial *hajj* node of Bombay was one of the great Muslim melting pots of the age — or, rather, one of the great Muslim salad bowls. As with almost every other Indian *hajji*, as well as the thousands of Afghan, Persian and South-East Asian pilgrims whom steam networks funnelled through India’s ports, the Indian rail network led A’zam ‘Ali ‘Azimabadi to Bombay. Staying in a makeshift *hajj* hostel in a Shi’ite *imambara*, he heard a cacophony of languages among the pilgrims: Sindhi, Telugu, Nagpuri, Farsi, Lakhnawi Urdu. Even fellow Muslims were unintelligible. For ‘Azimabadi and thousands of other Muslim visitors, the port was a disorientating *carrefour* of many different Muslims and their unfamiliar Islams.\(^{63}\)

In another important demographic impact of the new infrastructure, the ease, affordability and relative security of steam travel meant that larger numbers of women were also enabled to perform the pilgrimage.\(^{64}\) With Muslim women in even wealthy families still often confined to the domestic arena, the gendered impact of the steam *hajj* was amplified as the journey placed women in unprecedented proximity not only with non-family members but also with the startling lifestyles of non-Muslim strangers. The Persian diary of ‘Alaviya Kirmani tells how during her *hajj* of 1893–5 the new geography of steam carried her to Bombay. Unwilling at first to leave the safety of her cabin, she was unable to sleep for the deafening noise made by the combination of the city traffic and the engines of thirty steamships in the harbour.\(^{65}\) With its seven-storey buildings and its aqueduct

\(^{63}\) On other Muslim travellers’ perceptions of Bombay’s pluralism, see Green, *Bombay Islam*, ch. 4.

\(^{64}\) For example, Begum, *Princess’s Pilgrimage*, ed. Lambert-Hurley (editor’s intro.); Mahallati, ‘Women as Pilgrims’.

system, which bore water from many miles distant, when she did venture out, she found Bombay like nothing she had known from her closed domestic life in provincial Kerman. Drawn ashore again on another excursion, she described the city’s industrial sweat-shops, where she watched Hindu women making silk on two hundred spinning machines. Owned by Parsis and staffed by Hindus, the dark satanic mills of Bombay had become part of the Muslim pilgrimage. Having spent her entire life in provincial Kerman, where Shi’ites were an overwhelming majority over smaller groups of Zoroastrians and Jews, ‘Alaviya found her familiar social order completely reversed. Dashing in every direction through the streets and markets were huge numbers of Hindus, Christians and Zoroastrians (for whom she used the derogatory term Gebr). To Shi’ites such as herself, the bustling crowds of unbelievers were ritually unclean and polluting (najis). Through exposing her to these impure bodies, the pilgrimage itself brought her soul into greater jeopardy than had she remained at home. Far from bringing Muslims together in a communion of common faith, the industrialized hajj was a pilgrimage to pandemonium.

Yet soon ‘Alaviya found consolations in this strange city of infidels. Its novelties intrigued her. There was the zoo, where lions and leopards could be inspected close-up in cages; a museum of stuffed and posed animals; and the beautiful Queen’s Gardens, where trees and roses gave respite from the urban bedlam. The steam hajj held new and unexpected (if clearly not Islamic) highlights. Still, bound for Mecca and passing through Bombay a few years earlier, ‘Alaviya’s compatriot Na’ib al-Sadr Shirazi had no good words for such frivolous distractions. Instead, he condemned the city as a cauldron of moral corruption where Muslims were dragged astray from the Straight Path by the schemes of Englishmen, Jews and Hindus. His diary contains one of the most dramatic

(n. 65 cont.) ed. Rasūl Ja‘fariyān (Qum, 1386/2007), 51. Thanks to Kathryn Babayan for providing access to this book.

