History of haj travelogues

Sport & Tourism, Trip

While discussing ‘ European travel and travel accounts’, J. R. Hale says that ‘ by now curiosity was widely accepted as one among, if not the chief of the reasons, why a man might travel’ (Hale 1979: 18). (Hale, J. R. (ed.). The travel journal of Antonio de Beatis: Germany, Switzerland, the low countries France and Italy 1517-1518. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1979). While there survives a limited number of pre-nineteenth-century Haj pilgrimage narratives, suggesting that medieval pilgrims did not write about their pilgrimage experiences except in the record of discourses wherein they participated. Sumption gives the reason for this absence of the Haj pilgrimage narratives as the absence of excitement and thrill during the journey of the Haj pilgrimage. According to him, “ the reasons for the composition of pilgrimage accounts are closely related to the objectives and motivations of a pilgrim for undertaking the journey in the first place. One of the reasons for the proliferation of pilgrimage narratives in the west was the ‘ fascination’ of the journey under- taken.

Christian pilgrims made a risky and exciting journey through strange lands and societies, by either walking ‘ three thousand miles’ or undertaking ‘ six weeks in a tiny, unstable boat’ (Sumption 1975: 182). (Sumption, Jonathon. Pilgrimage: an image of mediaeval religion. London 1975). Unlike for Christian pilgrims, it is hard to consider the fascination of travel among the principal motivations for Haj pilgrims generally, since they undertook the journey not for pleasure or out of curiosity but for the required performance of the Haj. The Muslim pilgrims’ principal concern was to reach the Hijaz in time, and after the performance of the hajj to come back home safely. In other words, they made the journey not to see and write interesting things

but to perform a religious duty. As Thayer says, ‘ To be sure, the attraction of the Haj may ultimately lie beyond any social benefit that accrues to the participants. It may rest instead in the fundamental religious sensibility of the pilgrims’ (Thayer 1992: 186). (Thayer, James Steel. “ Pilgrimage and its influence on West African Islam” in A. Morinis (ed.), Sacred Journeys: the anthropology of pil- grimage. London: Greenwood Press, 1992: 169-187).

The routine, predictable, yet exhaustive nature of the journeys of the Haj pilgrims endured may have discouraged them from recording their journeys. The route was relatively well-defined, and the caravan orderly and well-protected. Unlike Christian travelers, they were travelling across the lands of the same state, thus seeing people of the same Muslim culture, without needing to speak different languages, use different currencies, or negotiate borders between states. Even during the journey, some pilgrims were more interested in the conversation of their fellow pilgrims, particularly in listening to knowledgeable persons, than in experiencing the journey itself. The uniqueness and peculiarity of a journey would motivate the traveler to record it and the result would be of interest to an audience.

Conversely, the more routine a journey, the less remarkable and more monotonous its telling would be. The vast majority of pilgrims travelled in an official caravan, the route and actions of which were predetermined, routine and fairly predictable. Like soldiers, they travelled under the leadership of certain officials; hence their personal influence upon the course of the journey was negligible. All this made their journeys less personal, less risky, and less dangerous and so less worthy to record. In contrast, many medieval

Christian pilgrims travelled in small groups; and were recommended to take no money with them except for the purpose of delivering it to the poor as alms (Sumption 1975: 124-125). (Sumption, Jonathon. Pilgrimage: an image of mediaeval religion. London 1975). Such factors certainly made their journey less guaranteed and more personal, dangerous and exciting; it also made their written accounts more interesting, but open to fabrications. Another reason can also be that by writing, an author will either introduce something new or negate the existing work on the same topic. To negate, the author is required to have either more knowledge or a different perspective or superior literary ability. The existing geographical texts on the Hijaz written by previous scholars discouraged ordinary pilgrims from writing a description of the holy cities from their limited observations. As Pearson is of the opinion that, ‘ It appears that all these pilgrims assumed there was nothing new to say about the haj. Qazvini wrote that he would not say much about the haj itself, or Mecca and the Kabaa “ on account of the brevity of this treatise and availability of the relevant details in many books and compilations. ” (Pearson 1994: 17) (Pearson, M. N. Pious passengers: the hajj in earlier times. London: Hurst & Company, 1994.) Haj pilgrims did not write down their pilgrimage experiences because for them simply undertaking a journey was not a sufficient motivation for most literate medieval Muslims to set down their personal experiences of it. Unless a religious or practical or literary purpose was intended, the portrayal of their daily lives or a single episode like the pilgrimage journey, in an artless manner for its own sake must have been regarded by them as an occupation which would take some time and money; and in return it would have won its author no material or

spiritual benefit, no honor or credit in the eyes of contemporaries. Khayzuran, the Queen-mother of the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid attended the haj from Baghdad while she was still a slave-consort in 776.

