

## Islamic Pilgrimage and Travel

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## Islamic Pilgrimage and Travel

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| 1. The Characteristics of the Islamic Pilgrimage | 3. The Rules for All Pilgrims in the Sacred Space                   |
| 2. Farahani's Pilgrimage Trip                    | 4. The Distinction Between Pilgrimages in Islam and Other Religions |

### 1. THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ISLAMIC PILGRIMAGE

The so-called sight-seeing tour, a common mode of travel in modern times, is not as popular in the Islamic countries as in other parts of the world. Several factors account for this discrepancy. First of all, a number of preconditions are necessary in order to make sight-seeing tours possible. Facilities and transportation systems must be developed to the point where people can actually travel easily from one place to another. In addition, the potential tourist must possess the leisure time and financial means to allow a break from his or her daily routine.

In industrially developed countries, people have been working at a frantic pace in order to achieve the goal of an ever-increasing productivity. Yet, at the same time, labor and welfare legislation has been enacted to protect workers and extend them certain rights, although there are still areas for improvement in this regard. Nonetheless, many people are able to plan vacations and use their leisure time for sight-seeing activities.

However, for most people, vacation schedules are not determined solely by personal choice. In Japan, the traditional calendar, which is based on cultural practices and customs, provides certain restrictions, and travel is often concentrated around the New Year's Day holiday and the *bon* festival (the Buddhist festival for the dead) in August. Similarly, families with children must limit their travel to school holidays.

On the other hand, in the Islamic world, workers still have little power to claim their rights. Only a small group of people in the system are entitled to guaranteed holidays and are actually able to enjoy them. Thus, only a limited number of people in the Islamic world are able to join sightseeing tours and travel in their leisure time—rights which are guaranteed for workers in modern Japan and Europe. The majority of people must rely on certain periods in the traditional calendar to pro-

vide opportunities for travel and sight-seeing as an escape from their mundane daily routines.

For example, in the Islamic *Hijra* lunar calendar, the pilgrimage to Mecca has provided the greatest opportunity for ordinary people to travel. In Iran and Central Asia where pre-Islamic customs still remain strong, the spring equinox, which marks the change of seasons from winter to spring in the solar calendar, is regarded as New Year's Day (*Nourûz*). Many people go sight-seeing near their homes or take a longer vacation around this time.

In this paper, I will define the Islamic pilgrimage as the annual mass travel of Muslims to and from Mecca. The climax of the trip is worship at the holy sites to the east of Mecca between the eighth and the thirteenth of the month of *Dhu al-Hijja* (the last month in the *Hijra* calendar). In the Muslim seasonal cycle, the pilgrimage rounds off the end of the calendar year. The pilgrimage is also regarded as the ultimate activity to mark the end of one's life.

There are two major characteristics of the Islamic pilgrimage. The first is that, for all Muslims, the pilgrimage is considered to be a legal obligation which must be fulfilled. However, there is some flexibility: one must make a pilgrimage only once in one's life and the sick and the poor are exempted from this requirement. In addition, people who are unable to fulfill this obligation are not punished. Yet, people who have not made the pilgrimage cannot help feeling guilty toward God and might feel pressured to carry out this sacred duty. Or at least, they might keep hoping that they can make the pilgrimage someday.<sup>1)</sup>

The second characteristic is that pilgrims cannot choose the season in which they travel. Since the time of the pilgrimage is set by the Islamic lunar calendar, the designated period might occur in different seasons. For example, in 632 A.D., the "Farewell Pilgrimage," which was held just before Muhammad died, took place in March. In contrast, the pilgrimage held during the oil crises period, which was triggered by the fourth Middle Eastern conflict of October 1973, was in January, the coldest time of the year. Accordingly, the pilgrimage of the Muslims is to be held within strict religious constraints and cannot be changed depending on personal will or preference. Such constraint distinguishes Islamic pilgrimage from those of other religions such as Christianity, Buddhism and Shintoism.

