
Rituals of Devotion: Unveiling The Intersection of Faith and Haj Practice for Muslims

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Article History:

Received: 12 April, 2024

Revised: 02 May, 2024

Accepted: 05 May, 2024

Keywords: *Ritual, Religious Devotion, God-Conscious, Concepts of Religion, Pilgrimage Studies.*

Abstract: *This paper delves into the intricate relationship between religion and the confluence of faith, spirituality, and ritual within a historical and cultural/symbolic domain. Considering the diversity of religious concepts and the ongoing debate over definitions, the study argues that a rational foundation exists within religious adherents supporting arduous rituals due to historical and religious precedents. Drawing upon the works of Clifford Geertz, Tanya Lubrman, and Talal Asad, the paper aims to harmonize their varied approaches and formulate a cohesive understanding. The theoretical framework aligns with Geertz's definition of religion as a system of symbols that engenders enduring moods and motivations by crafting conceptions of a general order of existence. This interpretation resonates with the act of pilgrimage, particularly Hajj, where devotees seek communion with God through spiritual sentiments and rigorous rituals. The convergence of Geertz's theory with the works of Lubrman and Asad forms the basis for comprehending the motivations that propel Muslims onto the well-trodden path of pilgrimage.*

Introduction

The examination of religion as a conduit for the pursuit of truth and divine knowledge has been a focal point within academic disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, and psychology. Scholars endeavor to delineate the origins and foundations of religion, navigating diverse approaches encompassing rationalist, intellectualist, evolutionist, and social perspectives. The multifaceted nature of religion extends its influence across realms of politics, colonialism, culture, history, and science. Throughout this scholarly expedition, the characterization of religion as 'primitive' by some and 'civilized' by others, asserting its perceived superiority, underscores the ongoing discourse. Persistent investigations seek to unravel religion's intricate impact and role in shaping the trajectory of modernity and society. The inherent complexity of religion necessitates a continual scholarly endeavor to decipher, analyze, and formulate a universally applicable definition conducive to a comprehensive understanding of this concept.

Within the scope of this paper, I endeavor to interconnect the multifaceted concepts of religion, converging faith, spirituality, and ritual within a broad historical and cultural/symbolic domain. Given the diversity of perspectives and the ongoing debate surrounding the definitions of religion, I posit an argument asserting a rationale within religious adherents, propelling them to engage in arduous rituals due to historical and religious precedents. To elucidate this perspective, the scholarly works of Clifford Geertz, Tanya Lubrman, and Talal Asad will be explored, utilizing their theories as foundational references. Despite the variance in their approaches, a deliberate effort will be made to harmonize their concepts, culminating in a nuanced conclusion regarding diverse notions of religion and their implications for this study. The compatibility of these scholars' works becomes evident as they mutually reinforce my endeavor to construct a theoretical

framework elucidating the motivations propelling Muslims to partake in the pilgrimage, commonly known as Hajj, wherein they seek profound communion with the divine. Throughout this paper, the terms Hajj and pilgrimage may be used interchangeably.

My Theoretical Framework

The foundation of this argument aligns with Clifford Geertz's definition of religion, as articulated in his influential 1966 essay, "Religion as a Cultural System." Geertz conceives religion as 'a system of symbols that establishes potent, pervasive, and enduring moods and motivations in individuals and formulates conceptions of a general order of existence. These conceptions are imbued with such an aura of factuality that the resulting moods and motivations appear uniquely realistic' (Bielo, 2015). This interpretation finds resonance in the practice of pilgrimage, where devotees endeavor to merge their spiritual sentiments with rigorous rituals. Geertz contends that 'religious symbols formulate a basic congruence between a particular style of life and a specific metaphysic,' sustaining each component with the borrowed authority of the other (Lambek, 2002). Although Geertz incorporates public circumstances in his understanding of religion, the guidance for adherents' actions (Asad, 1993) may be derived personally or from alternative motivations. Notwithstanding, the undeniable truth is the willingness of pilgrims to make sacrifices and yearn for the 'oceanic feelings,' as expounded by Sigmund Freud.

In Tanya Luhrmann's article, "The Faith Frame: Or, Belief is Easy, Faith is Hard," she explores the nuanced dimensions of faith, distinguishing between its hard and soft aspects. According to Luhrmann, faith extends beyond mere belief in an invisible other; it requires commitment and effort to hold certain convictions at the forefront of one's understanding of reality, even in the face of empirical contradictions. This active engagement transforms the faithful and becomes a fundamental part of their identity (Lambek, 2002). Faith, viewed as a subjunctive, prompts individuals to question how the world should be. Challenges to identity-defining beliefs are assessed differently than challenges to mundane beliefs (Lambek, 2002).