66 Ibid., 51, 55.
67 Ibid., 54–5.
68 Ibid., 49.
69 Ibid., 52–4.
examples of such negative reactions by way of a Persian anti-panegyric he composed to Bombay in 1888:

I saw groups of venal people with most curious dispositions
All with the single thought of gathering cash and gold.
Humans too are but a price for those souls who’ve gone astray . . .
In that land I saw many groups among the Hindus . . .
One sect I saw bow down in devotion to a cow
While another called the sun with the name of God the Greatest.
To another side I saw a most miserable crew
Who spend their days in pleading for trees to save their souls.
I saw there too a community of Jews
Who dream of every kind of disorder that can be . . .
Their hearts I saw all drowning in dreams of gold and silver
For not one can tell the difference between Friday and the Sabbath.
Of the people of Islam I saw many groups there too
But to even speak their names would be a grave disgrace.
If I were to stand before an upholder of Shari’a,
I’d be shamed to tell the vices that I counted there among them.  

In Batumi, Bombay’s counterpart in the Black Sea, the Persian pilgrim Farahani similarly condemned the Russians he met as ‘very impolite, wicked, devious, coarse, rude, unjust, harsh, haughty to peasants, and careless’, continuing in this vein for an entire paragraph.  

Aboard a ship bound for Bombay’s sister city of Singapore, the Tatar ‘Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim was at first happy to meet a Persian ‘fellow’ Muslim, but since the latter was a Shi‘ite, their meeting led to the recognition of Muslim disunity through a debate on the Shi‘a–Sunni schism.  

An impoverished pan-Islamist, Ibrahim shows how a global hajj itinerary could be made by a pilgrim who was all but penniless.  

Not only does his travelogue (printed in Istanbul in 1910–13) reflect the experiences of the many hajjaj al-miskin, or ‘pauper pilgrims’, borne to Mecca by steam, it also forms a Muslim counterpart to the writings of the European and American ‘beachcombers’ who similarly begged passages round the planet. Evoked in Harry Franck’s Vagabond Journey around the World from the same year as Ibrahim’s Turkish text, here was a subaltern globalism of tattooed

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73 On his further travels, see François Georgeon, ‘Un Voyageur tatar en Extrême-Orient au début du XXe siècle’, Cahiers du monde russe et soviétique, xxxii, 1 (1991); Green, ‘The Rail Hajjis’.
American sailors-turned-sannyasins making their own steam pilgrimages to the monasteries of Buddhist Burma. It is this unsteadily integrating world that Ibrahim’s travelogue unveils, showing how the hajj became less a coherently Islamic venture than a vehicle of cross-cultural contact.

This was not least the case on the steamship decks and railcarriages that served as spaces of sociability and laboratories of ideas. Ibrahim’s diary thus describes the little world of a train compartment aboard the Trans-Siberian Railway: he conversed with a Frenchman through a Russian–French dictionary; with an Austrian, whose German helped fill the compartment with ‘all the languages of Europe’; with a Polish commercial traveller, who turned the conversation towards a comparison between Islam and Christianity; and with a Yakut shaman, who directed the discussion to comparative religion in general.

Far from a deepening discovery of Islam, Ibrahim’s long and diversionary pilgrimage introduced him to a multitude of non-Muslims. These encounters increased as he ventured further east along the Trans-Siberian Railway: in Vladivostok he met Korean railway porters and discussed, in Russian, their conditions as a colonized people. In counterpoint to his account of Russian train compartments, he then described the little world of the Japanese steamer Hozan Maru, which ferried him to Yokohama. ‘I set off for the land of pagans’, he wrote. ‘For the country of infidels; I was probably not going to meet a single Muslim’. Sure enough, on board ship he met Russians, Englishmen, Tatars, Georgians and Ossetians, with whom he resorted to English and Russian for conversation at the dinner table. Moreover, the steamer was a space for encountering non-Muslim ideas not only through listening but also through reading. For, with so many passengers sharing their books and


