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The Cultural and Political Economy of Hajj-going from Late Modern Britain:
Glocal Pilgrim Markets and their Governance

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Introduction

Western scholarship on the Hajj, whether in Islamic, Religious or Pilgrimage studies, has mainly been the focus of generalised comment rather than specific, in-depth studies.¹ Important monographs do explore its history, including the early modern period.² However, in an age of ever more intensive and extensive globalisation,³ the late modern Hajj remains relatively under-researched.⁴ This may be in part because of the exclusion of non-Muslim researchers from Mecca and Medina, and also the relative closure of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to detailed scrutiny per se. Nevertheless, in edited collections and journal articles during the 1990s, anthropologists did begin to identify various aspects of pilgrims' contemporary experiences in different national contexts.⁵ However, apart from occasional remarks in some fascinating memoirs,⁶ few have systematically illuminated the particularities of the cultural and political economy of Hajj. Tourism and Management scholars have begun to explore the Saudi Arabian context in this regard,⁷ while Bianchi has produced a detailed survey of the politics of the pilgrimage in non-Arab countries.⁸ In a contribution to this emerging literature, my essay represents the first account of the cultural and political economy of Hajj-going amongst a contemporary Muslim minority in the West. It focuses upon the pilgrim markets and patterns of governance which frame the late modern experiences of the UK's 23,000 *hajjis*.⁹

¹ Roff 1985.

² Pearson 1994; Peters 1994.

³ On globalisation, see Robertson 1995 and Appadurai 1996.

⁴ On late modernity in general terms, see Baumann 1989; Giddens 1990; Ritzer 1993.

⁵ These topics have included travel and the religious imagination, the idea of sacred homelands, ritual transformations of identity and social change (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Fischer and Abedi 1990; Delaney 1990; Werbner 1998). See also McLoughlin 2009a, 2009b.

⁶ One of the most recent and significant memoirs published in English is that of the Moroccan-American Muslim anthropologist, Abdellah Hammoudi (2006). Except for his own account, the recollections of the 'Jet Age Hajj' in Wolfe 1997 are all pre-1990, including Jalal Al-e Ahmad and Malcolm X in 1964.

⁷ Woodward 2004; Sadi and Henderson 2005; Burns 2007; Haq and Jackson 2009; Henderson 2011.

⁸ Bianchi 2004.

⁹ The relevant annual UK pilgrim figures for 2004-08 are as follows: 2004 (22,270); 2005 (27,910); 2006 (25,000); 2007 (21,715); 2008 (18,604). See

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090226/text/90226>. In 2009 the figure was 23,000, see <http://www.britishhajjdelegation.org.uk/about.php>.

Before saying any more about my arguments vis-à-vis Hajj-going, I begin here with a brief explanation of why i) pilgrim markets and ii) their governance are of particular significance. Firstly, since the 1970s especially, the logic of late capitalism has shifted decisively from industrialised mass production to consumption, with carefully marketed and branded commodities, including travel and tourism, becoming a dominant cultural mode of expressing, authenticating and displaying individual self-identities and desires.¹⁰ In this regard, the globalisation of consumer capitalism has been especially well-enabled by new media and public spheres, which have radically multiplied potential sources of knowledge and information, especially amongst the new middle classes.¹¹ Secondly, global flows of people, goods, capital and ideas have also relativised the sovereignty of the nation-state, creating more complex and pluralised societies that are ever more challenging to control and regulate. Indeed, since the 1980s especially, there has been a ‘neoliberal’ shift away from state control of the economy and welfare, towards the logic of the market.¹² Thus, in liberal democracies at least, government has become increasingly associated with flexible ‘management’ and ‘governance’ via the institutions, organisations and networks of civil society.

Of course, for all that globalised forms of late modernity take an increasingly familiar shape across the world, I follow Appadurai in suggesting that globalisation remains ‘a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order.’¹³ Indeed, as Robertson’s notion of glocalisation insists, the global is always tailored to different local, national and regional contexts, which are themselves trans-locally linked,¹⁴ as well as multiply modern.¹⁵ In this vein, I continue in the next section with an exposition of the pivotal glocal context of Hajj-going in Saudi

¹⁰ Gauthier *et al.* 2011. On religion and tourism, see Stausberg 2011.

¹¹ On Islam and such processes, see Turner 1994; Featherstone 2002; Eickelman and Anderson 2003.

¹² For an account of religion and political economy in the neoliberal age, see Martikainen and Gauthier 2013.

¹³ Appadurai 1990: 296.

¹⁴ Robertson 1995.

¹⁵ Eisenstadt 2000.

Arabia. Here, efforts to restructure the international pilgrimage marketplace are a response to the unprecedented opportunities and demand for the Hajj in late modernity. A full investigation of contemporary dynamics in the Kingdom is beyond the scope of this research paper. Nevertheless, based on a new synthesis of studies across various fields and evidence from industry experts in the UK and beyond, I argue that the organisation of the Hajj in Saudi Arabia today must be understood in the light of a broader tension between the ruling dynasty's 'selective incorporation'¹⁶ of economic liberalisation without very significant political liberalisation.¹⁷ On the one hand, it has sought to put more commercial religious tourism at the centre of efforts to diversify its non-oil based national economy. On the other, and despite open criticism at home and abroad, there appear to be few significant checks on Saudi business and government.

The main body of my essay returns to the equally glocally distinctive cultural and political economy of Hajj-going from the UK. Firstly, I examine the privileged 'free market' opportunities that British Muslim pilgrims enjoy in this regard, distinguishing in very broad terms the cultural-economic logics of two key market segments. A small but growing, 'cosmopolitan' market, is outward-looking, both to the UK 'mainstream' and the wider Muslim world per se. Focused on quality and serving a diverse, multi-ethnic constituency of young professionals, it seems to reflect the hybridisation of a post-Islamist cultural turn towards consumerism with an Islamic ethos.¹⁸ However, I argue that another, much larger, 'traditional' market focused on value, which serves less socially mobile, and more inward-looking, ethnic constituencies, is at least as important and interesting, precisely because it does not conform to the dominant logic of cultural economy in late modernity. Contending that the disjunctions between these two markets can be explained in terms of distinctive

¹⁶ Cf. Robertson 1995: 40-1.

¹⁷ See Hammond 2012.

¹⁸ Cf. Boubekeur and Roy 2012.

formations of class and cultural orientation, my analysis also contributes to an explanation of the conditions under which so-called ‘Hajj fraud’ flourishes.

Secondly, the transnational circulations associated with Hajj-going in Britain are not supervised directly by the secular, non-Muslim state. Rather its management and regulation has been covered in a general sense by a combination of government and public bodies concerned with overseas travel, health and consumer rights in the tourism industry. Nevertheless, I argue that, from the late 1990s, and illuminating New Labour’s balancing of neoliberal governance with more communitarian concerns, the Hajj became a temporary focus for government ‘soft’ power.¹⁹ Awareness of pilgrims’ needs at home and abroad has come in large part as a result of British Muslim lobbying. Activists were able to take advantage of ‘multicultural’ and ‘faith-based’ opportunity structures in the UK, which have allowed for the recognition of ‘communities’ as well as individual citizens. However, like British Asian Muslim voluntary organisations per se, the main interlocutors in the pilgrim welfare lobby lack capacity and resources, as well as being divided by ethnicity, denomination and expectations of government. Thus, what was ultimately crucial in the better public recognition and regulation of Hajj-going in the 2000s was New Labour’s growing need to incorporate British Muslims, both in terms of retaining their votes in key inner-city constituencies but also vis-à-vis key glocal security and cohesion policy agendas.

The research for this research paper is based upon original data collected mainly during late 2011. Transcripts of more than 100,000 words in total were produced following in-depth, semi-structured interviews of up to two hours duration with 11 industry experts, all but two being of British Asian Muslim heritage and all but one being male:²⁰ i) two tour operators approved by Saudi Arabia’s Ministry of Hajj, one in London with a high end,

¹⁹ Nye 2004.

²⁰ 68% of all Muslims in Britain in 2001 were of South Asian heritage, including 43% who were of Pakistani heritage. See Peach 2005: 20.

multi-ethnic customer base,²¹ and one in the north of England offering mainly British Indians a mid-range, good value service;²² ii) three Hajj guides / imams, one British Pakistani in the north of England,²³ one British Arab based in London,²⁴ and one Irish convert from the English Midlands;²⁵ iii) the two Hajj pilgrim welfare organisations which claim national reach, one located in the Midlands and serving mainly British Pakistanis (three representatives interviewed),²⁶ and one in the north of England serving mainly British Indians;²⁷ and, finally, iv) two government officers, both based in London and both incidentally of Muslim heritage, one British Pakistani working in central government,²⁸ and one British Bangladeshi employed in a local council's trading standards department.²⁹ I also draw upon observations at two, Hajj related, events organised by tour operators in the UK, as well as parliamentary discussions about the Hajj during the last decade or so.³⁰ Finally, while I am not generally concerned here with analysing data collected from pilgrims, I do also cite very selectively from a survey - 'How was your Hajj?' - which ran on Bristol Online Surveys, November 2011 – March 2012, and collected 211 responses mainly from educated, 'religious' Muslims in their 20s, 30s and 40s.³¹

Transforming the Hajj in Late Modern Saudi Arabia: Management, Tourism and Ideology

²¹ Interview, 19 October 2011.

