1 Introduction

“And perform the pilgrimage and the pious visit in the service of God” (Sura 2:196). Pilgrimage (Arabic Hajj or Hadj) stands for a journey to a specific place at certain times with the aim of approaching a specific transcendent and does not constitute a unique feature of Islam. In Islam, pilgrimage is not only a means of “existential healing” and a possibility to make religion fruitful for atheists (de Botton, 2012, 273) and thus interwoven with one’s own biography, but it is a duty that every Muslim of full age, health and financial capacity has to perform (Sura 3:97). For pilgrimage in Islam, there is an occasion (Sura 22:28), a fixed place (Sura 3:96–97) and a fixed period (Sura 2:197), a series of fixed components and stations (arkān, 2:198–200), a prehistory (Sura 2:127), a practical development (Sura 22:29–32), a religious and social responsibility (Sura 22:36–37) and a social and emic perception (Sura 22:34–35), a cultural imprint and a social openness (Sura 14:37), a liberating side and a couple of restrictive consequences. The Muslim rulers were thus supposed to secure the pilgrims’ caravans and ensure the practice of the ritual, so that we can think of it as an institutionalized access from the very beginning. Moreover, this ritual takes Muslims back to the birthplace of their prophet and their faith and is directly associated with Abraham. Accordingly, the pilgrimage in Islam has been booming right from the start. Hajj can convey an important contribution to historical research of Muslim societies, such as a glimpse into life practices of Muslims today (Peters 1994; Long 1979), into their lives over 1400 years ago (Doughty 1888; Faroqhi 2002), into the lives of Arabs before Islam (‘Ali 2001; Conrad 1987), i.e., into the period up to 622, etc. Furthermore, Hajj is equally considered an interesting source for travel stories (Begum 1909; Maltzan 1989) and also provides an important basis for interfaith dialogue and coexistence. Isabella Schwaderer classifies pilgrimage in Christianity as a metaphor for late modern religiosity (Schwaderer 2019, 105). However, since pilgrimage has been consistently popular in Islam, it is necessary to ask: How have the social, cultural, religious, economic, and political dimensions of pilgrimage changed in late modernity? I usually treat the ritual of pilgrimage, as a Muslim theologian living and teaching in Germany, from an internal Islamic perspective in my seminars. In this article, it is also very important for me to look at the phenomenon from an external perspective. Nevertheless, some personal experiences regarding the course of Hajj will be included here. This paper aims at showing how pilgrimage is being practiced in Islam today and at reflecting on the ritual in modernity from different, especially theological, religious, and anthropological perspectives.
2 Basics to the Ritual of Hajj in Islam

Because Islam does not understand pilgrimage as peripheral devotion, the ritual as a practiced form has not lost its importance over time, but it gets a place within the communities, and is considered the spiritual peak to which a religious Muslim aspires. Muslims living in Germany basically have two options for carrying out the pilgrimage: they either travel from Germany (often with a transfer within an Islamic country) or they apply for a pilgrimage visa in the countries of their origin. The decisive factors here are often the prices and whether a vacation is subsequently planned in the country of origin. The religious communities not only support their members in organizing the pilgrimage and ceremoniously welcome them back, but the ritual also becomes the subject of Friday sermons and religious speeches (Vaz) for a longer period of time. Muslims have founded pilgrimage offices exclusively for this purpose, which take care of all the bureaucratic matters and organize a ‘pilgrim guide’. The role of these offices increased after efforts in recent decades to institutionalize pilgrimage, such as Saudi Arabia’s strict requirement that pilgrims enter the country through an approved tour company. The pilgrimage offices must also ensure that visitors leave the country on time. Thus, the group leader has a double task: he takes care of the religious education of the pilgrimage and must prevent anyone of the group from being left behind for which he is allowed to collect and keep the travel documents. There are further rules for converts. They must first prove that they have become Muslims, and some Muslim communities can assist with this. However, these people often travel to an Islamic country and obtain confirmation from the religious authorities there (e.g., al-Azhar in Egypt). This ‘institutionalized’ approach to the ritual has not changed the liveliness of the pilgrimage and the variety of offerings during this time. Pilgrims also get the opportunity to attend teaching circles of renowned scholars in the pilgrimage sites and to decide for themselves the appropriate personal and religious spirituality.