For pilgrims, embarking on a pilgrimage parallels a quest for truth, crucial for sustaining their faith. Faith, inherently prone to oscillation based on environmental factors, adherent conditions, and knowledge of religion, demands constant attention. Luhrmann notes that individuals don't always employ rational, instrumental reasoning when engaging with religious ideas (Luhrmann, 2018). Given the indeterminate nature of faith, it necessitates 'constant attention' through supplication, readings of holy texts, ritual abnegation, and the care of sanctuaries. All these practices serve to surpass disappointments that adherents may encounter.

For Asad, he criticizes the tendency to treat religion as a separate sphere of human activity. Instead, he argues for religion's cultural incorporation into public and private life. In the context of the Hajj pilgrimage, this implies that religious practices are deeply embedded in the cultural fabric of the pilgrims' lives. In his work, Asad's approach underscores the power dynamics inherent in religious practices. In the case of the Hajj, the rituals and practices involve not just spiritual experiences but also power relationships – the dynamics between the pilgrims, the religious authorities, and the broader socio-political context.

Objective and Two-Stage Approach

One primary objective of this paper is to underscore that for adherents, religion transcends mere isolation and instead evolves into a comprehensive lifestyle deeply rooted in the framework of faith. As perceived by these adherents, the concept of faith operates on a two-stage approach. Firstly, a vertical approach (*hablum minallah*) involves individuals seeking to establish a profound relationship with God. Secondly (*hablum minannas*), a horizontal approach entails building relationships with others, thereby illustrating the unity of groups bound by a shared religious identity. Both these approaches emphasize the significance of integrity and accountability, akin to the Balinese concept of "Tri Hita Karana" or the three purposes of life—harmony with God, nature, and society. This universalist perspective provides adherents with a holistic view of

humanity, a notion strongly supported by Talal Asad's "Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category."

Talal Asad's ideas contribute significantly to understanding religion as a comprehensive lifestyle by challenging Western notions that separate religion from the domain of power. According to Asad, religion cannot be isolated from the cultural and social contexts in which it exists; rather, it is deeply embedded in the practices and discourses of a particular community. Asad emphasizes that religion should be incorporated culturally into public and private lives, rejecting the Western norm of segregating religion from other aspects of existence. In this context, the two-stage approach to faith aligns with Asad's views by highlighting the integration of religious practices in the vertical, personal relationship with God and the horizontal, communal relationships among believers. Asad's perspective encourages a more nuanced understanding of faith, emphasizing its role as a guiding force in shaping individual conduct and social interactions within a community.

Method

Integration of Approaches

To comprehend the intricacies of the Islamic pilgrimage, this study employs a three-pronged approach that amalgamates Clifford Geertz's system of symbols, Tanya Luhmann's framework emphasizing the spiritual and faith dimensions, and Talal Asad's insights into the inseparability of faith and life within the construct of religion. The core tenet of Islam lies in the inseparability of faith and life, exemplified in the pilgrimage as a dual process of seeking truth and engaging in the act of purification. This act serves as a demonstrative belief for adherents. Pilgrims embark on this journey fully aware of the tangible possibility that they might not return home. For many, the hope lies in the prospect of passing away in the holy land, as those who do are considered to have been martyred and cleansed of sin. Completing the Hajj is equated to a symbolic rebirth for the pilgrim.

Result and Discussion

Symbols of Location: Mecca and the Kaabah

Mecca, situated in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, has held profound importance as a pilgrimage site for the Arab tribes of north and central Arabia since its establishment by Prophet Muhammad approximately 1440 years ago. Despite the pagan beliefs prevalent at that time, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca was a dedicated act of worship to the singular God (Allah). The call to pilgrimage in Mecca is encapsulated in a divine directive from the Quran: "Call all people to the pilgrimage. They will come to you on foot and on every lean camel; they will come from every deep and distant path to perform Hajj" (Quran, Chapter 22 verse 27).

The spiritual epicenter of Mecca is the al-Haram mosque, a sanctuary that took its current form in 1570 CE. The mosque is a central quadrangle enclosed by stone walls, housing the revered Kaabah—a cuboid-shaped structure believed by Muslims to have been constructed by the Prophet Abraham and his son Ishmael. The Kaabah's four stone walls and roof are crafted from the hills surrounding Mecca, with its corners aligning roughly with the four points of the compass. Adorned with a black silk cloth, known as the *kiswah*, embroidered with Quranic verses in gold Arabic calligraphy, it is ritually replaced yearly on the second day of Hajj. The Kaabah, though not worshipped itself, serves as a focal point for the worship of the one God and a unifying symbol as Muslims globally direct their thoughts and prayers towards it.