²² Interview, 3 December 2011.

²³ Interview, 3 December 2011.

²⁴ Interview, 26 October 2011. Notably, British Arabs were generally more reluctant to participate in this research than their British Asian counterparts.

²⁵ Interview, 26 October 2011.

²⁶ Interview, 23 October 2011.

²⁷ Interview, 15 October 2011.

²⁸ Interview, 20 October 2011.

²⁹ Interview, 20 October 2011.

³⁰ A search for 'Hajj' at www.parliament.uk on 8 September 2012 produced 129 results.

³¹ See <https://www.survey.leeds.ac.uk/hajj>.

The number of overseas pilgrims performing Hajj has mushroomed since the mid-1950s,³² when annual figures rarely exceeded 100,000. With the end of colonialism and the absence of world wars (if not civil or regional conflicts), there has been less major disruption to the secure movement of people. Moreover, from the mid-1970s especially, fast, inexpensive air travel has also made time and distances less of an obstacle than in the past.³³ So, with more than 3 million Muslims in total performing Hajj in 2012,³⁴ immense pressure has been put on the infrastructure of the holy places during late modernity. In 1957 the expansion of al-Masjid al-Haram (the Great Mosque) complex around the Ka‘ba began at a time when Saudi Arabia was beginning to benefit from oil revenues. However, the Kingdom was only just becoming a settled, rather than a nomadic, society, and was still in the early stages of selectively developing the institutions of a modern state.³⁵ As global oil prices quintupled during 1973-4 further expansion of Hajj infrastructure was also initiated, including a massive bridge to better facilitate the stoning of the *jamarat* (pillars) at Mina. Thus, the House of Saud was able to demonstrate its largesse to the ‘guests of God’ on an annual basis, and so lend authority to its growing claims to lead the Muslim *ummah* (global community). However, in development terms, the Kingdom was still relatively lacking in modern organisation,³⁶ and various Hajj disasters resulted in a large-scale loss of human life. The severe heat, the prolonged duration of the rituals and the sheer number and proximity of pilgrims from diverse locations all intensifies risks to health and safety, especially among the elderly and infirm.³⁷ Ultimately, in 1988, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, a vehicle for Saudi pan-Islamism, decided to set a Hajj quota for each country at 1,000 pilgrims per million of

³² Bianchi 2004: 50.

³³ Bianchi 2004: 50.

³⁴ *Al-Arabiya*, 29 October 2012.

³⁵ Peters 1994: 362. Cf. Commins 2012 for the best recent scholarly work on Wahhabism and Saudi Arabia per se.

³⁶ Commins 2012: 159.

³⁷ Gatrad and Sheikh 2005.

total (Muslim) population.³⁸ Nevertheless, on several occasions between 1990 and 2006 hundreds of pilgrims still died in fires and especially stampedes. While blaming pilgrim behaviour in part, in recent years the Saudis have embarked upon further major works which seem to have been more effective.³⁹

The late modern development of the Hajj must also be understood in the context of the on-going challenges that the Kingdom is facing in terms of diversifying its non-oil based economy.⁴⁰ After the initial boom of the 1970s it became clear during a period of global recession that the population of Saudi Arabia was growing but youth unemployment was rising and living standards declining. Into the 1990s, the development of tourism was identified as having specific potential in addressing such problems.⁴¹ However, outside of pilgrimage, which is the country's third largest industry, Saudi Arabia has not encouraged international tourism per se.⁴² Certainly, the puritanical Wahhabi religious establishment, which has traditionally legitimated Saudi authority, has always been hostile to Western cultural influence. Nevertheless, despite open criticism of the regime's 'hypocrisy' from transnational Islamists within and without the Kingdom, the monarchy can still rely upon the loyalty of tame Wahhabi '*ulama*' (religious scholars) to endorse its carefully managed version of Muslim modernity.⁴³ Thus, together with private capital investment partners, and boosted by rising oil prices, in the 2000s the Kingdom has been aggressively developing accommodation, retail and related services in Mecca, with a view to significantly increasing

³⁸ Bianchi 2004: 51; cf. <http://www.hajjinformation.com/main/m40.htm>. The OIC was established in 1969 by the Saudis as part of an international strategy intended to counteract the influence of Arab socialism. Following a major clash in 1987, its setting of a quota in 1988 was also a means of counteracting revolutionary Iran's attempts to appropriate the pilgrimage for its own political purposes. See also Fischer and Abedi 1990.

³⁹ For an account from a Saudi government perspective, see <http://www.kapl-hajj.org/>.

⁴⁰ Burns 2007: 219.

⁴¹ Sadi and Henderson 2005: 249, 256; cf. Park 1994; Burns 2007. In an effort to avert social unrest, the Saudis have also embarked upon a very ambitious programme of the 'Saudiization' of its workforce, which has hitherto relied heavily on expatriates. For instance, in the mid-2000s only 16% of hotel staff were Saudi nationals. Tourism was seen as having the potential to produce more private sector employment for this constituency.

⁴² Burns 2007: 229. In 2000 58% of international tourist arrivals in Saudi Arabia were for Hajj or '*umra*' and 47% of international tourism expenditure in 2001 concerned Hajj or '*umra*. Other significant categories included 'visiting friends and relatives' and 'business / conferences.'

⁴³ Commins 2012.

pilgrim (and especially ‘premium’ pilgrim) numbers.⁴⁴ With fierce competition between multinationals for Mecca’s prime real estate, costs in every part of the industry have been driven up, with the city’s Chamber of Commerce estimating that \$10 billion was spent on the Hajj in 2011.⁴⁵

Against this rapidly changing context, and whether they monopolise the process or regulate a fully or partly privatised industry, many postcolonial Muslim powers in diverse nation-states continue to organise, promote and subsidise Hajj-going to claim their own Islamic legitimacy.⁴⁶ In the absence of a Muslim state bureaucracy to manage such matters in the non-Muslim states of the West, it was possible until recently for pilgrims to organise their pilgrimage from Muslim diasporas entirely independently. While commercial tour operators began to appear in the UK during the 1990s, the normal pattern of Hajj-going had often previously comprised individuals leading small groups. For instance, a Hajj guide from the Midlands interviewed for this project told of how, even in the early 2000s, she and another pioneering woman regularly took a group of just 20 to 30 British Muslim converts on a ‘walking Hajj’ aimed at recapturing an ‘authentic’ experience.⁴⁷ However, since a hotel fire near the Grand Mosque caused further fatalities in 2006, this is no longer allowed. While pilgrims can still book flights to Jedda or Medina independently, the Ministry of Hajj (MOH) insists that pilgrims must now secure their accommodation and visas through an approved tour operator. Thus, according to the north of England tour operator interviewed for this project, someone who is adapting successfully to these changes, increasing attempts to

⁴⁴ Henderson 2011: 541.

⁴⁵ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-20067809>.

⁴⁶ At the 2013 World Hajj and Umrah Convention, held at Olympia, London, 21-22 May, it was reported by officials from their respective Ministries of Religious Affairs that the private sector in Indonesia remains very small and confined to premium packages (representing only 10% of *hajjis*), whereas in Pakistan the private sector is much more widely developed (representing 50% of all *hajjis*) and not confined to premium packages. See also Bianchi 2004.

⁴⁷ For an account of Hajj travelling overland from the UK in 1977, see Thomson 1994.

rationalise and manage the Hajj in Saudi Arabia ensure that ‘on the certain date, at a certain time, where we [all] are, the Kingdom knows.’

Presently there are around 80 approved tour operators in the UK listed on the MOH website.⁴⁸ Such tour operators must now take a minimum of 150 pilgrims, with an initial upper limit being 450, and an option of applying for a higher band of 900 to 3000.⁴⁹ The MOH used to accept tour operators with smaller numbers but is now encouraging market consolidation and mergers as it is keen to deal with fewer, more established and larger, companies. Indeed, some US-based tour operators have already begun to internationalise their business.⁵⁰ All must travel to Saudi Arabia to present their credentials months in advance of the Hajj and book hotels, most likely leasing an entire establishment for the season.⁵¹ Payments are staggered but the total amounts involved even at the mid to lower end of the market underline the scale of the capital investment now required in the industry: ‘For one person in Mecca it is roughly £1,000 for a season for one bed. So there is a lot of money involved and there is also significant risk. Say, with the quota of 450 people, this means a minimum start-up cost for tour operators of half a million pounds’ (imam accompanying another north of England tour operator). Tour operators must also agree commercial contracts with a *mu‘alim*⁵² for the supply of transportation and tents plus food in the Europa camp outside Mecca at Mina. Thus the north of England tour operator explained that, even though he may return to Saudi Arabia with a group of pilgrims during Ramadan, he will still need to visit one more time in the two months before Hajj. The release of Hajj visas by the MOH

⁴⁸ http://www.hajjinformation.com/hajj_agents.php?id=53.

⁴⁹ <http://www.hajjinformation.com/main/n4.htm>. Within this bracket it is possible to apply to bring pilgrims in increments of 300.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Adam Travel (<http://www.adamtravel.com/>), which is based in the US but also has offices in Canada, Russia and Italy, as well as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan.