The number of pilgrims is mainly determined by Saudi Arabia. The Saudi Ministry of Hajj and Umrah is responsible for the planning and implementation of this ritual. As the competent authority, it determines the annual numbers of pilgrims and their international composition in cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC). The ministry which meanwhile offers the information on its website in three languages (Arabic, English, and French) wants to ensure that the ritual is performed as calmly, swiftly, unhindered, undisturbed and in accordance with the law as possible. For this purpose, it constantly oversees building projects in Mecca, provides pilgrims with sufficient information, and thus quite strongly co-

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1 In 1908, there were 173,000 (Ochsenwald 1984, 61); in 2019 2.4 million completed the Hajj. The number of pilgrims from Europe was 5% (Ministry of Islamic Affairs, Dawah and Guidance 2019).
2 The percentage of pilgrims for each country is 1% of the total national population, and this agreement can still be revised every 10 years (Organization of the Islamic Cooperation, no date).
controls the entire course of the ritual. As a practice, it does not matter from where one arrives. One does not have different pilgrimage routes and places in Islam but only one place where the different routes and carriers have to go to: Mecca. The mosque in Mecca is called the Ancient House or al-Kaʿba (Kaaba) in Islam.

There are two types of Hajj in Islam, the major one, known as al-Hajj which can only be performed in the month of Dhu al-Hijjah, the last month in the Islamic calendar. The second one is the minor pilgrimage, called ‘umrah, a pilgrimage that is much less demanding ritually and financially, in terms of time and space, and can be undertaken at any time throughout. When performing the Hajj, there are three possibilities:

1. Hajj ifrād (literally, sole pilgrimage), i.e., the pilgrim intends to perform only the Hajj ritual; 2. Hajj tamattuʿ, i.e., the pilgrim intends and plans to do the ‘umrah first, then to perform the Hajj. In the interim period between the two rituals, the pilgrim leaves the Ihram state (state of holiness) and all forbidden actions due to the Ihram state become permitted again during this period, hence the name tamattuʿ (literally: enjoyment), and 3. Hajj qirān, (literally, to connect); during this pilgrimage, as in the second case, the pilgrim performs Hajj and ‘umrah, but both with an Ihram state and one intention (niyya), with no pause in between. A person who is unable to perform the pilgrimage is not obligated to do so, however if he/she did do it, the pilgrimage has its validity. For the pilgrimage, there are four main indispensable locations (arkān), seven obligatory components (waẓibāt) and other recommended but voluntary acts (sunan).

Thus, the precept in Islam is that a person who wishes to make the pilgrimage must learn what is permitted and/or prohibited therein before entering the course. The following picture is to show the Stages of Hajj.

![Hajj Locations and Rites](https://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Hajj_locations_and_rites.png)
3 Together across Borders – Pilgrimage as an Image of the Ummah

