

**SAILING TO THE HIJAZ:
NARRATIVIZATION OF HAJJ IN THE LITERARY
INDIAN OCEAN**

MUHAMED RIYAZ CHENGANAKKATTIL



**DEPARTMENT OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI**

JANUARY 2024

Sailing to the Hijaz: Narrativization of Hajj in the Literary Indian Ocean

by

Muhamed Riyaz Chenganakkattil

Department of Humanities and Social Sciences

Submitted

*in fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of **Doctor of
Philosophy***

to the



INDIAN INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY DELHI

January 2024

THESIS CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “**Sailing to the Hijaz: Narrativization of Hajj in the Literary Indian Ocean**” being submitted by **Muhamed Riyaz Chenganakkattil** to Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Doctor of Philosophy**, is a bona fide record of the research work done by her under our guidance and supervision. In our opinion, the thesis has fulfilled the requirements and has reached the requisite standard for the submission relating to the degree. The contents of this thesis, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other Institute or University for the award of any degree or diploma.

Date: 23 January 2024



Divya Dwivedi

Associate Professor,
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi
Hauz Khas, New Delhi- 110016



P.K Yasser Arafath

Assistant Professor
Department of History
University of Delhi
New Delhi 110009

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work presented here in the thesis has been carried out by me towards the partial fulfilment of the requirement for the award of a PhD from the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, Indian Institute of Technology Delhi. The work contained herein is my own and is a presentation of my original research work. Wherever quotations from others are involved, every effort has been made to indicate this clearly with due reference to the literature. The content of this report, in full or in parts, have not been submitted to any other institute or university for the award of any degree.

23 January 2024



Muhamed Riyaz Chenganakkattil

2016HUZ8183

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

By the grace of God, I have completed seven years of circumambulation around the idea of Kaaba and pilgrimage. I found it an unending process of sailing to distant lands through a narrative world constructed through texts, stories, and archives. I have crossed angry oceans, barren deserts, and snow-capped mountains with my fellow pilgrim narrators. They have taken me to a distinct world of possibilities for understanding Muslim experiences, their histories, their mobilities, and their political imaginations. I have harbored my interest in imagining the past since I was introduced to two different anecdotes related to my great-grandparents. First, I still visualize the moment when and how my late grandma shared that my paternal great-grandfather looked like a Turkish man wearing a Turkish cap and a long black overcoat of scholars of that period as he delivered sermons for Friday prayers, the pilgrimage of the poor. Second, I was taken aback by documentary evidence which shows that my maternal great-grandfather was an enthusiastic traveler. As a seaman, he crossed his way to Glasgow. Looking at an identity card issued to him by the British authorities, which is kept in my personal collection, I always wanted to make an imaginary travel with him to places like Madras, Bombay, Karachi, Kuwait, Glasgow, and Manchester. I do not exactly know how I arrived at the idea of doing research on hajj. Thinking about the hajj had always led me to *Road to Mecca*, a hajj account by a Polish Muslim Muhammed Asad. It was the first English book I had ever taken to learn the vocabularies of a language to which I never had an exposure. Time flew and I grew up with time. So many stories unfold in my memory which culminated in this research.

I am deeply indebted to my committee members whose support has become my strength and inspiration to nurture my intellectual curiosity. I still recollect my interview meeting with the Professors of literature at IIT where I met my guide-philosopher-friend Divya Dwivedi. She asked interesting questions while sitting in a corner. I had never thought I would be selected for the PhD position. But her questions gave me the strength to respond in a way that I have never done before. Days passed by and I was assigned as a student with her. Through her generous intellectual support, asking me always to think out of the box. I learned from her constant encouragement both inside and outside the classroom. I am grateful for her constant support and appreciation in whatever I do. I am still imbibing knowledge from her. After my coursework and during the busy schedule to find another supervisor, we found Yasser Arafath, the historian-intellectual, who on our very first meeting told me many possibilities of