⁵¹ Woodward 2004: 184, reports that outside Hajj and Ramadan periods, hotel occupancy is just 20%, with an overall annual average occupancy of around 60%.

⁵² Literally ‘teacher’ or one who shows a pilgrim how to perform Hajj. While the late modern *mu‘alim* is effectively an agent, many have a longstanding family history of serving *hujjaj* (Woodward 2004).

only after the holy month of fasting also puts pressure on timescales.⁵³ As the London-based trading standards officer interviewed for this project, remarks: ‘a lot of the time the tour operator wouldn’t know they’ve got your visa until a week before you travel,’ with some pilgrims receiving passports, visas and flight tickets the night before or even at the airport (central government officer, London).⁵⁴

Among the representatives of the UK Hajj industry interviewed for this research, and amongst speakers from Indonesia, Pakistan and Nigeria at the 2013 World Hajj and Umrah Convention (WHUC),⁵⁵ there was an appreciation of the great demands made upon Saudi Arabia in managing the pilgrimage.⁵⁶ For instance, the Midlands-based Hajj guide likened it to London hosting the Olympics annually. Her London-based tour operator also acknowledged that ‘the services there, their systems, their procedures are getting more and more effective every year.’ However, WHUC delegates were frank, too, about what they saw as the lack of Saudi intervention to stabilise rising rents, regulate ‘non-quota’ pilgrims, as well as minimise uncertainties with better information sharing. The efficiency and work ethic of some Saudi nationals has also been questioned, with rapid modernisation in a rentier state meaning that segments of the population have come to expect well-paid but undemanding white collar positions.⁵⁷ As the tour operator from the north of England elaborates:

They do make it awkward ... for days and days you go there, you sit there, they’ll have a nice [cup of] tea, coffee and they’re eating this and that, you wait there all day, ‘Bukra,’

⁵³ As a time of spiritual reflection, this is also a key moment for many intending pilgrims to declare their intention to travel.

⁵⁴ On 26 January 2004, Labour MP for Putney in London, Tony Colman, tabled ‘Early day motion 481 British Citizens and Saudi Visas for Hajj’ which details that while applications for Hajj visas ‘must be accompanied by return airline tickets ... there is no certainty that a visa will be granted ... the substantial cost of a return fare to Saudi Arabia will be forfeited in the event of a refusal.’ The motion called upon the Saudis to ‘either abolish the requirement to buy a ticket in advance or refund the cost of the ticket to unsuccessful applicants.’ See <http://www.parliament.uk/edm/2003-04/481>.

⁵⁵ Organised by a London-based tour operator and entrepreneur, this was held at Olympia in London, 21-22 May 2013.

⁵⁶ Henderson 2011: 546 quotes estimated public costs of US\$3967 million for ‘the religious services sector’ during the 2005-09 Saudi planning period.

⁵⁷ Sadi and Henderson 2005. For this reason and a lack of training, progress on ‘Saudization’ has been slow.

‘Tomorrow,’ ‘Tomorrow’ ... [But] don’t go with the demanding attitude like we do – my God, don’t ever do that ... As long as you understand them and try to work their way, it becomes easy ... you’ve got to overcome that and you’ve got to make sure you’re one step ahead of them ... The certain thing is, what we did last year, there will be something different next year. That’s one of the reasons I go four time[s] a year.

The two UK tour operators interviewed also registered concerns about the current balance between necessary modernisation of Hajj infrastructure and respect for Islamic heritage in Mecca.⁵⁸ Historic, and sometimes sacred, buildings from the Prophetic to the Ottoman eras have been almost entirely demolished to make way for an expanded Masjid al-Haram and new, high-rise commercial developments.⁵⁹ Together with the historical pattern of puritanical Wahhabi iconoclasm, which is motivated by a stark avoidance of *shirk* (idolatory), ‘*ulama*’ support for the monarchy ensures that there are few checks on Saudi governance of modernisation. Critics within and without Saudi Arabia suggest that, ironically, this sometimes owes more to Las Vegas style kitsch than the legacy of Islamic civilisation.⁶⁰ For example, the Abraj al-Bait complex of hotels, shopping malls, which now overshadows the Haram and the Ka‘ba, is topped by a 600 metre high clock tower resembling London’s ‘Big Ben.’ Judging by the online message board of a UK broadsheet newspaper reporting such issues, opinion amongst Muslims internationally is very divided.⁶¹ However, my own British Muslim interviewees did worry that an aesthetic of sanctity has been compromised: ‘I tell you that a lot of people don’t accept it. I’ve never been, I never asked their price because I don’t want to take my *hajjis* there. I don’t think that should be there’ (tour operator, north of

⁵⁸ On globalisation and heritage, see Labadi and Long 2010.

⁵⁹ See, for example, Turkish protests at the destruction of the al-Ajyad Ottoman fortress in 2002, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/middle_east/1748711.stm.

⁶⁰ See, for example, *The Guardian* (23 October 2012), which cites Saudi architect and activist, Sami Angawi, as well as UK-based Saudi, Irfan al-Alawi, <http://www.islamic-heritage.org/>.

⁶¹ See, for example, <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/why-dont-more-muslims-speak-out-against-the-wanton-destruction-of-meccas-holy-sites-8229682.html>.

England). Even towards the ‘premium’ end of the UK market, the fundamental egalitarianism of the pilgrimage remains important: ‘I’m always afraid of losing the spirit of Hajj ... they had sofas last year in [the tents at] Mina. And I find it a bit frustrating ... I don’t want unnecessary luxury... the modernisation can be detrimental because it may mean that Hajj is only for the wealthy’ (tour operator, London).

Between Cosmopolitanism and Tradition: Pilgrim Markets and Hajj Tour Operators in the UK

In the same late modern moment of global mobility that witnessed the scale of Hajj-going skyrocket worldwide, Muslim diasporas were being established in the West by post-war international labour migration and family resettlement. Data for Hajj-going in the UK is available going back to the 1960s, with my calculations showing that pilgrim numbers have increased consistently ever since at about twice the rate of Muslim population growth.⁶² In recent years, approximately 23,000 pilgrims have travelled annually to Saudi Arabia for Hajj and this is the highest rate in Western Europe.⁶³ I argue that this high rate of Hajj-going can be explained in terms of some glocalised features of pilgrimage markets amongst Muslim diasporas.

Firstly, as the central government officer interviewed for this project explained, ‘no quota has been given to the UK; if you apply on time you get your visa, there’s no threshold.’ As noted above, the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation normally sets a Hajj quota of 1,000

⁶² Bianchi’s appendices reveal that the average annual rate of Hajj-going from the UK was 121 pilgrims during 1961-65 and 4,482 during 1985-7, while my own calculations suggest an average of around 23,000 in the period 2005-09. In the 30 years between 1961 and 1991 the Muslim population of Britain increased 18-fold from 55,000 to just less than 1 million. However, Hajj-going during a similar period increased 37-fold. Between 1991 and 2011 the Muslim population of Britain nearly trebled to 2.7 million, but during a similar period Hajj-going increased more than five-fold. For UK Muslim population figures see, Peach 2005: 23 and also <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/rel/census/2011-census/key-statistics-for-local-authorities-in-england-and-wales/rpt-religion.html>.

⁶³ See note 9 above. Cf. Bianchi 2004: 63. About 100,000 also complete the ‘*umra* or minor pilgrimage.

pilgrims per million of total (Muslim) population for each sending country.⁶⁴ However, Muslims who live as religious minorities are treated as a special case,⁶⁵ with the quota either waived or set against more general population levels. If the Hajj quota for the UK was based on Britain's current Muslim population of 2.7 million, it would limit the number of pilgrims to just 2-3,000 per year, some 10 times less than current levels. A quota based on the UK's total population would suggest a figure of 56,000 pilgrims, which has never been approached in terms of demand. Thus Muslim minorities in the West undoubtedly benefit from opportunities to go for Hajj at a time of their choosing, an option largely unavailable to most other Muslims, who may have to wait several years for their chance to travel.⁶⁶

Secondly, income remains the most significant predictor of who travels for Hajj today and, whether individually or as part of an extended family unit, most Muslims in the West can find the financial resources necessary to make the journey at least once in their lifetime. A large majority of British Muslims are the children and grandchildren of economic migrants of Indo-Pakistani origin, who typically traced their own heritage to contexts of rural peasantry. However, while Pakistanis / Kashmiris and Bangladeshis exhibit amongst the highest levels of relative deprivation in the UK,⁶⁷ international labour migration is still a marker of relative prosperity considering the development issues typical of homeland contexts.⁶⁸ Moreover, while the picture is complex, social mobility has also been on the rise

⁶⁴ There is also a longstanding 'no return within five years' rule but this has not typically been enforced by the Saudis.

⁶⁵ Bianchi 2004: 53.

⁶⁶ For instance, at the 2013 World Hajj and Umrah Convention, the Indonesian delegation reported that, in the Muslim world's most populous nation, waiting times for intending *hujjaj* can be up to 15 years. Cf. Bianchi 2004: 53. I have also spoken to international Muslim students in Leeds who view their UK residency as providing an opportunity to perform Hajj given the competition for places at home. Turkey's population is roughly 75 million and 99% Muslim, so its official quota is roughly around 75,000. See, <http://www.todayszaman.com/columnist-293279-iran-prime-culprit-for-slashed-hajj-quotas.html>

⁶⁷ The majority of British Pakistanis actually hail from Pakistani-controlled Kashmir.