The pilgrimage in Islam is characterized by a very high level of interest in spiritual experience but is not to be understood as a search for the meaning of life caused by modernity, or as a pure search for spiritual depth. In Islam, pilgrimage is not a “biographical program” (Kurrat 2012, 162). This means that a Muslim does not make his/her decision to go on pilgrimage based on a biographical situation, even if this cannot be ruled out. For example, while statistics of the Pilgrims’ Office in Santiago de Compostela mention that in 2018 around 10% of pilgrims were explicitly non-religious (Schwaderer 2019, 100), Muslims perform the ritual out of the religious conviction that they must obey this religious commandment. There are also religious regulations that must be observed for this. Sura 2:197 literally warns against unethical acts and quarrels. A kind of asceticism occurs through the reduction of clothing, equipment and everyday actions, a process of ‘experience of separation’. In order to prepare the people to open themselves up to new experiences, the pilgrimage has its own rules, and it is a clear departure from what is customary under Islamic law and the fixed structures of the individual. Thus, it is forbidden to dress up normally, to shorten the hair or to cut fingernails (Sura 2:196), likewise sexual intercourse, hunting and slaughtering animals are inadmissible. Permitted, on the other hand, are everyday practices that are natural, so that permission seems unnecessary, such as ablution, trading, using a parasol or money belt. This new order gives place for acceptance of the others as things that need getting used to are reduced to the minimum and establishes a new identity, a spiritual one. People are united in ritual, dress, supplication, time, place, and destination. Class, ethnicity and cultural affiliation recede into the background, whereby “relationships of trust can grow within a protected atmosphere that would not be possible in everyday life.” (Schwaderer 2019, 102; o.t.) Accordingly, pilgrimage is not a mere ritual practice and spiritual experience that is physically and financially demanding, but it brings forth a new community. Through pilgrimage there is the possibility to have a glimpse of the global community of Muslims, since nowhere else could you meet so many people in one place at a time. So, the pilgrimage is considered a unique opportunity to learn about the plurality of the world and creation, as well as to learn that people have different customs, values, cultures, and upbringings and that all these are to be respected and one has to make space for them without questioning them. The pilgrimage not only brings together an uneducated or illiterate Bedouin from the Sahara desert, an IT expert from the U.S., a housewife who often does not go far beyond the borders of her village, a career woman from the EU, but there happens a “detachment from the everyday world with its previous status positions, sociostructurally characteristics as well as cultural [...] affiliations” (Zinsmeister 2016, 366; o.t.). A new communality emerges outside of established social norms and dominant structures, although the bond to it remains temporary. Nevertheless, these different temporary forms of
communalization “contribute decisively to the subjectively perceived success of the pilgrimage” (Schwaderer 2019, 101; o.t.) and are considered an important basis for travel narratives. In the process, pilgrims adopt different norms and social structures, bring them back home, and develop them further.

The new community resembles the Muslim Ummah and is considered its image, replacing it for a moment at the same time. It offers an open and new space for self-awareness. Its members are united not only by spirituality and religious identity but are entitled to mutual support. They do this, among other things, by tolerating, accepting, and giving space to the other. ‘Giving place’ is a central aspect of the pilgrimage – both physically and mentally. Even before the journey, it is necessary to plan for the other. As a pilgrim, the traveler should think about providing for fellow pilgrims who might have little or nothing. Strong people must make room for weak and sick people, men must make room for their wives, younger people must make room for elders, locals must make room for guests, and with this consideration/accommodation one creates a place for oneself on the bench of healed souls and humble selves. After the pilgrimage, the pilgrims must not keep the whole sacrificial animal for themselves, but they ought to share in those in need (Sura 22:28). On the other hand, each pilgrim competes with the others for a place in the popular locations (Peters 1994, 14–19; al-Azraqī 2003), so that every year numerous people fall victim because of the crowd of pilgrims (BBC 2006). In search of salvation for oneself and others, one creates a place for oneself only by granting a place to others (ummah members). In doing so, one experiences the connection of the visible with the invisible and thus “a MORE – [...] a feeling of being with God” (Zinsmeister 2016, 369), which – despite the bad experiences by some – reserves the pinnacle of spirituality and pastoral activity to the pilgrimage in the Muslim perception.