Another Indian, Gulbadan Begum, the daughter of the Mughal Emperor Babur, performed the Meccan pilgrimage in 1575, a journey which didn't bring her back to Agra for seven years. And groups of unnamed Takayrna women from modern-day Sudan are recorded by the Swiss writer John Lewis Burckhardt in 1814 as preparing for the long and expensive boat journey to the hallowed sanctuary. Despite women going on Haj, there is dearth of Haj narratives. Other ways in which hajjas recorded their experience was through poetry and song. Indeed the oral form pre-dates written records of hajj narratives. Zahra N. Jamal and Rizwan Mawani in their blog, mentions about anthropologist Barbara Cooper who recorded a lilting melody of a more contemporary encounter in 1989 by Hajjiah Malaya, a 90-year-old Maradi Hausa woman from Niger. (The blog 11/07/2011 07: 32 am ET Updated Jan 07, 2012)(Hajj Diaries: The Multiple Dimensions of Muslim Pilgrimage by Zahra N. Jamal, Ph. D. and Rizwan Mawani)An apparent lack of demand from contemporary audiences for written travel narratives may have resulted from a lively interest in oral narration. Indeed the oral form pre-dates written records of hajj narratives. It is likely that a pilgrim's immediate audience would have preferred to hear his stories directly from him, and would not spare time and money to copy, buy or read such stories, even if they contained a breathtaking journey experience. To satisfy the curiosity of their immediate audience about the journey and sacred places, many pilgrims must have enjoyed telling their accounts directly to fellow

countrymen (see: Farmayan and Daniel 1990: XXIII). (Farmayan, Hafez Elton. L. Daniel. A Shi‘ ite pilgrimage to Mecca: the Safarnameh of Mirza Mohammad Hosayn Farahani. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990). From a Muslim perspective, the assumption seems to have been that, as Haj takes a prescribed form, there was little need to record what went on during Haj is beyond perhaps the receiving of visions or the advancement of Islamic knowledge. In her article on South Asian accounts of the Haj, Barbara Metcalf has charted the emergence of this genre from the eighteenth century, suggesting that it is very much a ‘ modern phenomenon.

There is some debate among historians as to when the first hajj narrative was produced in the South Asian context. Metcalf follows the example of most Indian writers in attributing it to Maulana Rafiuddin Muradabadi, a disciple of the renowned hadith scholar and Delhi reformer, Shah Waliullah, who had gone on pilgrimage in 1787 and later wrote an account of it. Challenging this perspective is Pearson who claims that another had appeared over a century earlier by the hand of a certain mullah called Safi bin Wali Qazvini. Either way, what is clear is that there were very few accounts, whether in the form of published travelogues, journals or letters during eighteenth century. After that time, however, they began proliferate with ‘ several dozen’ appearing between then and 1950 and ‘ ever more’ after that, according to Metcalf’s judgment. What this suggests is that the impetus to write Haj accounts, like that to write novels, memoirs, biographies and other forms of modern literature, was closely related to the introduction of certain types of technology, most importantly the printing press. Michael Wolfe in One Thousand Roads to Mecca: Ten Centuries of Travelers Writing

about the Muslim Pilgrimage written in 1998 writes about how since its inception in the seventh century, the pilgrimage to Mecca, or the Hajj, has been the central theme in a large body of Islamic travel literature.

Beginning with the European Renaissance, it has also been the subject for a handful of adventurous writers from the West who, through conversion or connivance, managed to enter the city forbidden to non-Muslims. In the book One Thousand Roads to Mecca, Michael Wolfe includes the works of travel writers from the East and West over the last ten centuries. The two very different literary traditions form distinct sides of a spirited conversation in which Mecca is the common destination and Islam the common subject of inquiry. This book include travel narratives by Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Battuta, J. L. Burckhardt, Richard Burton, the Begum of Bhopal, John Keene, Winifred Stegar, Muhammad Asad, Harry St. John Philby, Lady Evelyn Cobbald, Jalal Al-e Ahmad, Malcolm X, and Michael Wolfe. Haj Travelogues from Ottoman Empire In his article, Ottoman attitudes towards writing about Pilgrimage experience Dr. Menderes Coskun writes about the tradition of Haj travelogue writing in the Ottoman Empire. He is of the opinion that pilgrims did not favor writing their accounts of the journey due to the fact that they made the journey not to see and write interesting things but to perform a religious duty. Ottomans were reluctant to write down their personal lives or adventures, or to insert their selves into the description of an occurrence they experienced. Madeline C. Zilfi says “ It is a common- place in Ottoman studies that, prior to the mid-nineteenth century, diaries, letters and collections of personal papers of the sort that enriched Western European biography are lacking for comparable Ottoman dignitaries” (Zilfi 1976: 157).