researching the hajj. I pursued my research under his direction with great enthusiasm for a variety of topics. Until now, he has become my true inspiration to reflect and grow. His inquisitive questions of ‘how, what, and when’ taught me about the importance of learning the minutest details. I am highly grateful for his expertise, guidance, and support. Professor Simona Sawhney, who constantly makes me ask and speak in the classrooms, has been my true inspiration guiding me to read thoroughly and think creatively. I still recollect her words, “Riyaz, time flies, and fly with it”, that she uttered to me at a place where my memories are attached. She has been my motivation at the times when my hopes were shattered, and my passionate teacher. Professor Uday Kumar made me think about the distinctiveness of reflections on a particular subject when I first him with an impoverished draft to his office in JNU. He asked me to write whatever I have collected from my experiences and reflect upon them. My first proposal was shaped greatly by his support for my work. His gentle advice is always helpful to me to keep myself up in the moment when I feel stuck. Professor Sanil whose philosophical musings have always amazed me when I went to his class and then again to his office to discuss a subject of short research. His suggestions to do a deep reading of ‘walking as pilgrimage’ stays with me. I am indebted to his advice throughout my time in the institute.

Many other professors at IITD influenced my thinking-- Arjun Gosh, Angelie Multani, and Farhana Ibrahim. My teacher at Jamia Millia Islamia Prof Nishat Zaidi is source of my inspiration when I lacked exposure to the academic world. I recollect her comments on my response paper for post-colonial literature course as she remarked, ‘simplify it, write for yourself and you will master anything you write.’ Prof Anisurahman and Abdullah Abdul Hameed were amazingly helpful during my post-graduate period. I am truly thankful for their support when I found it difficult to navigate through my studies.

Life at IITD has been very enriching. My experience as a graduate student was greatly enchanted with memories. I have evolved as a person because of my lovely friends and colleagues. Their unending love and kindness have made me come out of my ‘shell’ and transformed the coward and shy person into a courageous extrovert. My partner and “editor-in-academic love,” Sania has been a source of joy and strength, without her affectionate companionship, I would not have sailed across the ships of knowledge. I am grateful for her relentless care for me. I am thankful to my dear friend Alan who departed this earthly world too soon, with whom late-night academic discussions were a source of inspiration. The array

of my friends at the campus, Jayesh, Mahendra, Sandeep Debnath, Robin Ellath, Shinod, Garima Rajan, Rituaparna Kaushik, Rituparna Sengutpa, Nandan Rosario Sebastian, Jose, Neha, Satheesha Angarika, Amal Jahah, Priya Bose, Gopika Gurudas, Sumallya Mukhopadhyay, Jyotirmay Das, Debottam Saha, Arusha Punia, Nazia Amin, Nandini Kalita, Rahul, Mahima, Rajashekar, Haidametu, and Florence have helped me in various ways in arranging impromptu discussions on various aspects of my research and having friendly conversations, without whom IITD would have become a deserted Island for me.

I wholeheartedly express gratitude to my friends who read and proofread this dissertation, without their support this research would not have acquired its current shape. Along with Sania, who is my constant companion in academics, Nove Hoc, a generous colleague; Nazreen Mussarat Fatima, a passionate learner, whose Kaaba-compass-clock will stay with me forever; Ansil K Muhammed and Ajith Maruthaveeran, two sources for my material and academic support, all of them burnt midnight's oil to meticulously read and revise the draft at various stages.

During my conference trips, I had opportunities to meet many scholars and colleagues from different parts of the world. Thankful to Nile Green, the first ever international academic whom I met in my life and he with all capacity helped me at various phases of preparing my applications for fellowships and exchange programs. I still remember those moments when I visited UCLA for a Conference. Even during a busy schedule, he offered to meet a young graduate student, and I cherish the memories of the conversations we had. All those conversations stay with me anew even after years. Prof Marjo Buitelaar and Birigit have become inspiring academic figures for me, and I have benefited from their endorsements on my work while preparing applications for various fellowships. I have learnt a lot from Prof Buitelaar through multiple email exchanges during the initial phases of my research and even offered to accommodate me at her center at Groningen, but unfortunately all plans got disrupted because of the raging COVID-19 pandemic.