76 Ibid., 62–5, 68–9, 70–2.

77 Ibid., 88–9.

78 Ibid., 93; author’s trans.

79 Ibid., 96.
newspapers, Ibrahim noted that ‘our boat was transformed into a library’.  

As their pious purposes came under threat from the cosmopolitan pressures of an integrating planet, ordinary pilgrims from small towns were increasingly drawn into thinking about the imperial–industrial world order they saw closing in on their shrinking Muslim ecumene. In a further example of how the pilgrimage became a means to meet an unprecedented array of non-Muslim people, in 1905 the steam-powered hajj-as-world-tour carried the Persian Mehdi Quli Hedayat from Iran across Siberia, Japan and the United States to Europe and, eventually, Arabia. To select just a few of the many encounters Hedayat described, his party met with Russian settlers in Siberia; Chinese migrant workers in Shanghai; an English female spy in Port Arthur; Spanish waiters in Yantai; an Indian maharaja in Kyoto; Japanese and American ministers in Tokyo; expatriate French, Russians and Germans in the treaty ports; Hawai’ian staff at the Young Hotel on Honolulu; a female American journalist in Chicago; and exiled Armenians in Paris.  
Here was the hajj diary as global ethnography.

As with the other ways in which the hajj was transformed through the inbuilt features of steam travel, Muslim passengers were effectively forced — structured — into engaging with unbelievers, for steam routes also provided a framework for social encounters. Even as pious a Shi’ite as Muhammad Reza Tabataba’i could not resist describing in detail the many secular attractions of the Mediterranean’s ports. Since this was anything but the deliberate policy of empire, which depended on the maintenance of social and racial difference, the process was more industrial than colonial. If in some colonial regions such fraternizing was forbidden in first-class rail carriages, elsewhere such encounters were an inevitable feature of shared steamer decks and rail compartments, whether among second- and third-class passengers or among the gentler denizens of the first-class decks. To conservative Muslims like ‘Abd al-Husayn Khan Afshar, such encounters were troubling distractions from the proper duties of the pilgrim. Smyrna by night, he

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80 Ibid.
complained, was a rowdy esplanade of crowds, casinos and coffee-houses. In Port Said he described a chance meeting with an English hammam owner, whom he overheard flirting in her own language with the Muslim clients of her bathhouse. Hoping to shame her by revealing he had overheard her sordid whispers, Afshar walked past her and said ‘Goodbye’ in English. Through such anecdotes, recorded in many hajj diaries of the period, we see how the pluralizing demography of industrial global transport transformed the hajj into a vector of moral tensions.

Since the steam ports were not so much the privileged panopticons of a colonial elite as the workplaces of male and female proletarians from Italy and France who subsisted on the trade in booze and bodies, such tensions occurred all the more often on the streets of these working ports. No soother of pious souls, the passage to Mecca had become a fraught journey through ‘flesh ports’ of iniquity and vice. For some, the steam ports were unavoidable moral perils: the Persian Farahani condemned the way Russian rule in Batumi implemented ‘as a means of freedom and comfort that whores and young male prostitutes are permitted to engage in debauchery’. For others, the ports were enticing panderers to dissipation. The Afghan Mahmud Tarzi recounted less critically the bordellos (fahisha-khana) of Istanbul and the drinking dens (bira-khana) of Alexandria. In 1891 Tarzi had set off with his father on a hajj that carried them through a series of ports around the eastern Mediterranean. His diary allows us to catch the pilgrimage’s transition between two generations of meaning: for the father, the hajj remained the pious journey of tradition; for the son, it was an opportunity to discover a new world of science and women. While Tarzi later became Afghanistan’s leading modernizer, the diary of his youthful pilgrimage reveals motivations and activities he shared with other young men for whom the hajj served as a cover for the things that young men do. Flinging himself into the globalizing demography of the steam

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84 Ibid., 125–6.
85 Farahani, Shi’ite Pilgrimage to Mecca, ed. and trans. Farmayan and Daniel, 65.
ports, for Tarzi the *hajj* was a flirtatious cruise between Istanbul, Athens and Alexandria, where he abandoned his father, and his pilgrimage, to stay instead with a prostitute. 87