⁶⁸ For instance, the numbers from Pakistan performing Hajj have been low relative to population size. See Park 1994: 271. Cf. also Haq and Jackson 2009 for a very rare study of the experiences of *hujjaj*, in this case middle class Pakistanis and Pakistani Australians.

for some decades amongst a small but continually growing ‘new’ middle class of young, educated professionals.

Thirdly, according to Islamic law, being physically able and having the necessary financial resources makes the Hajj incumbent upon Muslims at least in terms of religious norms. Once almost exclusively an opportunity for older people to prepare to ‘face *al-akhira* [the afterlife] with a clean sheet’ (Hajj guide, the Midlands), amongst wealthier Muslims worldwide, including the diasporas of the West, Hajj-going is now very common among young adults. Urbanised, literate and mediatised Muslim publics are more conscious than ever before of religious orthopraxy.⁶⁹ Indeed, a key trope of modern revivalist discourse emphasises the virtues of actively remaking individual subjectivity and self-identity in the here and now, rather than simply in readiness for the hereafter.⁷⁰ So, while my online survey suggested that ‘religious duty’ was the key factor in 53% of British Muslim respondents determining when they made their pilgrimage, ‘personal need or spiritual journey’ was the most important factor for another 30%.

As compared to their ancestors, then, most British Muslims’ expectations of going on Hajj have been completely transformed in late modernity, just as they have become more democratised in terms of social class, gender and generation.⁷¹ However, the argument here is that while common processes shape the UK Islamic pilgrimage market, quite different tour operator packages and experiences are demanded by two distinctive segments, the ‘cosmopolitan’ and the ‘traditional.’ I base my claim on interviews with all the various

⁶⁹ Cf. Gellner 1992; Eickelman and Anderson 2003; Masud *et al.* 2009.

⁷⁰ Interestingly, some young British Muslims are choosing to mark their marriage as a significant rite of passage by going on Hajj together. Moreover, while many pilgrims still incorporate a stopover in the holy places on a homeland visit, such ties are weakening amongst diasporic youth, with Islam providing one alternative focus for ‘homing desires’: ‘Instead of going on holiday somewhere else [i.e. Pakistan, India, Bangladesh], why not go on Hajj, or on ‘*umra*?’ (imam and Hajj guide, north of England). Cf. McLoughlin 2009a, 2009c, 2010a.

⁷¹ Only 35% of the young, educated and self-identified ‘religious’ respondents to my online survey had grandparents who had been for Hajj. This figure will have been inflated by migration, too, as compared to homeland norms, because of economic migrants sponsoring the pilgrimages of their kin. In contrast, 80% of respondents had parents (more clearly the migrant generation) who had been for Hajj, while 91% of respondents themselves (Muslims in their 20s, 30s and 40s) had always anticipated making the pilgrimage in their lifetime. Cf. McLoughlin 2009a, 2009b.

industry experts, as well as my own general research on British Muslim communities during the last 20 years. Indeed, the distinction between these cultural-economic logics has relevance more generally for the analysis of emerging patterns of Islamically-marked consumption.⁷² Nevertheless, I do not deny the empirical complexity of, or real time crossovers between, these two abstract categories, something I aim to explore in other publications.

In summary, the ‘cosmopolitan’ UK pilgrimage market is targeted by the most professionalised tour operators at the relatively small but growing middle class of mainly British-born and educated Muslims in their 20s, 30s and 40s.⁷³ To attract this ‘premium’ market tour operators mimic sophisticated ‘mainstream’ holiday packages, at once appealing to the consumer as an individual but also providing the reassurance of well-organised ‘bureaucratic’ formality. However, in the style of the ‘post-Islamist’ cultural turn described by Boubekeur and Roy,⁷⁴ this market segment is also imbued with a universalistic Islamic ethos which cuts across ethnic and denominational boundaries and so represents a clear outward-looking alternative to the established, and much larger, ‘traditional’ UK Islamic pilgrimage market segment. In the mid-range the latter is still often well-organised by experienced tour operators. However, they typically serve a customer base that is less prosperous overall and demands good value, as well as remaining inwardly oriented in terms of particular religio-ethnic networks. In this market segment, transactions are also more informal, something not untypical of migrant economies more generally.

⁷² For instance, recent work on modest fashion inevitably tends to focus only on ‘cosmopolitan’ and not more ‘traditional’ markets. Cf. Kiliçbay and Binark 2002 on Islamic consumer culture and lifestyles in Turkey with a focus on veiling. For the UK, see Tarlo 2010.

⁷³ For a discussion of cosmopolitanism, most especially in terms of enhanced individual cultural repertoires and multiple, criss-crossing, de-territorialised affiliations, see Vertovec and Cohen 2002.

⁷⁴ See Boubekeur and Roy 2012 for a discussion of the evolution and pluralisation of ‘Islamism’ in the last decade or so. In at least one significant trajectory, a more austere, oppositional ideology and activism has given way to a ‘post-Islamist’ cultural turn. In the devolved networks of individual entrepreneurs and professionals, markets associated with cultural production and leisure (including travel and tourism) mimic the aesthetics of ‘Western culture’ but are imbued with an Islamic ethos. This globalised, free market ‘consumerist Islam’ has had a pervasive, everyday influence on individual Muslim lives far beyond the conventional reach of Islamist organisations.

Thus, for example, the London-based tour operator interviewed for this project was established in the late 1990s after two university Islamic society activists, who had organised separate student pilgrimages, joined forces. Now in their late 30s and early 40s, and in a cultural space away from activism, the entrepreneurs saw a clear business opportunity to provide a premium service which ‘didn’t cut any corners.’ The company also offers Islamic heritage tours worldwide, as well as religiously appropriate family beach holidays. Its highly professional website carefully addresses Muslim women while featuring a blog and Facebook page too.⁷⁵ Committed to enabling pilgrims to minimise the very considerable stresses of performing Hajj, and thus freeing them to concentrate on their spiritual journey, the aim of the London-based tour operator is to make the pilgrimage ‘as easy as possible,’ hence the motto: ‘We will worry about your Hajj more than you will.’ Before departure there are preparatory seminars,⁷⁶ a medic and 10 multi-lingual Hajj guides and helpers are on hand to escort the 200-300 pilgrims,⁷⁷ and two or three ecumenically-minded ‘*ulama*’ can advise on the *fiqh* (jurisprudence) of Hajj across all *madhahib* (schools of law governing the detail of ritual behaviour amongst other things). However, in offering only 4 star and 5 star packages for an ‘express’ (two-week) and more extended Hajj tour, which in 2011 cost between £4-5,000 per person including flights, most clients are middle-class British Muslims from a variety of South Asian and Middle Eastern ethnic backgrounds, as well as white converts to Islam.

In contrast, the north of England tour operator interviewed for this project, a British Indian in his 60s from Gujerat, established his business in the early 1990s, following redundancy from the textiles industry. He also had previous experience of leading small groups for Hajj and in 2011 took 395 pilgrims, mainly from a Gujerati Indian background,

⁷⁵ The company also advertises that it is featured on websites such as <http://hajjratings.com/>.

⁷⁶ I observed a London seminar organised by this tour operator on 9 October 2011 and conducted informal interviews with the tour operator, Hajj guides, a doctor and pilgrims.

⁷⁷ The Ministry of Hajj requires tour operators to provide only one guide or helper to every 100 pilgrims, <http://www.hajjinformation.com/main/n4.htm>.

but anyone who is comfortable in Urdu, the *lingua franca* of the group, is welcome. The packages he offers are good value - ‘Give them four, five star, I know the people who [are] from here, they won’t be happy ... not the price.’ He describes the hotel used in Mecca for several years until its demolition as ‘nice enough, clean enough’ and, all importantly, within a few minutes’ walk of Masjid al-Haram. In 2011 pilgrims paid £2,550-£2,275 depending on whether they were two or four to a room and regardless of whether they travelled for five weeks or two. The tour operator is a fan of early departures for the holy places and dislikes taking professionals on ‘express’ packages because, in his view, they arrive too stressed. He also contrasts the ‘organised’ Gujeratis who book very early with the ‘last minute’ Pakistanis. However, the biggest problem is food: ‘I cannot satisfy them with the five star food or the Arabic food. They would not enjoy [it].’ Therefore, with the hotel’s agreement and the appropriate immigration checks, he brings a chef from India, although like everything else, the rules concerning foreign workers are subject to change.⁷⁸ Underlining the homeland orientation of this transnational operation despite a clientele including many younger pilgrims, the *‘alim* who travels with him, is also brought from India. Overall, there is one Hajj guide to every 50 pilgrims and while he does run a pre-Hajj seminar, as well as clear but homespun website, this tour operator still prefers to brief his pilgrims face to face, being careful to manage their expectations: ‘I explain to them it’s not easy ... I always paint the darkest picture possible. When he [sic] gets there he has no problem. He gets more than what I promised, but I don’t promise what I can’t produce.’