My words cannot capture the limitless gratitude to all the wonderful people who have crossed my academic path. I strongly feel grateful to Mahmood Kooria, my friend-guide, with whom I had my first conversation about my interest in researching hajj, and who helped me in many ways, when I was a young student pursuing my undergraduate degree. Only because of him, I developed a curiosity to learn the art of writing convincingly. I am especially indebted to Sohaib Baig, whom I have never met personally, but had many exchanges to share the

research materials, especially in the initial stages of my research while struggling with my proposal. I express heartfelt thanks to Philipp Sperner, my co-traveler to the academic events in Delhi who helped me trace an important manuscript that became a crucial part of my research. Darcie Price-Wallace became a ray of hope for me when I was struggling with a draft to be submitted for publication. I am indebted to Shaj Mohan whose words –‘argue for a third perspective or position and that’s sole task of a researcher’- were constant inspiration. I remember Lakshmi Pradeep with gratitude for her unending commitment to helping me through conversations, proofreading and suggestions. I am thankful for the constructive criticism and suggestions provided by Guido van Meersbergen and Natalya Din-Kariuki on the chapter of Shia Hajj; Hannah-Lena Hagemann and Alasdair Grant on my work on rebellion and Kaaba; Doris Bachmann-Medick, Jens Kugele, on Katharina Stornig on my manuscript on jinn mosques.

This work would not have been possible without the help of some great people from Iran and Turkey. Ayşe Kavak, my Ottoman teacher whom I found in a rarest moment of my search for Ottoman Turkish archives in the collections of various libraries in Turkey. At midnights, we met virtually to read *Bin Bir Gece Masalari (One Thousand and One Nights)* and she became my favorite *hoca*. I am sincerely indebted to her for becoming a key for me to access the oceans of wisdom. Prof Rasul Jafariyaan along with Esra Dogan of Turkey, with whom I had conversations in Persian, though I did not have any knowledge of the language except for some vocabularies, assisted me in finding the traces of a manuscript written by a pilgrim from Madras. Muhammed Ali Hirz from Ihra in Saudi Arabia became my valuable source to discuss the Arabic translation of the Shia hajj manuscript, who with all his capacity sent me the scanned copies of the same. All these people have my source for knowledge exchange. I extend my heartfelt thanks to their selfless efforts.

During my research visit to New York at Columbia University Library and New York Public Library in 2021 amidst the raging pandemic, I had opportunities to discuss my work with scholars who work on Islam in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Words cannot express my gratitude to Ismail Fajrie Alatas, Daniel Majchrowicz, Hiba Abid, Guy Burak, Mohammed Salih Cholakkalakath, Saarthak Singh, Masood Muvahed, Ahmed Zakarya Mitiche, Naved Zarinnal, and Furkan Şenturk who gave me constructive feedback during our conversations which lasted for hours for over many days.

Many friends generously devoted their valuable time to reading my thesis drafts and helped

to restructure my writing and revise it for clarity. Words cannot express my gratitude to Julia Rigma, Ben Carlo, Jodie Russell, and Danny Forde who were my Virtual Dissertation Group cohorts from whom I got feedback. I am thankful to Professor Margret Frenz who asked me to look at the records of female pilgrim mobility hidden in the colonial archives, David Young, Samyak Gosh, and Sonia Wigh whom I met at a South Asia Workshop at the University of Stuttgart for their generous suggestions on a chapter that was written based on the British colonial documents.

I am grateful to King Faisal Centre for Research and Islamic Studies for offering me a visiting fellowship position but could not continue with it because of the bureaucratic hurdles. I thank IIT Delhi for providing me financial support to conduct my research. I am highly appreciative of travel grants and expenses I received from University of Exeter, University of Hamburg (DFG), and UCLA to attend various international conferences organized there. I like to convey my gratitude to all my teachers at Darul Huda Islamic University and Sabeelul Hidayah, without whom I would have become what I am now. These last two were my ‘home’ for more than decade and they gave me all my strength in seeking knowledge.

During my research, I visited different libraries and archival sites. Several knowledge-loving people helped throughout these visits. I remember them with sincere thanks for their kindness in providing the basic information on how to do things with archives and books. At Mappila Heritage Library, Syed Ashraf Thangal and Abdurahiman Mangad Master taught me how to hunt for materials. At Regional Archives, Calicut, Varghese sir, the archivist, introduced me to the worlds of brittle documents that concealed the sources of knowledge. Abdul Jaleel P.KM, who became my unexpected guide on my ways to discover the manuscripts housed at Mishqal Mosque in Calicut; Altaf Khan who was my Urdu materials-digging partner at Bangalore Muslim Library; Simi K. Salim who became my fellow-hunter for a diary of Teethachumma Hajjuma, a Malabari Muslim woman who traveled to Mecca in 1930s, were very helpful and approachable. Without their generous help, my access to these valuable sources would have been unimaginable. During my archive hunt, many helping hands came forward to discover the sources that were never found in the public domain until then. Rajan of Abdurahiman Library, Saneer, Zakariya of Vengara, Gaffar of Narukkode, and Gafoor of Elathod who discovered treasures of knowledge for me. I am thankful to them.