Whether aboard ship or in port, the youthful Tarzi described himself as charmed by the various Christian women he met. 88 Once again, we see the steam *hajj* laying material foundations for new social networks through which pilgrims came into contact with European passengers aboard ship and train. In such close confines Tarzi described himself enlivening his ship’s dinner table with bravado and banter, and falling in love with a Greek girl named Mary. 89 For Tarzi, the meeting with Mary was as intellectual as amorous: through discussing philosophy and superstition, the beautiful young woman was a medium of reformist ideas. 90 Irreverent and often downright irreligious, Tarzi’s diary describes him in a sequence of impious activities, whether admiring (indeed, ogling) pretty girls on the streets of Istanbul or buying revealing photographs of women from a portside peddler. 91 The young Afghan was far from the only pilgrim for whom the confined globalization of the steamship and port provided opportunities to observe non-Muslim women. For example, when the captain of the Lloyd’s steamer on which he was sailing announced its imminent arrival at Istanbul, the Persian Tabataba’i noted with interest how the European women on board suddenly became lively and made themselves beautiful before disembarking. 92 But with its frank insights into the underbelly of a Muslim fin-de-siècle, it is the diary of Mahmud Tarzi that best reveals how the pluralistically proletarian demography of the steam ports through which the *hajj* was now routed could enable even the most intimate encounters with an un-Islamic ‘other’.

Ports, trains and steamships were thus key sites for structured encounters that were stamped onto public consciousness by their

89 Ibid., 163–4, 169–72, 324.
90 Ibid., 169–72.
91 Ibid., 308, 332–3, 367, 415.
description in so many printed travel diaries. The matrix of industrial transportation into which the pilgrimage was absorbed ensured that even pilgrims who feared or denounced the non-Muslims they met were inexorably placed in the midst of unbelievers.

IV

SEMANTICS: THE LANGUAGE OF THE INDUSTRIAL *Hajj*

Far from sheltering Muslims in the company of fellow believers, the spaces of industrial transport placed pilgrims into contacts that relativized their world picture. Even as some pilgrims responded by reaffirming their *Weltanschauung*, it was changed through the dialectics of encounter. Rather than transcribing the pious formulas of the pre-industrial *hajj* narrative, others, like the Afghan Tarzi and the Persian Hedayat, used their diaries to detail the achievements of science they observed along the way.\(^\text{93}\) Exchanges with non-Muslims also exposed pilgrims to powerful new concepts — powerful because they explained the visible logistics of these mechanical journeys. These semantic exposures were both conceptual and linguistic, even to the point of transforming the language of the *hajj*. Whether in Arabic or in Turkish, Persian or Urdu, the diaries of the steam *hajjis* were writ through with a new lexicon of travel. It is a moment of transformation captured in the diary of Siddiq Hasan Khan from 1868, whose neo-classical Arabic struggled to bring together a pilgrimage of old stages (*manzils*) with a new one of ‘wheel of fire’ (*‘ajalat al-nar*) trains.\(^\text{94}\) As the expanding railway lines of the 1860s drew nearer his home in Bhopal, like countless others Siddiq Hasan was funnelled through Bombay, on the way out by train and on the return by steamer.\(^\text{95}\) Given the date, his ‘mail ship’ (*markab al-barid*) was necessarily a steamer (likely from the P & O monopoly), though

\(^{93}\) For example, in the celebratory account of the rail network expanding from the port of Smyrna in Tarzā, *Siyāḥat Dar Seh Qat’a Rū-ye Zamīn Dar 29 Rūz*, 104.


\(^{95}\) Ibid., 171, 190–1.
he struggled for an Arabic term, since words for these new machines were only just being coined or, more often, borrowed.