In contrast to the recreational impulses behind the modern tourist industry, people in the Islamic world have rarely traveled solely in pursuit of enjoyment and pleasure, either in the past or in the present day. On the other hand, it has been often pointed out that Islamic culture has a long tradition of human mass movement. Pilgrimages were not the only form of travel. 'Ulamâ traveled around in search of teachers who would teach them the Koran, *Hadith* (the tradition of the Prophet Muhammad), and *Shari'a* (Islamic law).<sup>2)</sup> Moreover, the Islamic world

1) For various aspects of legal obligations for Islamic pilgrimage (*Hajj*), see to Long [1979: 11].

2) There are fragmentary accounts of travels in search of learning by 'ulama in a number

was located at the center of international trade networks in the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean, and a monetary economy developed there relatively early. Thus, merchants traveled frequently on land in caravans and on sea by ship.<sup>3)</sup>

Two factors made it easier for people to travel. Firstly, people were conscious that they were members of the Islamic religious community (*'Umma*)—a consciousness which transcended ethnic and national differences and differences in language. The existence of this strong feeling of solidarity made it possible for people to move about freely across and beyond whatever boundaries.

Secondly, institutions and facilities which encouraged travel, known as the *waqf*, had been in existence for a long time. Namely, for the benefit of the public, wealthy individuals donated their private property or the ownership of their shops in the bazaar to God, or in more practical terms, to the *'Umma*. The rent from the property and the shops was used to construct and maintain *caravan sarai* (inns for traveling merchants). Thus, travelers had access to free or low-cost accommodations which contributed to the ease of travel.

## 2. FARAHANI'S PILGRIMAGE TRIP

The nature of Islamic pilgrimage as travel has changed throughout the centuries due to the influence of the following historical factors:

- 1) the consciousness and religious belief of the pilgrims.
- 2) the intention and attitude of policy executors such as secular rulers of dynasties (sultans) in the past and political leaders of the present nation-states.
- 3) the activities of those in the transportation business such as organizers of caravans, shipping companies, coach companies and airlines, as well as travel agents, and other merchants who stand to benefit economically from pilgrimage.<sup>4)</sup>

In this article, I will focus primarily on tourism and the pilgrimage since the nineteenth century because of the abundance of available information for this period.

There are various methods of investigating the actual conditions under which Islamic pilgrimage took place. The ideal way, of course, would be to participate in the pilgrimage and experience it for oneself. However, only converts to Islam are permitted to do so, thus making it impossible for non-Muslims to have this kind of

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of historical materials as well as references to these materials by several researchers, domestic and foreign. The work that offers a comprehensive image, however, is "Introduction to History" by Ibn Khaldun, an *'ulama* and historian born in Tunis, North Africa, in 1332 [Ibn Khaldun 1987].

3) For history of trade, international commerce, and transportation in the Islamic world in pre-modern times, see Yajima 1991.

4) For an outline of historical transitions of the reality and nature of Islamic pilgrimage, see Sakamoto [1990].

direct experience. Therefore, Islamic pilgrimage is probably one of the most difficult subjects to deal with from an ethnological and anthropological point of view.

Another method is to use pilgrimage records and travel journals which provide useful information on the topic. These include travel records by Richard Burton [1898] and C. Snouck Hurgronje [1931], who traveled to Mecca without disclosing their European identities. However, more reliable information can be obtained by the writings of the Muslims themselves.

The amount of literature on the pilgrimage written by Muslims varies in different time periods and geographical locations. Let us first consider the chronological variations. It is possible to make the assumption that more literature was produced during periods when the pilgrimage was very popular. Particularly popular times would then include the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the fourteenth century, the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the nineteenth century. Significantly, each of these periods is regarded as a transitional phase in the history of Islam. The atmosphere of these changing periods has been captured in the records of pilgrimages by Nâser-e Khosrow, Ibn Jubayr, Ibn Baţţûtah and Evliya Çelebi.<sup>5)</sup>

More records on pilgrimages were produced by travelers from relatively remote areas in the Islamic world such as Maghreb and Iran, rather than by those from more central areas closer to Mecca, such as Egypt, Syria and Iraq. If the amount produced was not actually greater, the more interesting travel journals were written by pilgrims from those two remote areas.<sup>6)</sup> This is probably because Muslims in remote areas were more concerned with events at the center of the Islamic world. Another reason might be that they tried to compensate for their spiritual and material deficiencies in their daily lives through their pilgrimage to Mecca, the holy