4 Between Religion and Society – Pilgrimage as Social Practice

The pilgrimage is a demonstration of the unity, brotherhood, and equality of all Muslims. From all professions, social classes, and strata, from every corner of the world, Muslims gather in Mecca, dress in the same simple manner, abide by the same rules, say the same supplications (in the same language), at the same time, in the same place, in the same order, and with the same goal. There is no arrogance or ‘nobility,’ but humility and devotion. “You are all made of Adam and Adam is made of earth,” the speakers echo all the time. Since this is a ritual duty, the main motive for this gathering is basically the relation to the transcendent. However, if we look at this practice more closely, it is obvious that social differentiation is strongly present during the pilgrimage, despite all attempts to create ‘unity’. At this point one can agree with Schwaderer that in the practiced form of pilgrimage “the relationship of sub-
jects to themselves, to the natural and social environment and to transcendence can be explained” (Schwaderer 2019, 96; o.t.).

The pilgrimage becomes a ceremony in everyday life, in which an incredible number of actors of the social environment participate. The everyday and social handling of the pilgrimage differs from one social environment to another and is related to the nature of the subject, but the pilgrimage shapes the whole scene in society during the pilgrimage months, so that the material, physical and spiritual aspects of the pilgrimage overlap. The so-called ‘period of pilgrimage’, in which one can apply for a place, is officially announced. The time of the pilgrimage evokes a ‘state of emergency’ in most Muslim countries. For the state it is not only a logistical and infrastructural challenge, but also a medical and medial one. In addition to securing necessary personnel and infrastructure such as transportation and waiting rooms at airports, short broadcasts, info-commercials to educate the people about health measures, administrative regulations, and religious-spiritual acts (in) the pilgrimage are produced and broadcast on various channels. In addition, the important information is provided to the pilgrims as a ‘pilgrimage book’ and MP3 audio file. The governments of the Islamic states thus show special attention to this ritual and occasionally try to instrumentalize it politically, so that the boundary between profane and sacred resp. pilgrimage and politics cannot be clearly grasped. On the one hand, some common pilgrims receive audiences with high officials, heads of government or state (Wazārat al-awqāf wa al-shuʿūn al-islāmiyya 2020), on the other hand, high officials (often judges, military, and police officers) and important personalities (this is the case in many countries) are favored with a pilgrimage and exclusive care and accommodation programs are organized for this group. This use of the ritual as a political tool goes back into history (Peters 1994, 109; Slight 2015; Ryad 2016). It suggests, therefore, that Islamic cultural circles have used pilgrimage to bring about a kind of sacralization of public space and a ‘recall of the gods’.

This ‘to relating’ of the state to the pilgrims and to the natural environment ties in with the social image and social imprint of the practice. One does not only perform a ritual, one visits the city and mosque of the prophet and the graves of his great companions, is a circulating phrase. As soon as people learn about a person who is going to participate in the pilgrimage, this is considered an occasion for celebration. Relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and friends explicitly express their congratulations, gather at the person’s home, paint or inscribe his house with motifs of the pilgrimage, hang up white flags on the roof of the house and accompany him to the airport. A pilgrim’s return from the ritual is usually likewise received in celebration. At the end of the pilgrimage the highest Islamic holiday begins, namely the Feast of Sacrifice. On this 4-day festival, sacrificial animals are slaughtered, with only one-third of the flesh kept for oneself and the rest given to the ill and poor. This feast marks the theological and social conclusion of the pilgrimage and is not reserved for pilgrims but is celebrated by Muslims all over the world. The pilgrim is given the honorary title of Hājj (for men) or Hājjah (for women), which means more prestige and social advancement. With this festival, the pilgrimage session
comes to an end, previously forbidden things are allowed again, and one returns to normality.

5 Pilgrimage as a Spiritual Practice in Modernity

The pilgrim status begins with entering the Ḩaram area, about 20 kilometers around Mecca. There the pilgrims have to do ablution (ghusl), put on the pilgrim robe and declare the intention (niyya) to start the pilgrimage. However, many pilgrims put themselves into the Ḩaram state out of joy already in the homelands, thereby also claiming certain freedom that would not be imaginable outside the Ḩaram state. The abolition of borders thus takes place not only at the place of pilgrimage, but already on the way there.