In the late 2000s British Muslims’ spending on pilgrimages covered by ATOL (Air Tours Organisers’ Licensing) was estimated at £36 million.⁷⁹ For tour operators, there are therefore potentially lucrative profits with the General Secretary of the pilgrim welfare

⁷⁸ For a discussion of foreign workers in the Saudi hospitality and tourism industry, see Sadi and Henderson 2005.

⁷⁹ *Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca – essential information about fraud*, 15 October 2010, National Fraud Intelligence Bureau and City of London Police, <http://www.fco.gov.uk/en/travel-and-living-abroad/your-trip/hajj-pilgrims>; see also <http://islamicmonitor.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/launch-of-national-hajj-awareness.html>.

organisation, The Association of British Hujjaj (ABH, see below), estimating in his interview that there is as much as £1000-1500 profit to be made per *hajji*.⁸⁰ Since the 1990s low cost airlines and wealthy Muslim entrepreneurs have also chartered flights to take advantage of the opportunity to transport pilgrims in their thousands from regional airports.⁸¹ However, highlighting the unusual structure of the UK Hajj industry, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) notes, too, that only 12,000 (or 50-60% of) pilgrims make their bookings through ATOL approved tour operators such as the two discussed above.⁸² A significant number of British Muslim pilgrims arrange their Hajj through other channels.⁸³ As the central government officer elaborated: ‘An ordinary pilgrim ... will not walk into a travel agent [saying], “Look, I’m going for Hajj. This is my passport. How much are you going to charge me?”’ Rather, the cultural-economic logic of a large proportion of UK Hajj organisation is still very much rooted in the mutual co-operation, honour and trust associated with networks of kinship, friendship and locality, with senior figures, such as a *shaykh* (spiritual guide), or family member, often taking the lead.⁸⁴ Despite the expectations of UK public bodies such as the CAA, and attempts to modernise and rationalise the industry by the Ministry of Hajj, Hajj-going in the UK is still typically organised informally. It is certain problems that are perhaps most in evidence at the bottom end of this ‘traditional’ market that I focus on in the rest of this section.

While there may be only 80 Ministry of Hajj approved tour operators in the UK, the chief executive of the other UK pilgrim welfare organisation, the Council of British Hajjis (CBH, see below) explained that, given the pilgrim numbers agreed and paid for by tour

⁸⁰ *Q News* (1 April 2000) gives some insight into Hajj packages available in north-west London just over a decade ago, with prices then ranging from £1,400 to £1,750 for an average of five sharing over 2-3 weeks. It was cheaper travelling from Europe, with £830 buying a trip sleeping on the floor in flats away from Masjid al-Haram. No food (or flights) included. The article suggests that even then profits of £600 per pilgrim could be made.

⁸¹ See <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/1996/03March96.html#Hajj> from Britain, <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/1997/04April97.html#Hajj> and Eid news.

⁸² See <http://islamicmonitor.blogspot.co.uk/2008/11/launch-of-national-hajj-awareness.html>.

⁸³ *Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca*, op cit.

⁸⁴ Cf. Shaw 2000 on kinship among British Pakistanis.

operators in advance, ‘Some will then appoint agents, sub-agents and smaller tour operators back home who aren’t Ministry [of Hajj] approved because they can’t meet the necessary quotas [on their own].’ Like the Association of British Hujjaj, the CBH estimates that the total number of sub-agents selling Hajj packages in the UK is at least 200-250, with each of these operating various ‘touts’ at key points in the annual cycle such as during the month of Ramadan. Moreover, the London-based local council trading standards officer interviewed for this project speculated that the Ministry of Hajj’s policy of commercialisation and market consolidation has actually prompted the emergence of some ‘rogue traders’ given the profits to be made: ‘a lot of people have missed the boat and so they are trying to find a different way of jumping on the bandwagon.’ As well as the tout ‘in the [high] street, [or] corner shop, who is a money exchanger [and] will sell this [Hajj packages] as additional business’ (central government officer, London), at the very bottom of the pyramid of sub-agents are other ‘members of the community.’ These ‘uncles’ may include family and friends or imams. For instance, an intending pilgrim might very naturally ask their imam about going for Hajj, and imams, who are typically employees of their mosque committees and are rarely well-paid, may see the opportunity for a perk.⁸⁵ Indeed, they may be told by a sub-agent or operator: ‘Your ticket will be free. You will be my guest. Bring your congregation with you’ (central government officer, London). As an imam who accompanies a Ministry of Hajj approved tour operator in the north of England explained: ‘those people who are living near me, they prefer to go where I am going, because they know me. I am going from 17 years. People trust me, that is why they want to trust [such and such a tour operator] ... they don’t know him.’

Unfortunately, one legacy of rising expectations about what they can expect and the informal way in which Hajj-going has been organised hitherto is ‘Hajj fraud.’ More than 80%

⁸⁵ On mosques and imams, see McLoughlin 2005a; and for critical commentary on imams as Hajj touts, see regular contributions to the London edition of the *Daily Jang* (ABH religious scholar).

of victims are over 65,⁸⁶ with many likely to be relatively uneducated, or perhaps in some cases, illiterate. Unlike tour operators, who hold passports, visas (and tickets where flights are included), sub-agents and their touts are not Ministry of Hajj approved or ATOL registered. Thus, despite being the contact point for the consumer, they have no power over the delivery of services, deal in cash and rarely provide written contracts, receipts or accurate documentation. As the London-based trading standards officer reported, most complaints he receives are civil in nature, whether in terms of changes to verbal agreements regarding flights (delays, routes, stop-overs), mis-described hotels, rooms or other services.⁸⁷ While such issues have been reported to trading standards departments in the UK only in recent years, they are also often difficult to prosecute because of a lack of evidence or the amount of time that has elapsed since the alleged offence. Hajj fraud involves a range of industry problems including incompetence, dishonesty and outright deception. Amongst sub-agents and touts especially there is inevitably a lack of skills and knowledge of tour operator responsibilities, while tour operators themselves can be unprofessional and disorganised concerning their liaison with the Ministry of Hajj. So, some will take pilgrims' money assuming that they can deliver but there is no doubt that legitimate tour operators also over-promise and raise pilgrim expectations, both verbally and in terms of advertising, setting a relatively high price for low standards.⁸⁸

In terms of outright deception, the case of Qibla Hajj Kafela Services in East London was well-documented in the press during 2009.⁸⁹ As the trading standards officer interviewed

⁸⁶ *Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca*, op cit.

⁸⁷ He reports having received 34 complaints in 2011. One complainant (letter, 3 August 2011) from East London paid £2,200 per pilgrim for a separate room for his family party of five people. However, on arrival men were separated from women and he was directed to a bed in a room with six others which had one shared bathroom and was never cleaned; in his absence he was also evicted from one tent in Mina and moved to another: 'Please note many pilgrims suffer a lot because of such mismanagements but don't complain, reason being of their holiness for becoming *hajjis*.'

⁸⁸ Where quality is compromised in terms of accommodation, food or transport, the impact on the elderly and frail with other illnesses such as diabetes and heart conditions can be especially deleterious. See Gatrad and Sheikh 2005.

⁸⁹ <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk/8144531.stm>.

for this research explained, having previously worked for a legitimate tour operator, Mohammed Faruk Ahmed began advertising his own Hajj packages which undercut the competition by £400-500 per pilgrim. He also claimed that he was Ministry of Hajj approved and had an ATOL licence when he did not. Eventually legitimate traders reported him to the local trading standards department, prompting a visit to an office where he had only a single desk and filing cabinet. However, Ahmed absconded to Bangladesh with more than £500,000 and hundreds of passports only to be arrested and jailed on his return to the UK. A proactive response to this negative publicity was quickly demanded by Lutfur Rahman, the British Bengali leader of Tower Hamlets council, with trading standards representatives visiting all local mosques in a ‘consultation bus’ in order to raise awareness of the issues (trading standards officer, London).⁹⁰

Shaped by their socialisation in modern Britain, more Muslims are now willing to assert consumer rights that they enjoy not as pilgrims but as UK and European citizens. Indeed, according to the Economic Crime Directorate at the City of London Police, there has been a four-fold increase in reporting UK Hajj fraud from 2011 to 2012.⁹¹ However, the full scale of the problem remains unknown, with many older pilgrims especially still reluctant to involve the authorities, often for ostensibly religio-cultural reasons. Amongst this constituency at least, the ‘traditional’ attitude persists that, having become ‘holy’ or ‘pure’ as a *hajji*, and so prepared for the afterlife, one does not speak of such worldly things (central government officer, London).⁹²

⁹⁰ According to the 2011 Census the population of Tower Hamlets is 32% Bengali and 34.5% Muslim, the highest proportions respectively in the UK, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>.

⁹¹ Commander Steve Head, speaking at the 2013 World Hajj and Umrah Convention.

⁹² If, having told everyone they know that they are going for Hajj, and then there is a problem, some may perceive this as a curse or not being ‘called’ by God. Tour operators may also deploy emotional blackmail in religio-cultural terms, insisting that Hajj is a *jihad* (struggle) and that those who complain will not have their pilgrimage ‘accepted’ by Allah. Communities may reinforce such silence, too, especially if family are involved.