5) Naser Khosrou (1003-61), an Iranian government official who served the Seljuk dynasty, made a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1045. His travelogue was written in Persian, but can now be easily read in English translation [Nâser-e Khosrow 1986]. Ibn Jubayr (1145-1217) was a Moslem born in Valencia on the Iberian Peninsula who made a total of three pilgrimages to Mecca. The Arabic record which remains today is of his first pilgrimage taken in 1183-85. French and English translations are also available. Ibn Baţţûtah (1304-68) was a great traveler who was born in Tangier in Morocco. He departed his homeland in 1325, intending to make his pilgrimage to Mecca, but did not return home after his pilgrimage and spent most of his life traveling. His voluminous travelogues written in Arabic are translated into Japanese [Ibn Baţţûtah 1990]. Evliya Çelebi (1611-84) was a traveler born in Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire. He traveled not only in the Ottoman Empire but also to central Europe and Iran. He authored a ten volume travelogue in Ottoman Turkish, of which one volume is devoted to his pilgrimage to Mecca. A modern Turkish version has been published [ÇELEBİ 1984], but no European language translation is available.

6) For historical materials on pilgrimage, refer to the bibliographies in the following articles: Yajima [1983]; Sakamoto [1986a]; Abderrahmane El Mouddeh [1990: 69-84]; Metcalf [1990: 85-107]; McDonnell [1990: 111-130]; Karpas [1990: 131-152].

ground. Since the distance between Mecca and their remote homelands was so vast, dramatic incidents often occurred during the journey. Consequently, the travel records have a more interesting flavor.

Given the background I have outlined above and my own academic speciality, hereafter I would like to continue my discussion on Islamic pilgrimage by relying on the travel record written in the 1880s by an Iranian, named Mirza Moḥammed Ho-seyn Farahani. This record, written in Persian, provides us with the chance to understand the area from a wider perspective (without concentrating on a particular area) because Farahani traveled not only in Iran, but also in Ottoman Turkey, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula where the three main ethnic groups in the Islamic world lived; namely the Arabs, the Iranians and the Turks.<sup>7)</sup>

As his name suggests, Farahani was born in the Farahan region, which is about 200 kilometers southwest of Teheran. He was a bureaucrat serving the Qajar Dynasty which ruled Iran at that time. The motivation for his pilgrimage came partly from the fact he was a devoted follower of the Shi'a Sect, but the particular characteristics of his homeland also contributed to this decision. Today, the Farahan region is not particularly exceptional, but for a time after the emergence of the modern carpet industry in the 1870s, it was the most prosperous part of Iran. The Ziegler Company and the Hotz Company, established by the British and Dutch respectively, built large factories in the area for the production of carpets, which were the most important exported commodity to Europe. Local merchants who were influenced by foreign traders also became involved in the carpet industry, and many weaving factories were set up in villages and towns. With the emergence of the new industry, the locals enjoyed financial prosperity. They also developed commercial networks and personal contacts with the outside world. These factors contributed to the sudden increase in opportunities for travel, including pilgrimage. The export route for carpets overlapped with the pilgrimage route up to the Ottoman Empire's capital, Istanbul.

The general route of Farahani's pilgrimage was as follows. He left Teheran, capital of the Qajar Dynasty, on the sixteenth of July, 1885. He traveled by horse carriage to a port on the south shore of the Caspian Sea. He then boarded a Russian steamer which provided regular services on the Caspian Sea and arrived at Baku, capital of the present Azerbaijan Republic. He left the boat there and traveled on the Zakafkas railway which was opened in 1883. He went through Tbilisi, the capital of Zakafkas (part of the Russian Empire), and reached Batumi, a port on the southeastern shore of the Black Sea. He caught a Russian steamer there again and stopped at various port towns on the north side of Anatolia, such as Trabzon and Samsun, and reached Istanbul, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, on the seventh of August.