A ‘soft’ cultural response to the ‘hard’ networks of steam, the new lexicon of travel was adapted from European languages through the incorporation of loan-words or calque translation.\(^96\) Within a few decades, the old lexicon of the monsoon (from the Arabic \textit{mawsim}), the dhow (from the Somali \textit{daw}) and the caravan (from the Persian \textit{karvan}) was replaced by a new vocabulary for steamships and trains. In Urdu, Persian and Arabic, neologisms for sea travel included \textit{vapur} (from the French \textit{bateau à vapeur}); \textit{kishti-ye bukhar} (a calque for ‘steamship’); \textit{agbut} (literally ‘fire ship’); and \textit{kishti-ye dudi} (literally ‘smoke ship’ as another calque for ‘steamship’); with the Suez Canal variously rendered as \textit{qanah}, \textit{qanal} or \textit{kanal}.\(^97\) For rail transportation, there spread new words for train (\textit{tren}, \textit{al-qatar}, \textit{rel-ghari}); station (\textit{gar}, \textit{estashan}, \textit{mahatta al-qatar}); train compartments (\textit{kabin}, \textit{kabina}); and, for the railway itself, variously \textit{al-sikka al-hadid} and \textit{rah-e ahan} (‘iron road’) or simply \textit{reloa’i}. Combined with the encounters with non-Muslim peoples and places, this borrowed lexicon set steam travelogues apart from the semantic texture of their pre-industrial counterparts.

Steam travel involved not only journeys through space, but also journeys through time. For, like other Muslim travels of the period, the \textit{hajj} served as a semantic passage through an alternative and non-Muslim ‘space-time’.\(^98\) Its distances no longer measured in the stages, or \textit{manzils}, of yore, the pilgrimage was now conceived as a journey of \textit{kilomitar} and \textit{mils}, loan-words that transformed the conceptual geography of the \textit{hajj} in pace with the shifts in its material and social geography. The old \textit{manzils} of the


\(^{97}\) The interplay of semantic and geographical transformation was reflected in the multiple names for the canal, rendered in Arabic as both the \textit{qanal} (using the French loan-word) and \textit{qanah} (using the classical Arabic). In Persian and Urdu it was alternatively rendered as \textit{kanal} or \textit{qanal}.

\(^{98}\) Nile Green, ‘Spacetime and the Muslim Journey West: Industrial Communications in the Making of the “Muslim World”’, \textit{American Historical Review}, cviii, 2 (2013).
pre-industrial hajj no longer held meaning when the majority of pilgrims now bypassed such overland stages as Buraydah and Baghdad, and instead sailed through such steam hubs as Aden and Bombay, which had scarcely existed a century earlier. Having begun by recording movement through the old spatial measurement of manzils, in 1879–80 the diary of Muhammad Reza Tabataba’i recorded a gradual transformation of his concept words for space. For, once under way, Tabataba’i slowly introduced to his diary a sequence of new measurements: fit (‘feet’) for the size of the ship; kilometres (‘kilometres’) for distances to and within Istanbul (a confusing new concept that he defined for his Persian readers); mil-e inglisi (‘English miles’) for distances around the Mediterranean and Egypt; and then back to the kilometr when he described French-influenced Alexandria.99 Other hajj diaries recorded locations in the scientific degrees of latitude and longitude, as in Mahmud Tarzi’s description of Smyrna and other ports of call.100 Both concretely and conceptually, the hajj was transformed into a journey through a new kind of space.