In the practiced form of pilgrimage in the modern era, the Quranic image of pilgrimage which links the ritual with traveling caravans and mounts (Sura 2:27) disappeared. Instead of this classical image, the Muslims today have several transportation options to answer God’s call: they can travel by car, ship and/or airplane. These are not merely time-related or indicative of practical diversity due to local proximity or distance, but also express social and economic differences. Nevertheless, some individuals keep insisting on making the journey there on foot, spending months and years on the road to do, so sometimes making it into the headline. One can interpret this as kind of rebellion against modernity, which seems to marginalize the spirituality of the pilgrimage in favor of the practice. This is also an attempt to experience God in a different way at this place, and indeed “often one feels deeply moved, even inspired” (Zinsmeister 2016, 363; o.t.).

The competition among Muslim states in Saudi Arabia for more places for their citizens also characterizes the practice in the modern era. Demonstrating good relationship, political influence, economic advantages, population numbers, etc. become commonplace. The pilgrim delegations usually mark themselves with the flags of their home countries in order to recognize each other. The preacher on the day of the most important event of the pilgrimage, namely the standing at ‘Arafah (waqfa-t’arafāt), is an object of this competition in order not to miss this honor. But the social differentiation (and demarcation) also includes the pilgrims themselves. Despite similarities in dress and pilgrimage route, major differences occur in treatment, accommodation, care, and recognition. Pilgrims from wealthy regions often expect (and receive) different perceptions than those from poor areas. Muslims from Europe are treated according to European standards, while their co-believers from China or India have divergent experiences. Rich believers can afford a panoramic view of the holy site in Mecca and Medina; their financially constrained fellow pilgrims, on the other hand, have to live miles away from the mosque.

Social differentiation also affects the duration of the pilgrimage. As modern society increasingly pressures people and measures them by their achievements, it is no longer possible to preserve the classic image of pilgrims, where the ruler has pil-
grims brought to Mecca under his supervision. However, the conviction that in this place “life is fuller, richer, deeper, more rewarding, more admirable, and to a great extent what it should be” (Zinsmeister 2016, 363; o.t.) has not lost its value. Therefore, many ways are developed to allow more people to practice the ritual. State pilgrimage, for example, is about pilgrimage being organized by the state for its lower- and middle-class citizens for little cost. In addition, there is the tourist pilgrimage (touristic stands here for an upgrade of the service performances), which is organized by travel agencies – as usual in the tourism sector (Thurner 2012) – one’s specific wishes are gladly considered for an additional fee. For the elites of society, there is also the businessmen’ pilgrimage (‘businessmen’ here is to indicate the time pressure), a pilgrimage that lasts on average for a few days only. This social vibrancy and the multitude of possibilities regarding the spiritual experience, as well as the essential role in religious and political identity formation, should gain depth in further studies of pilgrimage in modernity. The development of various practical forms of pilgrimage may vary regionally, but nevertheless shows that the classical ritual has been able to preserve its role as a transcendental experience that takes place within the framework of “traditional religious spaces and conventional patterns” (Schwa- derer 2019, 98; o.t.) despite fundamental social change and invites us to observe the phenomenon of how pilgrimage gains a new quality in modernity.

6 Pilgrimage as Life Transformation: A Place between Hope of Forgiveness and Hope for Change

In Islam, studies on the attractiveness of the pilgrimage for biographical reasons are still lacking but some aspects from studies on the same topic within Christianity can be transferred to the ritual in Islam. In his study on the biographical significance of pilgrimages on the Way of Saint James, Christian Kurrat identifies five biographical starting situations: as a balancing of life, as a means to processing a crisis, as a time-out, as a transition between two stages of life, or as a signal for a new start (Kur- rat 2012, 179). Within an Islamic context it is mainly the last two motivations that can be of relevance. During the Hajj, the image of the prophet’s farewell pilgrimage is re-activated, so that the ritual often initiates a new start and is perceived by the social environment as a transition between two phases of life.