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7) The most authoritative Persian language text of Farahani's record of pilgrimage is *Safarnameh* [FARMA'YAN 1964]. The most recent annotator and editor is Hafez Farman Farma'yan [FARMA'YAN and DANIEL 1990].

He waited in Istanbul for a connecting boat and left for Jidda, the outer port of Mecca by boat on the twelfth of August. During his Mediterranean voyage, the boat only stopped at Izmir and Alexandria. Traveling south through the Suez Canal, he arrived at Jidda on the twenty-seventh of August. After he disembarked at Jidda, he traveled to Mecca in a caravan. He stayed in Mecca to complete all the rituals relating to the pilgrimage. On October ninth, he started his return journey and followed almost the same route, arriving back in Teheran on January 21, 1886.

Farahani's pilgrimage involved continuous movement from one place to another. However, a closer examination reveals contrasting differences in manner, behavior pattern and attitude between his actions in the sacred space near Mecca and those outside the sacred area. Thus, it is possible to divide his pilgrimage trip into two sections: travel in the sacred sphere and travel in the secular sphere. The structural differences between these two merit further examination.

Farahani's travel in the secular sphere was mainly undertaken by boat except for a few legs of the journey where he had to join a caravan. Without exception, modern Muslims traveled by steamer between the 1830s and World War I. This mode of transportation was characterized by "point-to-point moves" from one port town to another between which the steamers provided services. This form of travel contrasted with "linear travel" by land in a caravan in the pre-modern era. The present style of travel to and from Mecca can be also described as "point-to-point travel," but it is more direct than that of the previous era due to the omission of stopovers [SAKAMOTO 1990: 208-210].

It is important to differentiate between these three styles of travel because the locations most affected by the pilgrimage differed historically according to the transportation system of the time. In Farahani's time, that is, in the nineteenth century, ports such as Baku, Istanbul and Alexandria were important towns because pilgrims stopped there for a relatively long time. These ports served as central areas for pilgrims to gather and organize themselves. Singapore, Calcutta and Bombay in the Indian Ocean had a similar function to the ports in the Caspian Sea, the Black Sea and the Mediterranean where Farahani traveled [SAKAMOTO 1990: 210].<sup>8)</sup>

In contrast, Baghdad, Damascus, and Cairo were the important centers for the organization of caravans in the pre-modern era when the pilgrimage was made by a different means of transport. Rulers of the time tried to increase their prestige by organizing pilgrimages and protecting pilgrims. Thus, the pilgrimages provided them with the opportunity to consolidate and extend their power.

While traveling in the secular space, a pilgrim was not under any restrictions

8) Yamaoka Kôtarô the first Japanese to complete a pilgrimage to Mecca, headed for Jidda, the outer port for Mecca, on a steamer that made calls in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Bombay. His observations that these ports were places where pilgrims gathered are specifically noted in his travelogue [YAMAOKA 1988].

with regard to clothing, diet and accommodation as long as general Islamic law was observed. In Farahani's record of his pilgrimage, some Iranian pilgrims who wanted to observe strict Islamic law refused to sit in the same compartment with non-Muslims while they traveled through Zakafkas by train because they thought it would be contaminating [SAKAMOTO 1985]. However, such a view was rather extreme. In general, sight-seeing during the journey was thought to be a positive rather than a negative activity. People regarded these stopover cities, such as Istanbul and Alexandria, as places to relax before and after the visit to Mecca.

What did an Iranian pilgrim such as Farahani want to see and hear in Islamic-cities such as Istanbul and Alexandria? His interest was concentrated in three main areas. Firstly, he tried to compare these cities with Iranian cities and observe their personal interactions and commercial networks, and so, he reported on the Iranian communities in these cities. He also referred to the traffic in imports and exports, Iranian merchants, and occasionally the political situation of the Iranian community.

Secondly, he tried to examine and compare the society of Iran with that of Istanbul and Alexandria. He also extended his observation to society in Ottoman-Turkey and Egypt. It was obvious that these three cities and societies differed significantly, in spite of the fact they shared the same religion. Indeed, his experiences as a pilgrim seemed to make Farahani more aware of the differences than the similarities between these cultures. The pilgrimage was also an opportunity for him to become conscious of the backwardness of his home country, Iran.

