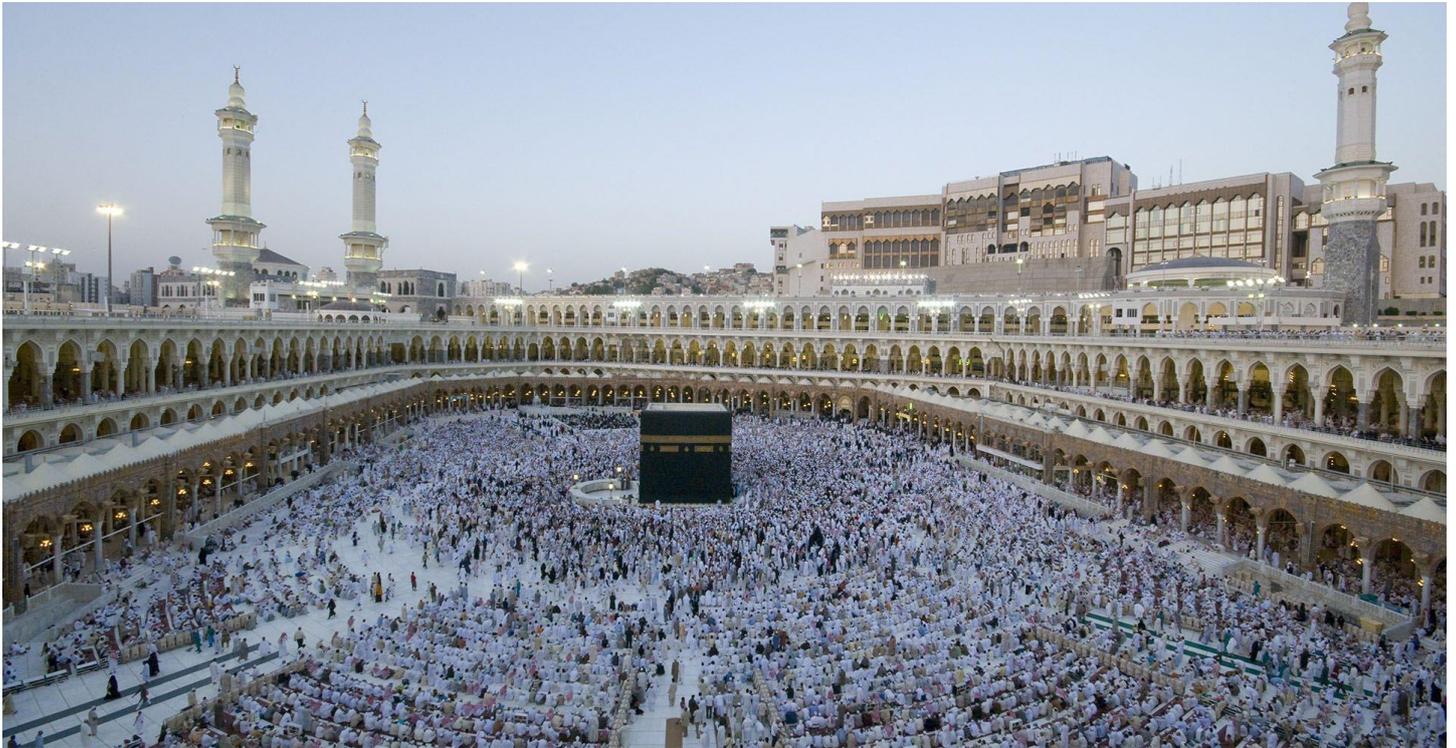


Appendix 8

The Hajj



The *Hajj* is an annual pilgrimage to Mecca that must be performed at least once in a Muslim's lifetime - hence it is a mandatory requirement - for every adult Muslim who is physically and financially able to undertake the rigors of this journey. The word *hajj* means 'to intend a journey'. It reflects every action that a Muslim must perform with intention. It is a demonstration of the solidarity of the Muslim people and their submission to Allah, hence an important expression of *ummah*.

The Hajj is associated with events in the life of Mohammed, and yet Muslims claim that the ritual stretches back thousands of years to the time of Abraham. Mecca is the hub, and centred on the Ka'aba which holds a revered black stone in its walls.



Thus *Hajj* begins at Mecca in the last month on the Muslim calendar *Dhul-Hijjah* on the 8th-12th (or 13th). Every pilgrim is required to prepare themselves mentally and spiritually for this act of ritual consecration. At every significant stage, prayers of intention are said. All the instructions are significantly detailed and include prayers at each decisive moment.

Every pilgrim shaves his head, has a complete body wash (*gusl*), and subsequently wears two plain seamless white sheets of cloth (*ihram*), leaving only head and face uncovered. In the morning on **Day 1** all the pilgrim[s] joins together at the mosque in performing *umrah* – making seven walking circuits of the Ka'aba within the main mosque at Mecca, the *Masjid-al-Haram*.

These circumambulations are performed keeping the *Ka'aba* on their left, and on each circuit kissing or touching the black stone in the wall. If this is not possible due to the volume of people, pilgrims should face the Black Stone and point at it.