(Zilfi, Madeline C. “ The diary of a müderris: a new source for Ottoman biography”. Journal of Turkish Studies I. (1976): 157-176). None of the most prominent Ottoman poets, except Nabi, are reported to have produced a description of the hajj journey either in verse or in prose. Even the leading sixteenth-century poets Fuzuli, who spent an important part of his life in Kerbela, and Baki, who went to Mecca as a kadı (judge), did not compose a travel account or a depiction of the sacred places they saw. A number of minor Ottoman men of letters are also reported by the major biographers to have gone to the Hijaz either for the hajj or for other reasons. Some poets such as Gazali (d. 941/1535)3 and Fevzi (d. 1666) are reported to have spent the rest of their lives in the Hijaz. Mustafa Ali of Gelibolu (d. 1600), and Okçuzade (d. 1630), although both performed the hajj, were not reported to have produced a work on their pilgrimage experiences (Schmidt 1987: 2), (Schmidt, J. Mustafa Ali’s Künhü’l-Ahbar and its preface according to the Leiden manu- script. İstanbul: 1987)The authors of the few known pilgrimage narratives, except Evliya Çelebi, did not put much of themselves into their descriptions, and clearly did not intend to write about their own journeys for their own sakes. Kafadar suggests that the lack of personal literature might be due to lack of a ‘ strong sense of individuality’ in medieval people (Kafadar 1989: 124). (Kafadar, Cemal. “ Self and others: the diary of a dervish in seventeenth century Istanbul and first-person narratives in Ottoman literature”. Studia Islamica 69 (1989): 121-150). Nabi’s Tuhfetü’l-Harameyn, is one of the most famous and most literary travel narratives of Haj in Ottoman literature. If the texts which were composed to help future pilgrims with practical information are excluded, the majority of known

narratives are written by those authors such as Ahmed Fakih, Fevri, Evliya Çelebi, and Nabi, who undertook at least some parts of their journeys independently of the official caravan. It was partly the support of generous patrons for either travel or composition that played a role in the existence of certain well-known pilgrimage narratives. Some of their authors are reported to have received financial support either for the expenses of the journey or for the composition of an account of it or for both. For instance, Evliya Çelebi enjoyed the help and patronage of local governors during his journey. Nabi was not only given leave but also supported by his patrons to undertake his journey. He composed his narrative in a high-flown artistic style and presented it to Mehmed IV. Evliya Çelebi. 1081 [1672] R. Dankoff and S. Kim, An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi (London 2010) p. 341). Evliya Çelebi was an Ottoman cavalryman born into a wealthy family. From 1640 onwards, he travelled extensively around the Ottoman Empire and further afield on horseback. In February 1671, Çelebi had a dream in which the Prophet Muhammad told him to perform Haj. He set off for Mecca in May 1671, travelled along the coast, through Syria to Jerusalem, and doubled back to join the Hajj caravan in Damascus. Before reaching Mecca, Çelebi recounted that when they first sighted Medina, the caravan’s animals regained their strength and headed towards the town at great speed. Çelebi was so overcome with emotion when he prayed at the Prophet Muhammad’s tomb in Medina that he nearly fainted. After performing Haj, he returned to Cairo with the Egyptian Haj caravan.

The notes from all his journeys formed his ten volume work called the Seyahatname – the Book of Travels. And the Ottoman judge Mehmed Edib

(1779). The Joy of Stopping Places by Mehmed Edib. Mehmed Edib was an Ottoman judge from Crete who went on Hajj in 1779. This manuscript contains a detailed description of his journey, about the landscapes he sees and including a wealth of information about the construction of forts and other buildings along the Syrian Hajj route. Between the sites of Hadiyya and Nakhlatayn for example he mentions a rock known as ‘ the rock of salutation’ which was reported to have greeted the Prophet Muhammad on his journey through this area. The earliest surviving manuscript is this autograph copy in the Chester Beatty Library, Dublin. Instead of producing detailed pilgrimage narratives, it is known that some poets produced shorter compositions on the pilgrimage, producing a brief poem or several fragmentary couplets. Indeed, poetry itself was a sufficient motivation for skilled poets to produce a work on almost every phenomenon, including the pilgrimage experience. For a master poet, it was more memorable and effortless than a lengthy treatise.