I am very much thankful to Muneer Kalliyil, Anas P, Zainul Abid, Rafi KJ, Vishnu Prasad, Swalih Amminikkad, Rajwa Kamal, Rasik, Asheem, Jabbar Chungathara, Raj Sahoo, Raees,

Hisana, Hani Naseef, Farhana Ashique, Summayya Hameed, Nafeesa Ismail, Lubna Ismailee, Suhara Batool, Rasmil, Daheen Akther, Arif Ali, Rafeefa Parveen, Gaffarkhan Thayyil, Shafeeque Puttekkad, Hannah, Hashir Madappally, Mohammed Ali Shihab, Shabeeb Mampad, Damsas, Fahima Shad, Akhil, Athila Hussain, Noushad Thoombath, Moammed Shabeer, Ashraf, late Asharudheen Palode and many more friends who showered their kindness when I was ‘orphaned’ without any support. Their rooms became my home with compassion and their food became my sustenance.

Above all and everything, it becomes ineffable for me to express my thoughts for my parents for their endless love and moral and emotional support throughout my life. My father, CKA Razak -a religious scholar turned politician- taught me to read old Malayalam script. Without his love and affection, I would not ever be able to produce this research. My Maa, whom I endearingly call *Oochumma*, has been a constant source of courage at the most difficult times of my life. Also, from the depth of my heart, I thank my siblings, Rashida, Rafeeque, Rafid, Raees, Rizwana, my nephew Rashad, my uncles, aunts, and cousins who are the loveliest people on earth, supporting me with what all they have, and at various stages, they poured the stories they are familiar on mobilities to the sacred lands.

Finally, I cannot go further without thanking my late Grandma Ayishumma, from whom I learned the skills of reading complex Arabi-Malyaalam script. She had told me stories of globetrotting communities who visit Mecca on foot every year.

I dedicate this thesis to her loving memory!

With prayers.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the production of hajj imaginary from the literary cultures of the Indian Ocean world. It explores how the narrativization of the pilgrimage to Mecca helps in the meaning-making process of a ritual experience and investigates how the hajj experiences that are narrativized unfold the multidirectional story worlds about the pilgrims' lifeworlds to develop new methods of researching and understanding Islam and Muslims from the region. By bringing together the multifaceted literary sources of pilgrim articulations from Muslim South Asia, especially from Malabar, Madras and Hyderabad, this dissertation delves into the various structures of hajj experiences that give us the large set of registers intertwined with a sense of devotion, politics and pilgrim subjectivity. With in-depth analyses of the social, moral, and political lifeworlds and vocabularies of the pilgrims, the dissertation discusses hajj narration as a product of multimodal encounters and lived experiences of the pilgrims through which they recollect, reimagine, and articulate the political-cultural repercussions of a devotional action. In doing so, this research argues that the distinct context-specific pilgrim subjectivities are formed through narrativization and the articulative labor of Indian Ocean Muslims. It proposes that in this process of narrativization, the pilgrim-writers place the hajj and its experiences in relation to the significant questions of worldmaking, encounters with difference, Muslim transnational belonging, and Muslim internationalism, along with the politics of othering and divisive attitude, including the issues of race, ethnic nationalities, religious minorities, and sectarian sensibilities.

This study shows that hajj narratives, read intertextually and comprehensively, provide us with a method to trace the shifting meanings highlighting how a religious ritual has acted as a significant site for witnessing inter-imperial politics, questioning imperial and colonial regulation of pilgrim mobility, envisioning transnational Muslim political orders and articulating Muslim differences and stratified identities, for negotiating the vexing questions and changing reconfiguration of Muslim societal and political imaginary and also a space for encountering the socio-political intervention of Muslim and non-Muslim powers, such as the empires of Ottoman and the British, and the state of Saudi Arabia. Developing the hajj as a method to analyze the multifocal aspects of Muslim pilgrim experiences and articulations from the region, this dissertation suggests that we see the hajj as a text, a meta-genre, hajj discourse as a poetic project, and hajj narratives as articulation of para-ritual.