Pilgrim Welfare, Muslim Lobbies and the Changing Contexts of Hajj Governance in Britain

The prompt political response to the Tower Hamlets Hajj fraud case underlines the political leverage that large South Asian heritage diasporas have come to exercise in particular locales of late modern Britain since the 1980s. However, successful lobbying on behalf of Muslim pilgrims in the UK began somewhat later only in 1997-8. Moreover, in an age of everyday trans-nationalism, it was initially targeted at national rather than local government given a primary concern with problems overseas in Saudi Arabia. The Association of British Hujjaj (ABH) is a registered charity based in Birmingham, the city with the second largest Muslim population in the UK and one dominated by British Pakistanis, the largest single Muslim ethnic group in the country.⁹³ Formed in response to the various Hajj disasters of the 1990s, the ABH chairman himself told of how, immediately after the 1997 tent fire at Mina, which killed over 300 pilgrims and injured many more, he had been unable to determine the fate of various family members.⁹⁴ On other occasions, too, the general secretary and many local people had been unable to easily access help when they were affected by thefts or deaths in the holy places; it seemed that every year *hajjis* returned to Birmingham with tales of human tragedy. Thus, in a longstanding tradition of *khidmat* (voluntary religious service),⁹⁵ various businessmen and professionals in the city, together with a number of senior Muslim medical doctors and religious scholars, decided to establish the ABH.⁹⁶

The ABH's pioneering objectives were therefore twofold: i) to persuade the British government to better support its Muslim citizens on Hajj and 'umra, and ii) to educate British

⁹³ At the 2011 Census, 21.8% of Birmingham's population was Muslim, while 144, 627 Pakistanis represented 13.5% of the population, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>. The current ABH chairman is a middle-aged Kashmiri businessman; the general secretary is a retired public servant, originally from Lahore.

⁹⁴ Apparently the FCO was unsure of how many British Muslims were performing Hajj in 1997 because many held dual nationality, <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/1997/04April97.html#Hajj> and Eid news.

⁹⁵ Cf. Werbner and Anwar 1991, Werbner 2002.

⁹⁶ See the ABH 2010 annual report and financial statements, <http://www.charitycommission.gov.uk/Showcharity/RegisterOfCharities/CharityWithoutPartB.aspx?RegisteredCharityNumber=1087426&SubsidiaryNumber=0>.

Muslims about health and safety matters in Mecca and its environs. In terms of the former, the late Dr Syed Aziz Pasha of the Union of Muslim Organizations, UK and Eire, a Muslim umbrella organisation founded in 1970, had called upon the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to consider a UK Hajj mission following the Rushdie Affair (1989) but to no avail.⁹⁷ However, when New Labour came to power in 1997 it was a ‘social democratic government trying to govern in a neo-liberal direction while maintaining its traditional ... support.’⁹⁸ Dependent on many votes from amongst the expanding Muslim population of the UK’s inner-cities, and so retaining a social inclusion agenda despite continuing many Thatcherite policies, a political context emerged that was hospitable to extending existing ‘multicultural’ and ‘faith-based’ opportunity structures to include the public recognition of Islam.⁹⁹ The ABH approached a fellow Pakistani / Kashmiri, Baron Nazir Ahmed of Rotherham, the Labour councillor raised as the first Muslim male life peer in 1998, and it was he that provided the necessary ‘bridging power’ to government. Together with Lord Ahmed, at a meeting in the House of Lords on 15 July 1999, the ABH managed to convince Baroness Symons that there was diplomatic advantage both at home and abroad in the UK being the first non-Muslim government in the West to publicly legitimate the Hajj by establishing a delegation.¹⁰⁰

Lord Ahmed went on to lead the very first delegation in 2000. However, it was eventually decided by the FCO that he would do so alongside another dignitary, Muslim Council of Britain (MCB, established 1997) general secretary, (now Sir) Iqbal Sacranie, a

⁹⁷ See the blog of Dr Mozammel Haque, Media Advisor of the Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC). The ICC provided the secretariat for the Hajj Advisory Group (2002-06), <http://islamicmonitor.blogspot.co.uk/2012/10/launch-of-british-hajj-delegation-2012.html>. Following the Rushdie Affair the Tories did not concede any Muslim claims for public recognition as ‘Muslims’ and insisted that they speak with one voice. This was a contributory factor in the founding of the Muslim Council of Britain (MCB).

⁹⁸ Stuart Hall, *The Guardian*, 6 August 2003.

⁹⁹ See Modood 2005, as well as Fetzer and Sopher 2005. The latter argue that patterns of church-state relations are especially significant in shaping opportunity structures for the recognition of Muslims in Western Europe.

¹⁰⁰ *Independent on Sunday*, 17 October 1999,

http://collections.europarchive.org/tna/20080205132101/blogs.fco.gov.uk/blogs/the_hajj/.

Gujerati heritage businessman originally from Malawi.¹⁰¹ Increasingly privileged by New Labour as the interlocutor between the state and ‘hard to reach’ British Muslim communities, at the time, the MCB was sometimes criticised by existing Muslim organisations for seeking to assume control of their work.¹⁰² Indeed, representing a very different religio-ethnic segment of interests, the ABH general secretary is on record suggesting that the whole British Hajj Delegation (BHD) initiative had been ‘hijacked’ and ‘politicised’,¹⁰³ with the proposed delegation and its leadership increasingly dominated by MCB affiliates. When Lord Ahmed eventually resigned his role, it was a member of the MCB’s Board of Counsellors, and another new Labour peer, Lord Adam Patel of Blackburn, also of Gujerati heritage, who subsequently led the BHD from 2001, the year in which MP for Blackburn, Jack Straw, became Foreign Secretary.

While the core concern of the BHD was medical,¹⁰⁴ it was also part of a wider Foreign and Commonwealth Office strategic priority which saw domestic and foreign policy interests converge in the context of ‘9/11’ and the so-called ‘War on Terror.’ There was a desire to both improve British Muslim perceptions of UK government policy and promote

¹⁰¹ Perhaps because of subsequent criticism (see following note), Sacranie is rarely mentioned in this regard, for example, <http://islamicmonitor.blogspot.co.uk/2011/10/hajj-and-british-muslims-historical.html>.

¹⁰² See, for example, *Q News*, 1 March 2000.

¹⁰³ McLoughlin (2002, 2005b, 2010b, 2012) has argued that the vast majority of British Pakistanis have had nothing to do with the MCB, which traces its roots to the UK Action Committee on Islamic Affairs formed during the Rushdie Affair. The MCB has been dominated by an alliance of well-organised activists with historical links to i) Jama’at-i Islami amongst middle-class Pakistanis and ii) Deobandism among Gujeratis/East Africans like Sacranie and Patel. Despite representing probably the single largest constituency of British Muslims, even when the MCB’s star fell in the mid-2000s, rival Pakistani organisations with historical links to Barelwism and Sufism such as the British Muslim Forum and the Sufi Muslim Council miserably failed in their bids to recover mainstream political influence, in part because of devolved structures of religious authority.

¹⁰⁴ Between 2000 and 2009 the British Hajj Delegation (BHD) included eight or nine volunteer British Muslim doctors, including eventually one or two women doctors, as well as a chief medical adviser. They were joined as part of the BHD by one or two counsellors and two or three FCO staff from the UK’s consulate in Jeddah. According to all the constituencies interviewed, the undoubted benefits of the BHD in Mecca and beyond were twofold: firstly, pilgrims no longer had to leave Mecca and make the long journey to Jeddah to access consular services; secondly, unlike the doctors delivering medical services on behalf of Saudi Arabia, some of whom were from overseas, the BHD doctors were English-speaking and offered a home-visiting service to those too ill to travel (*Asian Image*, 11 October 2010).

better relations with the Arab and Muslim world more generally.¹⁰⁵ In its heyday, this use of soft power in an effort to govern with ‘consent’ was ritually performed when Foreign Secretary Straw launched the delegation annually in partnership with its new leader and ‘representative’ of British Muslim pilgrims, Lord Patel.¹⁰⁶ In the company of various ambassadors and diplomats, this event was hosted at the symbolic home of the wider Muslim world in the UK, the Saudi-funded Regent’s Park Islamic Cultural Centre (ICC).¹⁰⁷ Even while in other arenas of policy ‘Old’ Labour state multiculturalism faced stern criticism, this gathering communicated New Labour’s communitarian vision for the UK as a multi-faith, participatory democracy where, as active citizens, British Muslims could take a role in UK diplomacy.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, while many of the BHD medics funded their own locum cover, the government was forced to defend criticism of the overall cost of the BHD when it was clarified that the pilgrimages of other faiths were not being supported in a similar fashion.¹⁰⁹ For instance, Sir Michael Jay, head of the diplomatic service, maintained that the Hajj was ‘a unique event which merits special attention.’¹¹⁰ Nevertheless, during the 2000s, FCO expenditure on the BHD increased every year from around £40,000 in 2004 to £110,000 by 2009.¹¹¹ A Hajj Advisory Group had also been established in 2001-02 with a view to encouraging British Muslims to privately support the BHD. However, despite the involvement of the Muslim Council of Britain, the Association of British Hujjaj and other

¹⁰⁵ This included UK universities, the British Council, the BBC World Service, and sat alongside military and political interventions in Afghanistan. See <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200405/cmselect/cmcaff/36/36we06.htm>.

¹⁰⁶ See Hall 1996 for a discussion of the relevance of Gramsci’s notion of hegemony for governance with the ‘consent’ of UK civil society.