At the very end of his own – and only pilgrimage in March 632, the Prophet Mo- hammed addressed his fellow pilgrims and contemporaries at the end of the ritual with the most famous sermon in Islam ever, which has gone down in history under the name of Farewell Sermon (khutbat al-wadā’). In this sermon, the Prophet addressed religious, social, ethical, legal, economic, and family issues. Among the most succinct passages are the paragraphs in which he announces a definitive break with certain past actions because they contradict to Islamic teachings, such
as charging interest, carrying out acts in the name of blood vengeance, and class society: “And verily, every interest is abrogated. [...] And verily, every blood debt (damm) from the time of ǧāhilīya is abrogated [...] know that every Muslim is the brother of the Muslim and that Muslims are brothers and sisters (among themselves)” (Ibn Ishāq/Rotter 2004, 250). The clear break with the ǧāhilīya in this sermon is transferred to the pilgrimage, as it is considered a break with one’s bad habits, the announcement of a new chapter in the pilgrim’s life and actions, the labor of the birth of a new person who comes into the world with the completion of the ritual (cf. Al-Ajarma, 2021). This meaning is confirmed by a prophetic tradition that states: “Whoever performs the pilgrimage without having performed coitus or committed sacrilege will return [as sinless] as on the day his mother gave birth to him” (Bukhārī, Hadith no. 1737). Thus, pilgrimage also begins with breaking up with the structures of everyday life and an openness to join a new kind of community and to embrace a new identity.

Breaking with old habits is an important feature of pilgrimage, but similarities with pilgrimage in Christianity can be attributed more to the second type of pilgrimage, ʿumrah, especially in terms of motivations and starting situations. Although it has fixed forms, it is, on the one hand, selectable, not fixed in time, offers a certain flexibility, and, on the other hand, can be performed as a kind of time-out or “in the case of biographical turns in life or in situations of personal crisis, re-actualized” (Pollack 1996, 82; o.t.). Hajj can be performed belatedly for the souls of the deceased and as an apology/admonition to parents and loved ones, it can also be performed by proxy. Hybridization, that is, the combination of religious practice and leisure or vacation, would be a lived practice in ʿumrah. In the case of the Hajj, hybridization is not ruled out in principle, but is unusual. If one assumes hybridization, this applies at best only to the local people and should be enjoyed with reservation.

The fact that pilgrimage is accompanied by the will and willingness to break with the past and to join a new form of community still plays a crucial role today and has practical, social, and theological consequences. The perception of the pilgrimage as ‘setting back the works attitude’ leads to the social attitude of tending to postpone pilgrimage until an advanced age is reached. In practice, the perspective and hope are directed towards social change and nothing less than a social rebirth. The Muslim’s accomplishment or failure in stopping bad habits and practices after the pilgrimage on the one hand enhances or strains social prestige while it is on the other hand interpreted as showing divine acceptance or rejection of the pilgrimage. Society expects a certain social role from pilgrims; one should become (more) friendly and helpful to one’s social environment, appear (more) modest, mild, mannered, prudent, etc. As a carryover to a new stage of life, the pilgrimage is accompanied by the willingness to modify and change roles, but to do so without giving up one’s own identity is a challenge that occurs only after having taken part in the ritual.

The pilgrimage does not have any decisive biographical meaning as a starting situation within a before-and-after narrative, yet the pilgrimage itself is considered
a biographically significant point. Accordingly, the pilgrimage can have parallels with life transformation after all, it is because through the ritual that the different phases of individual and social change can become (more) conscious. This is especially observable in the case of converts for whom the new type of community of Muslims plays an important role. In addition, it is obvious that converts may perform the ritual because they have experienced a life crisis, seek to reach new spiritual depths, or as they are simply fascinated by the spiritual fullness – but also the physical demands – of pilgrimage. Converts want to let it be known that with the pilgrimage the past is “negated, canceled or eliminated” (Turner 1995, 69; o.t.). Numerous examples confirm how the pilgrimage can uncannily transform the lives of some converts. It will suffice to briefly mention, as an example, the well-known American activist Malcolm X, who decided to abandon racist attitudes and leave the ‘Nation of Islam’ based on his experience with pilgrimage. Malcolm X, who acted out of conviction that Islam favors blacks, encountered in pilgrimage a ‘community of equals’ that does not distinguish master from slave. Initially embracing Islam in the hopes to counter the anti-black racism he encountered in the United States with an ideology pushing for black superiority over whites, he soon learned and embraces the Islamic principles of equality regardless of notions of race or ethnicity.

