

The Social Aspects of the Pilgrims from the Islamic East during the Hajj (132 AH - 656 AH)

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Abstract

The Islamic Eastern pilgrims arrive in large numbers for the Hajj, and their arrival is often likened to a festive occasion, with people gathering to witness it. This was true whether they were arriving from the East or returning from Makkah after performing the Hajj pilgrimage. Their participation was not limited to joyful occasions; they also took part in moments of sorrow.

Keywords: *Kazakh, English, Latin, origin, experience, research.*

Introduction

Praise be to Allah, and peace and blessings be upon the Messenger of Allah, his family, and his companions. After that, Hajj is both a religious and social journey. During it, pilgrims from various regions of the Islamic state meet, all gathering under the banner of Islam, united by the oneness of Allah and a crucial obligation among His duties. They follow one Prophet and are united by the Sacred House of Allah. Allah has made Hajj a conference where the great and the small, the rich and the poor, women and men meet, around the Kaaba, and Zamzam, or in the Sa'i (the walk between the mountainous areas called Safa and Marwah) between Safa and Marwah, or in the various markets and homes, or during the movements between the Mina and Arafat sites, or during the days of Tashreeq. All these contributed effectively to the blending of Muslims and provided an opportunity to learn about each other's conditions. All are equal in rights and duties, with no distinction between an Arab and a non-Arab except by piety, as the noble Hadith indicates: "There is no superiority of an Arab over a non-Arab, nor of a non-Arab over an Arab, nor of a black person over a red person, nor of a red person over a black person, except by the fear of Allah" (Ibn Mubarak, 1986).

Al-Kazruni (d. 697 AH) described the Hajj season as one of the greatest events in Baghdad (Zahir-Al-Din, 1963). When the caravans from Khorasan, Ray, Tabaristan, and Gurgan (Ibn Al-Athir, 1997) arrived at the center of the caliphate in the month of Shawwal (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1992), "people rushed to watch, from young men and women to youths enchanted by the beauty of a girl, wandering in the gardens of the western side, whether walking or riding the saddle of an Arab horse" (Al-Farabi, 2003) (Al-Kazruni p. 24). The departure of people to see the Hajj caravans coming from the Islamic East was not limited to men alone. Women also went out to watch and enjoy, along with children. The annual tradition of the people of Baghdad gathering to witness these scenes became a custom. The pilgrims from the East, who regularly visited the Sacred House of Allah despite the long distances, were highly regarded. Many individuals made multiple pilgrimages, such as Abu Hamza Al-Khurasani (Abu Hamza al-Khurasani: A prominent ascetic from the Sufi elders, originally from Nishapur, he accompanied the Sufi sheikhs of Baghdad. He was known for his piety and asceticism, passing away in either 260 AH or 290 AH). (Atta, 1998). (Al-Kalabadhi, ND), and Abu Muhammad Al-Hamadani (Al-Mundhiri, 1981), with some reportedly having made sixty pilgrimages (Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi, 2002), although this number may be exaggerated. This sometimes led to a man falling in love with a girl and asking for her hand in marriage, or perhaps a pilgrim would notice one of the girls who came out to enjoy the spectacle and ask for her hand in marriage. The people continued to go out to see the new caravans arriving to welcome them (Al-Kazruni, p. 24.), and the Eastern caravan would stay in Baghdad until the departure of the Iraqi caravan in the month of Dhu Al-Qi'dah (Al-Tabari (d. 310 AH), p. 626). Thus, the gathering of Eastern pilgrims in Baghdad had a social aspect of marriage ties that occurred during the season due to this gathering, and social alliances through marriage were present in this large assembly. As for the number of pilgrims coming from the East, it was often estimated to be around twenty