This is followed by the ceremony of *Sa'i*, where pilgrims ascend the nearby hill of Safaa (330ft from *Ka'aba*) and descend towards the hill of Marwa (1,150ft from *Ka'aba*), between which pilgrims move

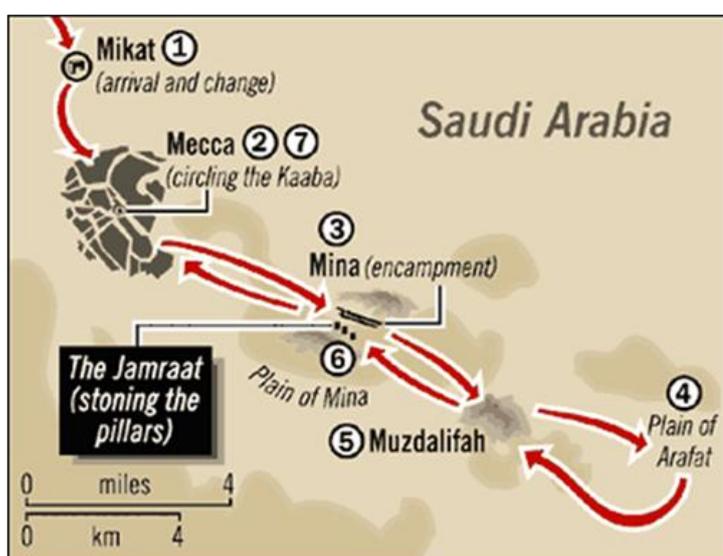
as swiftly as possible, seven times (amounting to a total of 1.96 miles) – all within the long gallery that forms part of the *Masjid-al-Haram*). Involving much praying, this ritual is to re-enact Hagar's desperate search for drinking water to give to Ishmael when she had been sent away by Sarah. Pilgrims then find water at the well of Zamzam and drink, demonstrating the fulfilment of Hagar's search for water.

After noon, pilgrims make another full body wash (*gusl*) and then walk to Mina (5 miles), where they pray and spend the night.

The next morning (**Day 2**) the pilgrims make their way from Mina to Arafat (8 miles) where they spend the time from noon till night praying in the vicinity of Mount Rahmah (Mountain of Mercy), where Mohammed preached his last sermon. At sunset pilgrims travel back to Muzdalifah, which they have to reach before midnight, where they again stand to pray and meditate until sunrise. This is to honour Mohammed's standing in the community.



The revered Black Stone



Hajj Route

(Perry-Casteneda map collection <http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/>)

On **Day 3** they move back to the outskirts of Mina in the morning, to the claimed site of the sacrifice of Ishmael. Here they do three things: (1) Each pilgrim throws seven pebbles at three rock pillars - the *Jamrah* – each time saying 'Allah is the greatest'. Stoning the first pillar re-enacts the scene when Abraham hurled stones at Satan to resist his temptation not to sacrifice Ishmael, the second pillar represents the temptation through his wife Hagar attempting to stop him, and the third represents Ishmael's temptation to avoid being sacrificed. (2) Pilgrims slaughter a sacrificial animal, eating some of it, and giving some to the poor (in common with Muslims around the world) – this is the feast of *Eid-ul-Azha*. This

commemorates the joyful sacrifice of the animal that Allah provided as substitute for Ishmael. (3) Pilgrims shave off their hair (a woman clips her hair to the length of a finger tip).

After these activities, pilgrims may discard their special *irham* clothing to wear ordinary clothes. Then they return to Mecca to repeat a further circumambulation of the Ka'aba. Pilgrims then return to Mina to spend two more nights there (**Days 4 and 5**). After noon on these days, stones are again thrown at the three *Jamrah*, beginning with the one farthest from Mecca, then the middle one, and lastly the *Jamrah Al-Aqaba*. Pilgrims, if not in a hurry, may stay yet another night at Mina (**Day 6**), on the afternoon of which more stone throwing takes place. To complete the ritual, pilgrims return to Mecca, and do a last farewell circuit of the Ka'aba seven times in an anti-clockwise direction. Then they are free to go home having done the *hajj*.

Either before or after the *hajj*, pilgrims will visit Mohammed's mosque at Medina where they pray according to a specific prayer ritual.

This pilgrimage is the focus of the 'realised hope' of the community. Every *hajji*, as a pilgrim is known, believes that this act of dedication in pilgrimage is the supreme means of obtaining forgiveness for sins.

That the sacrifice of *Eid-ul-Azha* is practised worldwide at this time is claimed to demonstrate:

- (i) the debt that the whole community owes to Allah,
- (ii) the remarkable solidarity of faith within Islam, and
- (iii) that the pilgrimage is itself a *communal* act of dedication to Allah.

It is not to be considered as a sacrifice for sin, or means of redemption – though in practice it is commonly thought to be so. ⁱ

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ⁱ **Cartwright-Jones, Catherine:** *Id al-Adha, Sacrifice and Henna Traditions* (TapDancing Lizard LLC, Ohio, 2001) p.5 – accessed as pdf file on 7th February 2017.