Thus it can be summed up with Schwaderer: the pilgrimage is “a multi-layered affair in which inner-subjective levels intersect with social dynamics and the experiences of meaning through sensuality. The existential experience of limits, but also of the enjoyment of one’s own corporeality, of overcoming obstacles, and the conscious reduction of comforts make pilgrimage” (Schwaderer 2019, 106; o.t.) an unrivaled opportunity for self-perception as well as the perception of others and an experience countering the ordinariness of everyday life. Throughout history some people even completed the pilgrimage even without becoming Muslims (Peters 1994, 223–228). This promotes a critical reflection on the practiced form of pilgrimage beyond one’s own religious and cultural boundaries.

7 Historical and Cultural Background of the Pilgrimage

When the Qur’an speaks of the pilgrimage, it speaks of “known months” (ashhurun ma‘lumät) without mentioning them by name. Al-Qurṭūbī (1964, vol. 2, 405) concludes that the pilgrimage months were known enough to the recipients in the Arabian Peninsula at that time so that mentioning them by name in the Qur’an was unnecessary.

Pilgrimage as a pre-Islamic practice should not be a new finding although the period of pilgrimage before Islam remains controversial. There is some disagreement among scholars about whether the pilgrimage took place in fall or whether it was associated with spring (‘Alī 2001, vol. 11, 348–349).
Before Islam, there was not one single pilgrimage site on the Arabian Peninsula but in addition to Mecca, the Arabs had established other pilgrimage sites some of which were already in the vicinity of Mecca. Since Islam has retained some rituals of the pre-Islamic pilgrimage, cultural similarities should not come as a surprise. Recognizing that pilgrimage was a central link between religion and society in the Hijaz (Ochsenwald 1984, 58), Islam took it up and added modifications. Before Islam, there also was the so-called ‘silent pilgrimage,’ meaning that pilgrims did not talk during the pilgrimage (al-Qasṭallānī 1996, vol. 6, 175). Before Islam, there also were two options for practicing ṭawāf around the house: one could perform the ṭawāf completely unclothed or perform it clothed (‘Ali 2001, vol. 11, 364). Taking off clothes is as a metaphor for putting away one’s sins, breaking up with the past and of the will to start a new chapter of life; a gesture that is anchored in Islam, as shown above. Before Islam, the practice of pilgrimage was not uniform, the Quraysh tribe, for instance, kept certain rites and places for themselves where other clans were not allowed to go while others included certain places and actions among the rites of the Hajj which were not recognized as such by the Quraysh. This practice can be reflected to some extent in contemporary practice, as Shi’ite pilgrims associate and occasionally delineate locations and add certain acts to the Hajj (al-ʿAshfahānī 1373 AH, 55–58).

The appreciation and special status of the Holy Mosque was also part of the practice in the pre-Islamic period. Each tribe was therefore entrusted with a task during the pilgrimage, to facilitate the pilgrims to perform the ritual. Facilitation became an Islamic precept, over time, the principle of relief has flown into an individual, social, cultural, and political attitude and practice, as shown above.

From these remarks it can be summarized: Pilgrimage is considered a transcultural spiritual encounter in which space and time are transformed into transcendence, offering a space for the diversity of people and their actions, cultures, and spiritual practices. For the salvation of souls, pilgrimage in Islam experiences continuous popularity and thus deserves proper attention and hermeneutical discussion within the context of (practical) theology.

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