Thirdly, he tried to advocate the unification of Iran, Turkey and Egypt transcending social and political differences. Farahani belonged to the Shi'a Sect. Therefore, his 'Umma ideology, in which the *Imam* (religious leader of the Shi'a Sect) played the central role, did not coincide with the 'Umma ideology in which the Sunna Sect believers considered the *Caliph* (religious leader of the Sunna Sect) as the central figure. The difference in cosmologies between the Shi'a Sect and the Sunna Sect in relation to the 'Umma ideology has not been reconciled. Yet, in spite of his belief in the tenets of Shi'a Sect, Farahani made friendly overtures to the Sunna Sect. His attitude was best illustrated in his favorable evaluation of the ruler of the Ottoman Dynasty, Abdülhamit II [SAKAMOTO 1983].

It is well known that Abdülhamit II was not only a secular ruler (*sultan*) but also a *Caliph* who represented the Sunna Sect's religious community. As a political leader, he utilized his position as *Caliph* to the maximum and tried to rebuild and strengthen the Ottoman Empire which was described as "the sick man of Europe." The territory which the Ottoman Empire had possessed in Europe was lost in the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878. Thus, Abdülhamit II started rebuilding the empire by strengthening his Muslim base in the remaining territory in Asia such as Anatolia, where the Turks lived, as well as Syria, Iraq and the Arabian Peninsula, where Arabs lived. He thought it necessary to unite his Muslim subjects in order to maintain the integrity of the Ottoman Empire. Consequently, he urged his Muslim subjects to become aware of their membership in the 'Umma and tried to



reintegrate the Ottoman Empire as a nation.<sup>9)</sup>

In order to promote this pan-Islamic policy, Abdülhamit II strongly encouraged pilgrimage to Mecca. Farahani visited Istanbul when the pan-Islamic atmosphere was at its height, and he became a supporter of the movement. Since he himself was a bureaucrat serving the Qajar Dynasty and a member of the Shi'a Sect, it would not have been of any advantage to him to praise Abdülhamit II who was the ruler of the Ottoman Empire and *Caliph*. However, it is worth noting that the ideology of 'Umma unity superseded the differences between the Sunna Sect and the Shi'a Sect at the conceptual and the abstract levels.

### 3. THE RULES FOR ALL PILGRIMS IN THE SACRED SPACE

The sacred space in the pilgrimage begins at the border points called *miqat*. These are the check points on the many roads leading to Mecca. Beyond these points lies the sacred area, called *Haram* in Arabic. After the pilgrims enter this sacred space, they must observe not only the general rules of *Shari'a* which apply to the secular space, but must also follow separate strict rules in behavior and ceremony. Detailed rules control clothing, food, the rituals by which to worship at several sacred sites in the holy space, and the ways to interact with other pilgrims. These rules must be adhered to by all pilgrims regardless of differences in ethnicity, social class or sex.

Once inside the sacred area, the rules the pilgrims must follow vary according to the type of activity during the specific stage of the pilgrimage. Thus, it is inaccurate to regard the sacred space as an even and uniform sphere. It is necessary to divide the space into several categories, and depending on the category of space different behavior and rituals are mandated. The specific expectations for each category are outlined in further detail below.

- 1) Once pilgrims enter the sacred space—that is, the space beyond the *miqat*—they must wear white cloth, without stripes and seams, wrapped around their bodies. This style of clothing must be worn until they return to the secular space beyond the *miqat*. This rule, in principle, applies only to men; women and children do not need to observe it.
- 2) The next delineated space the pilgrims enter is the courtyard of the Ka'ba shrine, one of the sacred sites, and adjacent areas in Mecca. There are no rules defining when the pilgrims should set out for Mecca; however, the time of arrival at this second sacred space is clearly set at dusk on the seventh day of the month of *Dhu al-Hijja*. As I will discuss later, the several days which follow this date are regarded as the climax, namely the main ceremony, of the pilgrimage. Thus, visits to Mecca at any other time would not be regarded as a true pilgrimage (*Hajj*). When the pilgrims ar-

9) For an outline of Pan-Islamism policies of Abdülhamit II, ruler of the Ottoman Empire, see Landau [1990: 7-72].

rive, they circle counter-clockwise a number of times around the Ka'ba shrine and prepare themselves for the main ceremony which starts the next day.