Conceptions of time were also transformed through the semantic impact of industrial transport. Theologically, the hajj journey was the expression in space of sacred Islamic time: the pilgrim’s movement was choreographed around the temporal injunctions of the month of Dhu’l-Hijja, the last month of the Muslim calendar.101 Practically, this sacred calendar was now relativized as the journey was made through the consultation of ship and train timetables.102 By exposure to shipping calendars and station newspapers, passengers increasingly recorded their pilgrimages in the Christian calendar, using the blended borrowings of ‘janvier’ and ‘February’ as scatty replacements for Rajab and Sha‘ban. With manzils and the Hijri calendar increasingly marginalized by kilometres and Anno Domini, as a journey through non-Muslim space the hajj now exposed its participants to an alternative time scale. As individual pilgrims discovered these new mechanical time measurements — fixed,
precise and unchanging — they used them to conceptualize and articulate their pilgrimages. The ‘by-the-minute’ *hajj* diary is one of the global expressions of temporal modernity. The travelogue of Mehdi Quli Hedayat, for example, shows these developments under way, for, like many others of the period, it moved in the course of the journey from recording dates according to the Muslim to the Christian calendar. In the most dramatic of these abandonments of Muslim time, Hedayat explained to his readers the calculations of the international dateline system that his steamship crossed on the way to Honolulu. Nowhere can we see more dramatically how the journey itself led to the abandoning of the time system on which the *hajj*’s entire rituals were predicated.

Whether selective, comparative or strategic, such deployments of new conceptions of time helped pilgrims come to terms with the wider world they witnessed. As they visited the archaeological sites and museums that increasingly appeared in the ports and coasts of the eastern Mediterranean, pilgrims were exposed to the deep time of archaeology. These unplanned detours through classical antiquity forced pilgrims to revise their historical timelines. While the Persian Tabataba’i sailed through the notionally Islamic geography of the eastern Mediterranean, in his entire steam passage he scarcely remarked on seeing anything ‘Islamic’. It was a shift of vision symbolized in his excitement on seeing the ruins of a temple near Izmir that he was told was the

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107 On the wider impact of archaeological discoveries on Muslims in this period, see Wendy M. K. Shaw, *Possessors and Possessed: Objects, Museums, and the Visualization of History in the Late Ottoman Empire* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2003).
birthplace of Homer.\footnote{Tabrīzī, Hidāyat al-Hujjaṣ, 121.} No longer a passage through a dominantly Muslim memory space conceived as a scriptural geography of Qur’anic prophets, the ḥajj now passed through a pluralized geography of Greek poets and their pagan gods. As he sailed through an Ottoman empire that the archaeological excavations of previous decades had re-Hellenized and de-Islamized, Tabataba’i visited museums and excavation sites that he described with fascination in his diary. Reflecting the replacement of manzils with kilometres, in describing the sites of this pre-Islamic past, Tabataba’i replaced Hijri time with the deeper time of ‘before Christ’\footnote{Ibid., 126–7.}. For in the absence of a calibrated framework of ‘before Hijra’, such pilgrims adopted the deeper but blatantly non-Muslim time of BC. As central as the ḥajj was to the five pillars of Islam, by the late nineteenth century its geography was now coded in kilometres and miles and experienced as pre-Islamic and pagan (and later national) as much as Muslim or even Ottoman space.