One of the first Turkish poets to compose poems on the pilgrimage journey and the Kabaa was Yunus Emre, some of whose verses are still on the tongue of modern Turkish people (Golpinarli 1939: 64). (Golpinarli, Abdulbaki. Yunus Emre. Istanbul: Bozkurt Basimevi, 1939). He is reported on the evidence of a poem to have gone to the Hijaz (Esin 1963: 171). (Esin, Emel. Mecca the blessed Madinah the radiant. Novara 1963). The great mystic Mevlana Celaleddin had been in Mecca when he was young, and perhaps composed ‘ his famous invocation’ to the Prophet Muhammed there (Mengi 1999: 43, Esin 1963: 169). (Mengi, Mine. Eski Türk edebiyatı Tarihi: edebiyat tarihi – metinler. İstanbul: Akçağ, 1999). The pilgrim poet Na- bi’s Turkish Divan includes numerous verses containing his reflections on his

experience of the hajj (Coşkun 2002). (Coşkun, Menderes. Manzum ve Mensur Osmanlı Hac Seyahatnameleri ve Nabi'nin Tuhfetü'l-Harameyn'i. Ankara: Kültür Bakanlığı Yay. , 2002). This does not mean that the Ottomans altogether refrained from writing about their actual pilgrimage experiences. However, a very limited number of pilgrimage texts are known to students of Ottoman literature.

Among the known texts are Ahmed Fakih's Kitabu evsafı mesaci- di serife (Book of descriptions of the noble mosques), Fevri's Risale (letter), Gubari's Menasikul-hacc (The rites of the hajj), ' Abdurrahman Hi- bri's Menasikul-mesalik, Bahti (17th century)'s Manzume fı-menasiki ' l-hacc (Poem on the rites of the hajj), Evliya Çelebi's Seyahatname, Nabi (1642- 1712)'s Tuhfetu'l-haremeyn (Gift of/ from the two sanctuaries), Sulhi (17th century?)'s Der-beyan-ı ' aded-i men- azü-i Hicaz (Description of the number of stations to the Hijaz), Bahri (late 17th century ?)'s Usküdar'dan Şam'a kadar konaklar (Stations from Usku- dar to Damascus), Hacı Seyyid Hasan Rıza'i (17th century ?)'s Tuhfetü'l- menazili'l-Ka'be (Gift of the stations of the Ka'be), Kadri (17th century)'s Menazilü't-tarik ila beyti'ilahi'l- ' atik (Stations of the road to the ancient house of God), Cudi (18th century)'s Merahilü Mekke mine'ş-Şam (Stages from Damascus to Mecca), Seyyid İbrahim Hanif (d. 1217/1802)'s Hasıl-ı hacc-ı şerif li-menazili'l-haremeyn (Outcome of the hajj to the stations of the two sanctuaries), Mehmed Edib (18th century)'s Nehcetü'l-menasik, (Highway of stations), Kamil (19th century)'s Menasik-i hacc (The rites of the hajj), Aşçı Dede's pilgrimage nar- rative of 1897, Söylemezoğlu Süley- man Şefik (19th century)'s Hicaz seya- hatnamesi (Coşkun 2002). Haj Travelogues from Iran In 1045, the Persian-speaking

philosopher and traveler Nasir Khusraw performed the Haj four times. He describes the first of these in his celebrated Book of Travels, his Safarnama, where he writes about the actual journey of going on Haj. In his other works, he reflects on the meanings of this important ritual for him, each station of the Haj has an apparent (zahir) and hidden (batin) meaning, an earthly and heavenly significance that we must strive to know. The travelogue written by Haj Ayaz Khan who was one of Qashqai khans was based on his journey that has happened in 1922 from Iran to Saudi Arabia and Iraq in order to visit Islamic holy places. This unique Iranian travelogue is written from Qashqai peoples' point of view and offers a new reading of historical events in a cultural context. His narration paints a clear picture of cities he visited