- 3) The main ceremony is held between the eighth and the tenth day of the month. This ceremony is not held in the second sphere mentioned above. It is carried out by visiting and worshipping at sacred sites other than the Ka'ba shrine, which are dispersed within the area about twenty kilometers east of Mecca. The three-day activities of the pilgrims in the third sphere are more strictly controlled. Pilgrims must not shave or trim their nails. In addition, they must not talk to each other unnecessarily but are expected to converse with God privately in their own minds.

Movement in the third sphere occurs in the following sequence. The pilgrims leave the second sphere at an early hour on the eighth day and travel via Muzdalifah in order to reach the Jabal al-Rahma at Arafat by midday. Here, everyone listens to the preaching of the Qadi of Mecca. After they pray to God on the mountain top where the grave of Adam is supposedly located, they descend and stay overnight in tents at Muzdalifah.

On the morning of the ninth day, the pilgrims set out for the Mina Valley picking up pebbles along the way. The main event of the day is throwing the pebbles at three stone towers to chase away the devils said to inhabit them. Afterwards, they stay overnight in tents in the Mina Valley as on the night before.

The next day, the tenth, is the climax of the main ceremony. Animals, mainly sheep and sometimes camels, are gathered in the Mina Valley to be sacrificed and offered to God according to the tradition in which Prophet Abraham sacrificed his son to God. This sacrificial ritual is held not only at this place near Mecca, but also in other places in the Muslim world by those who were not able to join the pilgrimage in order to express their appreciation to God.

- 4) The last three days of the holiest time conclude with the sacrificial rites, and the pilgrims move into the fourth sphere. After the pilgrims shave and clip their nails, they enjoy talking to each other and entertaining themselves at banquets until the twelfth day. They are free to remain in the Mina Valley or visit the city center where the Ka'ba shrine is located. One event of particular importance is the big market which is held in the valley; here emerges a totally different, busy commercial sphere.
- 5) The thirteenth day is the day of departure from Mecca. The pilgrims go around the Ka'ba shrine once more to bid farewell to God. They then return to the miqat from the city of Mecca and depart for the secular sphere. The pilgrims do not necessarily need to leave Mecca on the thirteenth day. However, the activities after that day would not be regarded as part of the real pilgrimage, even if the pilgrims follow the prescribed

rituals. Rather, this is regarded as a separate activity, namely *'umrah*, or the "little pilgrimage."

#### 4. THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN PILGRIMAGES IN ISLAM AND OTHER RELIGIONS

Although the Islamic pilgrimage is a temporary mass movement of Muslims during a certain period of the year, the scale of the movement is larger than pilgrimages of other religions in terms of the number of pilgrims and the distance they travel.

Historically, the *Caliph*, who represented the Islamic community, or rulers of Islamic Dynasties directed and organized the large-scale pilgrimages. Before modern times, an individual rarely traveled alone due to the difficulties of transport and concerns for personal safety. Pilgrims were no exception, and they traveled in groups by caravans and on camels or mules to ensure their well-being.

As mentioned above, *caliphs* and secular rulers organized caravans in Baghdad, Damascus and Cairo by employing those in the transportation business and giving directions to pilgrim groups. Under these circumstances, those who wanted to go on pilgrimages could only commence their trip when they reached one of the major cities. There they sought assistance from the rulers of the time in the aforementioned cities, as these rulers organized caravans. They were able to begin their journey in earnest when they were allowed to join an organized pilgrim group. However, a different style of travel which did not depend on traditional means began to emerge in the nineteenth century. This change depended greatly on the progress of transportation methods, the development of travel agencies and cooperative organizations for pilgrims.