Whether through the cosmopolitan spaces of port cities or the mechanical spaces of steamships and trains, such exposure to alternative notions of space and time led many pilgrims to adopt these foundational conceptions. But global processes are never uniform or complete. In reaction, there were many rejections of these new models, whether through the enchantment of modern technologies by spiritual impresarios or the indigenizing of modern vocabularies by nationalist lexicographers who coined vast numbers of new technical terms in Arabic, Persian and other Islamic languages.\footnote{Elshakry, ‘Knowledge in Motion’; Alfred Gell, ‘The Technology of Enchantment and the Enchantment of Technology’, in Jeremy Coote and Anthony Shelton (eds.), Anthropology, Art and Aesthetics (Oxford, 1992); Green, Bombay Islam, ch. 3.} The point, then, is not that the ḥajj was ‘secularized’ or ‘disenchanted’, but simply that it became a vehicle for encounters with a non-Muslim world whose elements some Muslims adopted piecemeal while others rejected them wholesale. In either case, such responses were made with a new awareness of a world beyond Islam into which the ḥajj was ironically a channel.
One of the earliest of all steam hajjis was a certain Mirza ‘Abdullah of the Persian port of Bushire, who made his pilgrimage in 1853–4. His diary recounts the various conveyances that carried him to the Hijaz, from ‘the Peninsular & Oriental Company’s magnificent screw steamer Bengal’ to the ‘three mortal days and nights to reach Cairo’ on a third-class passage down the Nile aboard a steamer nicknamed Little Asthmatic. In ‘Abdullah’s mid-century diary, we can already glimpse the social laboratory of the steamship that in the following decades became so prominent a feature of the hajj. For also aboard the Nile steamer were Indian soldiers, ‘who naturally spoke to none but each other, drank bad tea, and smoked their cigars like Britons’; ‘a troop of Kurd Kawwas . . . surrounded by a group of noisy Greeks’; ‘a Spanish girl, who looked strangely misplaced . . . some silent Italians, with noisy interpreters . . . a party of French tradesmen returning to Cairo . . . a German . . . a Syrian merchant . . . and a few French house-painters going to decorate the Pasha’s palace at Shoobra’. That Mirza ‘Abdullah was not a Persian merchant but Captain Richard Burton, in those days a failed career officer of the 18th Bombay Native Infantry, only illustrates the point further: 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.

Through the sheer scale of the hajj, these transformations were of global importance, affecting men and women, the privileged and the poor, whom steam set in motion from all corners of Africa and Asia. Industrial communications afforded the mass production of both pilgrims and their diaries, for the hajj’s expansion through steam coincided with the spread of print among Muslims, reproducing the experiences and concepts acquired on the pilgrimage. As print amplified the impact of

individual journeys, whether in Persian, Urdu, Turkish or Arabic, the hajj diary was one of the great Muslim genres of globalization. Pointing further to the pilgrimage’s integration in the hard networks of industrial communication, it was in port cities such as Istanbul, Singapore and Bombay that many hajj diaries were printed. Even as Na‘ib al-Sadr denounced Bombay in scathing verse, it was there that he published his journal, while ‘Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim’s condemnation of the filthy streets of Mecca was publicized by the presses of Istanbul. In public print as in private deed, the hajj served to introduce Muslims to more places than Mecca and to more than merely Muslim ideas.

There was no uniform outcome or reaction to these contacts and comparisons. For some pilgrims, the hajj served to relativize and ultimately reduce their sense of the central place of Islam in the world, whether as a political force, a worldwide community or an explanatory episteme. As passengers recognized that the machines conveying them to Mecca were neither the inventions of Muslims nor explainable by Islam, for some Muslims the hajj served to restrict the explanatory power of Islam and create interest and credence in scientific world-views. For others, the hajj acquired a political dimension by spreading awareness of Europe’s dominance over Muslims. Yet it was only from the 1900s, especially after 1914, that this new political consciousness spread widely. In 1908 ‘Abd al-Rashid Ibrahim was one of the earliest political pilgrims, and it would not be until the 1920s and 1930s that the hajj diary became a regular medium of anti-colonialism through such figures as ‘Abd al-Majid Daryabadi and Abu al-Kalam Azad. What we have seen here is the sequence of integrative transformations that preceded — and enabled — the globally comparative political consciousness of the pan-Islamist and Muslim anti-colonial movements that proliferated around the First World War. But even for non-political pilgrims who

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longed only to circumambulate the Ka‘ba, the infrastructure of the industrialized hajj relentlessly exposed them to an imperial–industrial world order on which they relied to fulfil the central rite of their faith. Even as these decades saw Muslims develop the new concept of a ‘Muslim world’, an ‘alam al-islami, it was plain to more pilgrims than ever that, whether in terms of power, demography or knowledge, the world as such was no longer Muslim. Under the impact of industrial travel, by 1900 the hajj had been transformed in its geographic, demographic and semantic dimensions into a journey among unbelievers.

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114 On the conceptual invention of the ‘Muslim world’, see Green, ‘Spacetime and the Muslim Journey West’, 427–8.