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thousand, more or less (Al-Hiyali, 2002). The judge Al-Fadhil (d. 596 AH) mentions the number of pilgrims from the East when he performed Hajj in 575 AH. (Al-Qadi al-Fadhil: Abu Ali Abdul Rahim ibn Ali, known as Ibn al-Baysani, a scribe and minister to Salah ad-Din al-Ayyubi, described as the best scribe of his time. He died on the night of Wednesday, the 6th of Rabi' Al-Awwal, 596 AH. (Abdul Ribb Al-Nabi, 1989), estimating it at around two hundred thousand or three hundred thousand (Abu Shamah, 1997), (Al-Rawdatan, 1997). Ibn Jubayr, who traveled with the Eastern and Iraqi caravans after the season in 579 AH, stated: "A gathering whose number only Allah knows, filling the vast plain" (Rida, 2001.) (Al-Azhari (d. 370 AH), p. 71.) (Ibn Jubayr (d. 614 AH), p. 146.). In 294 AH, it was estimated to be around twenty thousand (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 2013). Al-Dhahabi (d. 784 AH) mentioned that around five thousand, or possibly three thousand, pilgrims died due to thirst in one of the years (Al-Dhahabi, 1993.). In one year, when Ibn Mazah (Ibn Al-Athir, 1997) performed Hajj, he was accompanied by three hundred scholars (Al-Dhahabi, 1993).

With these large numbers of pilgrims, the Abbasid state had to exert considerable effort to provide for their needs, including food, drink, and tents. They would set up water troughs and reservoirs along the Tigris, and their camp was placed outside the walls of Baghdad on the western side (Al-Kazruni . 24). The state also provided camels and ships when Baghdad faced floods, as occurred in 573 AH (Ibn Al-Jawzi, p. 240.). The food of the pilgrims during their journey was varied and diverse, including light foods that were easy to carry and did not spoil, such as flatbreads mixed with yogurt and sugar, cakes, and dried fruits (Hussein, 1996). However, this does not mean they did not cook food during their journey. It is mentioned that they used camel dung in some of the houses located in the deserts and barren areas, where they used it as fuel to cook whatever food was available (Khusraw, 1983). The pilgrims gather at the Bab Al-Kanasa to set off toward Mecca, and people rush there to bid them farewell (Saad, 1993). The pilgrims from the East are closely connected to the people living along the road stations through strong social bonds. They would entrust their goods and loads, which they no longer needed, to these people (Al-Hamawi, 1995). These could include thick clothes that weighed down the caravan, as some of them came from cold regions where such clothing was necessary, or their tents. Upon their return, there was a second season for spectators (Al-Kazruni, p. 25), and the Abbasid state would hold grand celebrations to welcome the safe return of the pilgrims and the completion of the Hajj season. The people would go out to welcome the pilgrims after decorating the markets and setting up tents in the streets (Arib Al-Qurtubi, 1967), wearing bright clothes and jewelry. Gifts were distributed in Baghdad during the Hajj season (Nada and Khadijah, 2019). The pilgrims from the Islamic East would spend the night in Al-Yasiriya (Al-Hamawi, 1995) before entering the capital, chanting Takbir (chanting Allah Akbar). (Al-Yasiriyyah: A large village on the banks of the River Isa, located a mile from Baghdad, with a beautiful bridge and gardens). (Al-Hamiri, 1980), and the Abbasid caliphs would go out to greet them (Saad, 1993). It seems that celebrating the return of the pilgrims was a familiar tradition during the Abbasid rule. Benjamin of Tudela (d. 569 AH) described the celebration he witnessed in Baghdad during his visit in 565 AH, where he saw the pilgrims entering Baghdad, calling out to the caliph: "O our master, light of Islam and pride of Muslims, come to us with your blessed appearance" (Benjamin, 2002.).

However, in some years, the people of Baghdad did not celebrate the return of the pilgrims. This occurred in 603 AH, when the Amir of the Hajj, the "Lion of the Seven Pilgrims," left for Syria due to a conflict with the servant who was, in the role of minister, Nasser bin Mahdi (Al-Dhahabi, 1993). There was also estrangement between him and the minister, so he feared him (Al-Safadi (d. 764 AH p. 297.). The caliph ordered that no one should go out to greet the pilgrims due to his sadness over the Amir of the Hajj leaving Iraq (AbuShamah,1874). Similarly, in 617 AH, when the Amir of the Hajj, Aqbash, was killed by the followers of Hassan bin Qatada, the caliph al-Nasirli-Din Allah (575–622 AH) was deeply saddened and did not go out to greet the pilgrims (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1997)