At the beginning of the modern period, steamers became the main mode of transportation. Steamers could transport more people in a shorter time than the caravans with their camels and mules. They could also reach Jidda, the outport of Mecca, without any problem. Although the advent of steamers made the pilgrimages more popular and individual travel possible, pilgrims did not have total control over their journeys. No longer did they need to join caravans organized by political administrators and submit to the many limitations of group travel. However, trips by steamer occasioned different types of restrictions. These restrictions arose because the majority of the steamers were not owned by Islamic countries from which the pilgrims came, but by European shipping companies. As a result, pilgrims were not in a position to negotiate their fares and had to accept the price set by the cartel of European shipping companies.

As is apparent from the problem of boat fares, pilgrims in the nineteenth century lost control over their economic autonomy. Yet, relatively speaking, pilgrims were able to arrange their trips more freely than in the past. This change occurred because of the emergence of many travel agencies which specialized in arranging pilgrimages. These travel agencies, with headquarters in Mecca, were called

mutawwif in Arabic. They handled every aspect of the pilgrimage, from arranging caravans, accommodation, preparing tents, provision of food and animal feed, to interpreting services. These agencies started to dispatch their agents to various Islamic countries about six months prior to the commencement of the pilgrimage in order to secure bookings of pilgrimages.

These travel agents could count on various groups as clients, but the most useful one was the organization of the Sufi Sect, which had a wide internal network based on the same religious belief. The Sufis had a cooperative organization similar to *Kô* (guild-like organizations of historical times in Japan) and dispatched a continuous flow of pilgrims to Mecca. By securing the Sufi Sect organization as their major client, the travel agents managed to solidify their business base [SAKAMOTO 1990: 212].

The number of people who provide services at various stages of the pilgrimage is much larger than those involved with pilgrimage-related business in other religions. This is partly because the pilgrimage takes place at a specified time of the year. The main reason, however, is that the Islamic holy places are situated only at Mecca and in the nearby areas, and Muslims from all over the world come to this area to worship.

In Christianity, Japanese Buddhism and Shintoism, the sacred site is not limited to one place; pilgrims choose from among many sacred sites according to their belief. Thus, the formal pilgrimage is not a universal one where all the pilgrims concentrate on the same site, but is more plural and localized in style. For example, many Christians, despite their sectarian differences, visit Jerusalem with its many holy sites associated with Jesus Christ. At the same time, many Roman Catholics regard a visit to Rome as their ultimate aim because Rome was the place where St. Peter and St. Paul were martyred and where the Pope resides. In addition, there are other famous holy places such as Santiago de Compostela in Spain which attracted Christians in medieval Europe due to a cult of the St. James [WATANABE 1980; URSEL 1987; BARRET and GURGAND 1986; BOTTINEAU 1986]. In Japanese Buddhism, it has been popular for followers of *Kôbô Daishi* believers to visit the eighty-eight temples on Shikoku Island and, for believers in Kannon to visit the thirty-three temples in Saigoku. Among Shinto believers, Ise and Kumano were once very popular destinations for pilgrimages.

In Islam, pilgrimages are undertaken to places other than Mecca. The members of the Shi'a Sect visit mausoleums of Imams and the Sufis visit sanctuaries. These pilgrimages are carried out on a more localized scale. However, according to the premise of the Islamic religion, such pilgrimages are to be discouraged because they conflict with the religion's strong belief in monotheism [SAKAMOTO 1986b].

In contrast to pilgrimages in other religions, the pilgrimage to Mecca is one of the duties that a believer must perform. Moreover, the number of pilgrims is much larger. In spite of these factors, Mecca did not develop as fully as a typical city which prospers on religion or a "cathedral" town. This is probably because the influx of people was limited to a certain period of the year. Pilgrimage towns of

other religions prospered on the money spent by the constant flow of pilgrims throughout the year.

The Islamic pilgrimage, however, concentrates people in the one town of Mecca within a short period of time, so large quantities of information, goods, and money are exchanged within this limited time frame. In this respect, the pilgrimage is unique and has given rise to a form of travel distinct from the pilgrimages of other religions.

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