¹⁰⁷ The ICC was finally opened in 1977, following the UK government gifting a site in Regent’s Park, London, to the Muslims of Great Britain and its empire during the 1940s. Subsequent funding for the building came from the Saudis and others, with several Muslim embassies acting as trustees, <http://www.iccuk.org/index.php?article=1&>. Britain is a longstanding ally and trading partner of Saudi Arabia.

¹⁰⁸ McLoughlin 2005b, 2010b, 2012.

¹⁰⁹ *The Independent*, 28 April 2003.

¹¹⁰ No special support is given to Hindus from the UK participating in the Kumbh Mela which has been ‘trouble free’ hitherto, <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200001/cmhansrd/vo010118/text/10118>.

¹¹¹ *Asian Image*, 11 October 2010.

organisations with close connections to diverse Muslim constituencies,¹¹² such finance was not generally forthcoming with the exception of some small contributions from Bombay Halwa Ltd and GlaxoSmithKline.¹¹³ Thus, the Hajj Advisory Group was abolished in 2006,¹¹⁴ the year that Jack Straw left the FCO.

Tellingly, since its inception, there has been no mention at all of the BHD or Lord Patel on the ABH's website. Since 2004, too, and always a few weeks before the official BHD launch, ABH patron, Lord Ahmed, has hosted a complementary but parallel event, 'Hajj Awareness Week,' at the House of Lords. There are also ABH pre-Hajj camps and seminars in cities with significant Pakistani numbers, including Bradford, Manchester and Glasgow, as well as Birmingham and London. Indeed, despite being marginalised from the BHD, the ABH secured small pots of state funding during the 2000s to deliver Hajj-related health and safety messages to 'traditional' Muslim communities, which the government has otherwise found hard to reach as well as integrate.¹¹⁵ For instance, when, in 2001, an outbreak of the rare W135 strain of meningitis was traced to UK *hujjaj* or those who had been in close contact with them,¹¹⁶ the Department of Health worked in partnership with both the ABH and MCB, as well as private sponsors, to raise awareness of the issues, including new Ministry of Hajj immunisation requirements.¹¹⁷ Officers of the ABH make regular contributions, too, in the British Pakistani diasporic public sphere,¹¹⁸ including the Urdu press and a newly burgeoning Islamic satellite television sector which is an especially significant

¹¹² <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2007-01-30b.112114.h&s=Hajj+delegation#g112114.r0>.

¹¹³ In 2003-04 the total projected cost of the BHD of £65,000 was offset in part by sponsorship of £10,000 from Bombay Halwa Ltd and also £5,000 from GlaxoSmithKline,
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200304/cmselect/cmcaff/745/745we10.htm>.

¹¹⁴ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2009-02-24a.47.0&s=Hajj+delegation#g47.1>.

¹¹⁵ See for instance,

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm199900/cmhansrd/vo000707/text/00707w12.htm>.

¹¹⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200001/cmhansrd/vo010503/text/10503w16.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Interestingly, the leaflet, *Advice to British Hajjis* (2001/02), was sponsored in part by British Airways and Noon Products/Bombay Halwa Ltd. The previous year, three women in Blackburn, Liverpool and Ilford had died from the same infection having returned from Hajj. See British Muslims Monthly Survey, <http://artsweb.bham.ac.uk/bmms/2000/04April00.asp>.

¹¹⁸ Cf. Werbner 2009 on the diasporic public sphere.

means of reaching women.¹¹⁹ However, in my online survey, only 24% of respondents were aware of the existence of the ABH. Similarly, the London-based trading standards officer argued that while the ABH is clearly ‘doing their bit for the Hajj ... I don’t think a lot of local [British Bangladeshi] pilgrims in Tower Hamlets are aware of what ABH are doing or whether they exist.’

Of course, any claims to be ‘representative’ are inherently problematic. However, that New Labour was unable to work with a single interlocutor on Hajj related governance is simply a reflection of the complexity and divisions amongst British Muslim voluntary organisations in UK civil society per se. Indeed, if the ABH mainly reflects mainly the networks of British Pakistanis, the second and only other Hajj welfare organisation of any significance in the UK, the Council of British Hajjis (CBH), is based in Bolton, Lancashire which, like other north-west locations, is a key node in UK Gujerati / East African Asian Muslim networks.¹²⁰ While this means that the CBH also has links to Lord Patel as a key MCB figure, notably, the organisation is a British-born led initiative, too, and so reflects a different approach to that of an older generation of community leaders.¹²¹ Having been for Hajj himself in 2005, and having subsequently attended a Muslim Council of Britain seminar in London during 2006, its chief executive, an information technology professional in his 30s, was left wondering why so much accumulated knowledge about Hajj-going was still not being shared at the grassroots: ‘Why weren’t people being educated?’. Since holding their own first ‘Health at Hajj’ seminar in Bolton during 2006, the CBH’s volunteer young professionals have delivered various events, including flu and meningitis vaccination clinics,

¹¹⁹ Channels include Noor TV (established 2006), Ummah Channel (established 2009) and Takbeer TV (established 2010). The Midlands guide interviewed for this research complained that women are too often treated as ‘appendages’ to Hajj travel groups, with knowledge rarely shared with them directly.

¹²⁰ In Bolton 11.7% of the population was Muslim (32,385) in 2011, with around 15,000 of Indian heritage and 12,000 of Pakistani heritage, <http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/guide-method/census/2011/index.html>.

¹²¹ Cf. Lewis 2007.

in thirty locations around Lancashire, Yorkshire and beyond.¹²² However, according to my online survey, only 23% of respondents had heard of the organisation (1% less than ABH), which suggests that, at present, it is no better known nationally.

Thus, because of their parallel ethno-denominational locations, the CBH and the ABH often end up doing quite similar work within their own networks and diasporic public spheres. Nevertheless, the two welfare organisations differ significantly in terms of their expectations of government. With estimates that only 10% of Hajj fraud is reported,¹²³ and well-aware of the religio-cultural factors inhibiting this in ‘traditional’ pilgrim markets, the ABH has argued that it is the responsibility of central government to proactively benchmark and regulate the UK Hajj and ‘*umra*’ industry as distinct from the ‘secular’ travel and tourism industry. Indeed, following lobbying by the ABH, their then local MP, Roger Godsiff, led a House of Commons debate on 25 March 2009 concerning ‘Hajj Pilgrims (UK Tour Operators).’¹²⁴ During the debate, he reflected the organisation’s criticism that the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform was taking a ‘soft approach’ by focusing only upon low levels of ‘community awareness’ of consumer rights. Rather, it was suggested that all travel agents should pay a bond to ABTA (Association of British Travel Agents) with ‘a number of small tour operators going out of business ... a price worth paying’ to protect a vulnerable community.¹²⁵ However, in contrast to the ABH, which clearly still imagines an ‘Old’ Labour interventionist welfare state, the CBH emphasises the need for self-regulation of the Hajj and ‘*umra*’ industry in the UK. Such a view reflects the

¹²² <http://www.the-cbh.org.uk/>.

¹²³ *Hajj: Pilgrimage to Mecca*, op. cit. The ABH’s home town trading standards department in Birmingham claimed that only four out of 40 Hajj and ‘*umra*’ tour operators and agents in the city were fully compliant with UK package tour regulations in 2012. See <http://www.birminghammail.co.uk/news/local-news/watchdog-calls-on-government-to-stop-muslims-181285>.

¹²⁴ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm090325/halltext/90325h0004.htm>. Godsiff was MP for Labour, Sparkbrook and Small Heath, 1992-2010.

¹²⁵ Reinforcing my analysis of the ‘traditional’ Hajj market segment in the previous section, the ABH chairman acknowledges that ‘our people, due to lack of education, they do not take full precautions ... unfortunately it’s still a lot of people who are travelling with the *chacha lalas* [uncles].’

more neoliberal influences within both the New Labour (1997-2010) government and especially the present Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition (2010-).

In a secular, multi-faith society the central government officer interviewed for this project was clear that the UK state ‘does not want to control religious pilgrimage ... [it is] important that tour operators work together and have a national body.’ To facilitate this, a Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform ‘compliance summit’ (16 July 2008) had been organised to ‘hear [from tour operators] their views on how they believe the sector can improve its reputation and achieve greater consumer confidence.’¹²⁶ However, while following this summit, the Civil Aviation Authority subsequently reported increased ATOL (Air Tours Organisers’ Licensing) and IATA (International Air Transport Association) registrations among UK Hajj and Umrah tour operators, the CBH has also sought to establish a national British Hajj and Umrah Council which would see tour operators sign up to a voluntary code of practice.¹²⁷ This opportunistic move exemplified the argument of the central government officer that, while tour operators themselves – and indeed established Muslim representatives in Britain more generally – seem to lack leadership capacity, they are being ‘shaken up’ by a younger generation of ‘can-do’ activists and entrepreneurs. However, if the independent-minded, north of England tour operator is anything to go by, the CBH still has work to do in winning UK tour operators around to the idea of a trade organisation: ‘You don’t get everybody in same frame of mind. I can’t see that happening. I do my own thing. It keeps me free.’¹²⁸

¹²⁶ <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200708/ldhansrd/text/80630w0004.htm>.