सार

यह शोध प्रबंध हिंद महासागर की दुनिया की साहित्यिक संस्कृतियों से काल्पनिक हज के उत्पादन की जांच करता है। यह पता लगाता है कि कैसे मक्का की तीर्थयात्रा का वर्णन एक अनुष्ठान अनुभव की अर्थ-निर्माण प्रक्रिया में मदद करता है और यह जांच करता है कि हज के जिन अनुभवों का वर्णन किया गया है, वे इस्लाम पर शोध और समझने के नए तरीकों को विकसित करने के लिए तीर्थयात्रियों के जीवन जगत के बारे में बहुआयामी कहानी दुनिया को कैसे प्रकट करते हैं और क्षेत्र के मुसलमान, मुस्लिम दक्षिण एशिया, विशेष रूप से मालाबार, मद्रास और हैदराबाद से तीर्थयात्रियों की अभिव्यक्ति के बहुमुखी साहित्यिक स्रोतों को एक साथ लाकर, यह शोध प्रबंध हज अनुभवों की विभिन्न संरचनाओं को समझने में मदद करता है जो हमें भक्ति, राजनीति की भावना से जुड़े रजिस्ट्रों का बड़ा सेट प्रदान करते हैं। और तीर्थयात्री व्यक्तिपरकता। तीर्थयात्रियों के सामाजिक, नैतिक और राजनीतिक जीवन जगत और शब्दावलियों के गहन विश्लेषण के साथ, शोध प्रबंध हज वर्णन पर तीर्थयात्रियों के मल्टीमॉडल मुठभेड़ों और जीवित अनुभवों के उत्पाद के रूप में चर्चा करता है जिसके माध्यम से वे राजनीतिक- को याद करते हैं, फिर से कल्पना करते हैं और स्पष्ट करते हैं। किसी भक्तिपूर्ण कार्य के सांस्कृतिक परिणाम। ऐसा करने से, इस शोध का तर्क है कि विशिष्ट संदर्भ-विशिष्ट तीर्थयात्रियों का निर्माण हिंद महासागर के मुसलमानों के वर्णन और कलात्मक श्रम के माध्यम से होता है। इससे पता चलता है कि वर्णन की इस प्रक्रिया में, तीर्थयात्री-लेखक हज और उसके अनुभवों को विश्व निर्माण, मतभेदों के साथ मुठभेड़, मुस्लिम अंतरराष्ट्रीय संबद्धता और मुस्लिम अंतर्राष्ट्रीयतावाद के महत्वपूर्ण प्रश्नों के साथ-साथ अन्य और विभाजनकारी रवैये की राजनीति के संबंध में रखते हैं। जिसमें नस्ल, जातीय राष्ट्रीयताएं, धार्मिक अल्पसंख्यक और सांप्रदायिक संवेदनशीलता के मुद्दे शामिल हैं।

इस अध्ययन से पता चलता है कि हज कथाएं हमें बदलते अर्थों का पता लगाने की एक विधि प्रदान करती हैं, जिसमें बताया गया है कि कैसे एक धार्मिक अनुष्ठान ने अंतर-साम्राज्यवादी राजनीति को देखने, तीर्थयात्रियों की गतिशीलता के शाही और औपनिवेशिक विनियमन पर सवाल उठाने, अंतरराष्ट्रीय मुस्लिम राजनीतिक व्यवस्था की कल्पना करने, स्पष्ट करने के लिए एक महत्वपूर्ण स्थल के रूप में काम किया है

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Thesis Certificate.....	i
Declaration	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	ix
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Pilgrimage to Mecca: From Devotion to Genre	32
Chapter 2: Pilgrim Gazes: Journeys from the Indian Ocean (1850-1947)	112
Chapter 3: Persecuted Other: A Shia Pilgrim from Madras in the Imperial Hijaz	147
Chapter 4: Hajj from South India: Fragmented Plural Stories.....	176
Chapter 5: Articulating the Hajj in Malabar.....	208
Chapter 6: Worldmaking and Malabar Muslim Pilgrims.....	270
Chapter 7: We are Pilgrims: ‘Collective We’ in Hajj.....	295
Conclusion.....	310
Bibliography.....	325