When the pilgrims from the Islamic East returned safely to their homes, they were warmly welcomed by the people (Al-Qadi Iyad, 1970), in an atmosphere filled with joy, happiness, and excitement, accompanied by chants of Takbir. Their return marked a season of celebration, with festive gatherings and the distribution of gifts. One of the customs when receiving a gift was to thank the giver by saying: "The gift has arrived, and the favor has been granted, may you remain a giver of joy and a supporter of kindness" (Al-Tha'labi, 1997). These gifts helped strengthen relationships and spread love and affection, as they opened hearts and

fostered unity. The Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emphasized this practice, saying: "Exchange gifts, and you will love one another" (Al-Bukhari, 1984), and in another narration, "Give gifts to one another, and you will increase in love" (Al-Dulabi, 2000). The Prophet (PBUH) would accept gifts and praise their givers.

On some occasions, large feasts were held upon the safe return of the pilgrims, with participation from both the general public and the ruling class (Ibn Al-Jawzi, 1997). The participation of the pilgrims from the East was not limited to celebrations and joys; they also took part in the funerals of some Abbasid caliphs and attended burial ceremonies. For example, in 423 AH, upon the death of Caliph Al-Qadir Billah (381–423 AH), the funeral procession was scheduled for the night of Friday, the fifth of Dhu Al-Qi'dah, to transport the coffin from the Caliph's palace to the tomb in Rusafa. This time was chosen to allow the pilgrims from Khorasan to attend the funeral. The people and dignitaries gathered, dressed in mourning clothes, and carried the coffin to the "Tayyar" (A light, fast-moving boat used by the elites in the Abbasid era) (Rida, 1959), then transported it from Bab Al-Taq (A large district in Baghdad on the eastern side, known for the Taq Asma. It was a large arch in Baghdad, where poetry sessions were held during the time of Harun Al-Rashid) (Al-Hamawi, 1991) on the shoulders of men to its final resting place (Ibn Al-Jawzi, p. 229.).

It must be noted that the pilgrims from Khorasan were subjected to violent attacks for many years, carried out by groups outside the authority of the Abbasid caliphate. The most severe of these attacks occurred in 552 AH, when the Ismailis attacked them, killing the pilgrims in a great battle. As the fighting intensified, the pilgrims surrendered after their caravan leader was killed and they threw down their weapons. However, the Ismailis betrayed them, stealing their money and belongings. They then attempted to kill the pilgrims from Khorasan, sparing neither scholars, ascetics, the elderly, nor the young. Even the women were killed, and the wounded were also slain. A treacherous plan was devised, where one of the attackers would wander among the dead and call out, "O Muslims, the infidels have gone! Who among you wants water?" This was a trick to kill those who responded. The entire caravan was killed, and only those who managed to escape survived. The horror of this tragedy spread throughout the Islamic world, especially affecting Khorasan, and every region had its own mourning (Ibn Al-Athir, 1997).

As for entertainment and leisure, the people of the East were known for their love of chess, which became widespread among all social classes (Al-Rawandi, 2005). Some religious scholars permitted the game, with the famous scholar of Nisapur, Sahl bin Sahl (d. 404 AH), issuing a fatwa allowing it, provided it was not played for money and did not distract people from their work or worship. He said, "If the money is not lost and the prayer is not forgotten, then it is a source of joy among friends" (Metz, p. 257.). It seems that their passion for chess led them to bring the game with them during their pilgrimage to entertain themselves and avoid boredom during the long journey between the regions of the Islamic East and Mecca. Pilgrims would ride on "shaqqadif" (camel saddles) so that two players could play while the caravan moving (Ibn Jubayr, p. 38.). They also played the game of dice (Majid, 1996), a game based on chance and luck (Metz, p. 258). However, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) prohibited the game of dice, saying: "Whoever plays with dice has disobeyed Allah and His Messenger" (Ibn Majah (d. 273 AH), Hadith No. 3762).

Conclusion

The arrival of the pilgrims in Baghdad was not a routine event; they were warmly welcomed by the people of Baghdad. The Abbasid state provided all the necessary comforts for them during their arrival and departure. Due to the long journey, the pilgrims used various forms of entertainment to refresh themselves and combat boredom. Upon returning to their homes, the pilgrims from the Islamic East were laden with gifts, which they distributed to their families and friends, fostering feelings of love and affection among the people.

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