¹²⁷ Yet, following the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform summit, an Association of British Hajj and Umrah Agencies was also established in East London, comprising 10 to 12 Ministry of Hajj approved members, and accounting for about 80% of the market amongst British Bangladeshis there and beyond (trading standards officer, London).

¹²⁸ Moreover, a tour operator from the north of England, who was one of the few from the UK attending the 2013 World Hajj and Umrah Convention, very strongly opposed the idea that Hajj welfare organisations in the UK – or ‘NGOs’ (non-governmental organisations) as he put it – could represent either tour operators or pilgrims’ interests, despite their decade long position as interlocutors vis-à-vis the state.

In the wider context of the global financial crisis, moreover, and an even more pronounced neoliberal emphasis on a ‘small state’ and the ‘big society,’ during 2010, the new UK coalition government, despite petitioning from the ABH, the CBH and others, withdrew its support for the British Hajj Delegation (BHD) medical team.¹²⁹ In public communications, consular ministers also seemed to adopt a more admonitory tone with pilgrims, urging them to heed Foreign and Commonwealth Office travel advice and ‘take responsibility for their own pre-travel preparations.’¹³⁰ Suggesting that British Muslim organisations no longer had the ear of government, in sharp contrast to the previous decade, the review of the BHD ‘did not include consultations with community leaders but, rather, took an objective view ... The FCO does not provide medical services at any other event involving large numbers of British nationals.’¹³¹ Given its new ‘muscular liberalism,’ and the envy which government resources directed to Muslims have aroused since ‘7/7,’¹³² a Tory establishment with fewer political reasons to court British Muslims decided that the Hajj was no longer ‘unique’ or deserving of ‘special’ support. Government argued that there had been a significant improvement in Saudi medical facilities and a related drop in market demand for BHD medical services although this was strongly contested by the CBH.¹³³

Conclusion:

¹²⁹ *Asian Image*, 11 October 2010.

¹³⁰ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/travel-advice-for-hajj-pilgrims>.

¹³¹ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/wrans/?id=2010-11-01d.19875.h&s=Hajj+delegation#g19875.q0>.

¹³² Birt 2009. ‘Muscular liberalism’ was a term used by British Prime Minister, David Cameron, in a speech delivered in Munich on radicalisation and the failure of multiculturalism (5 February 2011). See <http://www.newstatesman.com/blogs/the-staggers/2011/02/terrorism-islam-ideology>.

¹³³ ‘The number of people treated for minor ailments was 5,967 in 2007, 2,965 in 2008 and 254 in 2009,’ <http://www.theyworkforyou.com/lords/?id=2010-11-11a.345.3&s=Hajj+delegation#g380.1>. However, the CBH chief executive argues that in 2009 ‘The advertisement of the delegation being there came out too late ... people didn’t know where the delegation was.’ Indeed, a new chapter in the story of the BHD has already begun, with its re-launch as a private British Muslim initiative by Lord Patel at the ICC on 29 September 2012. On the new organisation’s website, and for the very first time, the logo of the ABH sits alongside that of the CBH, as well as those of certain well-known Ministry of Hajj approved tour operators. It will be fascinating to see i) whether, in the absence of financial support from the UK state, the new BHD can build organisational leadership capacity and sustainable intra-Muslim alliances, ii) what if any relationship it will have to attempts to establish a national body for tour operators, and iii) to what extent any such developments will positively impact on the experiences of pilgrims. See <http://www.britishhajjdelegation.org.uk/>.

In recent decades, the cultural and political economy of Hajj-going has been transformed by general shifts associated with late modernity. However, despite a world increasingly integrated across the borders of nation-states, the Hajj today does not reflect the simple export of, or an opposition to, some globalised Western standard in this regard.¹³⁴ Processes at work in terms of consumer capitalism and moves towards neoliberal governance reflect a more 'complex, overlapping, disjunctive order.'¹³⁵ Thus, in the UK diaspora just as much as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Hajj-going is the outcome of glocal processes negotiated in locally specific, yet globally interlinked, locations.¹³⁶ So, while restructuring of the late modern Hajj in Saudi Arabia is a response to unprecedented demand for the pilgrimage on a global scale, greater regulation and commercialisation also has to be understood as an expression of the regime's locally particular trajectories of modernisation. Following a late start in this regard as the Kingdom became a settled society, the House of Saud is seeking to diversify and liberalise its non-oil economy through religious tourism. Such transformations have been crucial in shaping the growth of increasingly large and professionalized private tour operators worldwide. Such operators, including those in the UK, appreciate the great demands made upon Saudi Arabia in managing the late modern Hajj. However, greater rationalisation has not yet eliminated problems of efficiency and there are concerns about the balance between necessary modernisation and care for Islamic heritage. As an absolute monarchy legitimated by a conservative yet compliant religious establishment, and despite growing contestation within the Kingdom and beyond, UK-based tour operators and other pilgrimage organisers attest that constraints on Saudi governance of the Hajj are limited, both nationally and internationally.

¹³⁴ Despite the inevitable tensions between increasing global homogeneity and persisting local heterogeneity, the latter cannot be seen principally in terms of resistance to the former as in the 'Jihad' versus 'McWorld' formula of Barber 1992. Rather, a more dialectical conception of interconnection, interpenetration and simultaneity is required.

¹³⁵ Appadurai 1990: 296.

¹³⁶ Robertson 1995.

In the main body of my essay I have advanced two main arguments which further evidence my main claim that the late modern cultural and political economy of Hajj-going is glocally configured. Firstly, the free market for UK pilgrims reflects the fact that Muslim diasporas and converts in the West are relatively privileged in having the opportunity, as well as the resources, to pursue their duties and desires in this regard. This makes the pilgrimage industry here potentially very lucrative for tour operators. Nevertheless, I have suggested that in the UK they serve at least two distinctive market segments, the ‘cosmopolitan’ and the ‘traditional,’ which identify quite different cultural-economic logics. The former segment mimics patterns of consumption in the mainstream ‘premium’ travel and tourism market and is attractive to a relatively small but growing British Muslim middle-class. However, this vernacular iteration of Muslim modernity is also typically inflected with the pervasive values and aesthetics of an outward-looking post-Islamist cultural turn which disaggregates individual self-identity from more inward-looking inheritances of homeland ethnicity. While opening up new and exciting sites of study for researchers, I argue that an examination of cosmopolitan Muslim consumer markets must be complemented and contextualised with studies of a more ‘traditional’ and less fashionable but no less glocally-configured market segments. The fact is that the majority of tour operators serve intending *hajjis* still entwined not only with ‘traditional’ forms of received religious knowledge and authority but also ethnic networks of collective duty, trust and obligation. Thus, many of the ‘choices’ made within this larger constituency still reflect traces of earlier patterns of Hajj-going. Nevertheless, there is very rapid social change within this segment, too, something suggested by growing appeals to secular ‘consumer’ rights when confronted by Hajj fraud.

Unlike Muslim-majority states, the UK government plays no part in officially organising Hajj-going from Britain. As compared to other pressing matters of governance in a complex, multi-ethnic society, pilgrimage has been a minor concern overall and regulated in

a general fashion by government departments and public bodies concerned with travel advice, health and consumer rights. Nevertheless, in an echo of developments under the British Raj in India,¹³⁷ and reflecting New Labour's balancing of neoliberal governance with and more communitarian agendas, I have argued that the Hajj became a temporary focus for greater state intervention and the exercise of soft power during the 2000s. Awareness of pilgrims' needs in Saudi Arabia and vis-à-vis the UK-based pilgrimage industry has emerged largely because of British Muslims' activism in civil society. Key umbrella organisations and pilgrim welfare organisations have undoubtedly taken advantage of political opportunity structures in late modern Britain, in particular, historically-entrenched ideologies of multiculturalism and 'faith' relations. However, the pilgrim welfare lobby in the UK still reflects the finite resources and capacities, as well as the divisions, of British Muslim voluntary organisations per se. Overall, they lack leadership capacity and independent resources, while also remaining divided in terms of ethnicity, denomination and generation, as well as their expectations of government. Thus, what was crucial in better recognition and regulation of Hajj-going in the UK during the 2000s was ultimately a changing political context. While seeking to show itself to be 'Muslim-friendly' abroad, at home the New Labour government needed to incorporate British Muslims, both to secure important inner-city votes and to implement key policies of cohesion and security with a degree of 'consent.' However, for all religio-ethnic minorities, of course, majority patronage is always highly contingent as the glocal configuration of foreign and domestic contexts and priorities change.

List of Acronyms

Air Tours Organisers' Licensing - ATOL

¹³⁷ Under the Raj during the nineteenth century, Muslim public servants, including an assistant surgeon and female superintendent, accompanied Indian pilgrims and guidance was provided to them in the form of a handbook, *Bab-i Makkah*. In the context of a cholera epidemic during steam age globalisation, the Viceroy also asked travel agent, Thomas Cook, to reform the management of Hajj-going. See Slight 2013.

Association of British Hujjaj - ABH
British Hajj Delegation – BHD
Civil Aviation Authority - CAA
Council of British Hajjis – CBH
International Air Transport Association - IATA
Islamic Cultural Centre - ICC
Ministry of Hajj – MOH
Muslim Council of Britain - MCB
Organisation of Islamic Cooperation - OIC
Union of Muslim Organizations - UMO

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