Adjacent to the *Kaabah* lies the Station of Abraham, a squarish stone on the ground, believed to bear the imprints of two footprints. Tradition holds that this stone marks the spot where Abraham stood while overseeing the construction of the *Kaabah*. Today, it is enshrined in an ornate golden glass and metal structure, embodying the historical connection between Prophet

Abraham and the sacred site.

According to scriptures, as Prophet Abraham was constructing the *Kaabah*, the angel Gabriel appeared to deliver the Hajar Aswad or Black Stone, believed to originate from heaven. This sacred stone is positioned in the eastern corner of the *Kaabah* and carries significant historical and spiritual resonance. During the Prophet Muhammad's era, an incident involving the Black Stone showcased his diplomatic and leadership acumen. After the *Kaabah* was damaged and subsequently repaired, a disagreement arose among tribal leaders about who should return the Black Stone to its original position. Seeking resolution, they turned to the next man passing by, who happened to be Prophet Muhammad. His diplomatic solution involved placing the stone on a large cloth, with each tribal leader holding a corner, collectively carrying the stone to its place. Prophet Muhammad ﷺ himself then set the Black Stone into its final position, demonstrating both leadership and impartiality.

In the early 7th century, in Mecca, Prophet Muhammad received the first revelations, marking a pivotal moment in the formulation of a general order of existence for believers. These revelations symbolize a profound cultural and religious shift, embodying a decisive force for believers. For some, this divine communication serves as a sign from God, with individuals relying on symbols and symbol systems, which, in turn, induce a profound cultural viability and existential anxiety (Lambek, 2002). However, some perceived the message as challenging their ancestral worship practices in medieval Arabia. With the ascent of Islam, Mecca evolved into the spiritual epicenter and heart of the religion. Simultaneously, the city emerged as a vital commercial center, witnessing flourishing trade during the sacred pilgrimage months. The rituals associated with Hajj have endured unchanged over time, making it a powerful religious undertaking that continues to unite Muslims worldwide, transcending nationalities and sects.

The Journey of Hajj: A Pillar of Islam

Hajj, one of the five pillars of Islam, holds a central and indispensable position in Muslim belief. The other pillars encompass the declaration of *shahadah*, acknowledging the oneness of God and the prophethood of Muhammad, the regular observance of five prescribed daily prayers, giving alms, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and the performance of Hajj at least once in a lifetime (DeLong-Bas, 2009). Scheduled in the twelfth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, *Dzulhijjah*, Hajj is an obligatory pilgrimage for all Muslims, contingent upon meeting two conditions – physical and financial capability. Considered a sacred rite of passage, Hajj stands apart from the other pillars of Islam, as its institution predates Islam itself, tracing back to the time of Prophet Abraham.

Responding to the call of Hajj marks a starting point and a journey into a deeper historical past—the origin of the Abrahamic religion. Muslims perceive Hajj as more than a mere physical ritual; it is a journey towards spiritual purification. Religious symbols play a pivotal role in this pilgrimage, "establishing powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations." These symbols instill distinctive dispositions in adherents, creating a heightened probability of engaging in the sacred activity of Hajj (Lambek, 2002). The essence of Hajj goes beyond a physical undertaking; it is a transformative journey that resonates with historical roots and spiritual cleansing.

The sacred rites of Hajj find their origin in the time of Prophet Abraham and serve as a commemoration of his life. It was Abraham, along with his son Ishmael, who constructed Islam's most revered structure—the *Kaabah*. The narrative unfolds with God's command to Abraham to sacrifice his son, a subject of scholarly debate regarding which son was chosen. This command is widely perceived as a test of obedience by God. Committed to his relationship with the divine, Abraham demonstrated an unwavering willingness to make the ultimate sacrifice (Mirza, 2013). However, divine intervention occurred, sparing his son, and a ram/sheep was provided for sacrifice instead. Throughout Hajj, symbolic rituals unfold, leading to the outcome of heart purification and soul purification.

Pilgrims from the farthest corners of the Islamic world embark on a spiritual journey—an ambition of a lifetime. The rites of Hajj, performed at a designated time in a specified month, bring together two to three million believers from over 70 nations, converging in Mecca by road, sea, and air (2022). Traditionally traveling together in convoys, Pilgrims would set out on foot, by camel, boat, train, and in contemporary times, predominantly by plane. Hajj represents a spiritual endeavor that commences at home and reaches its zenith in Mecca. Historically, pilgrims traveling overland would gather at central points such as Kufa (Iraq), Damascus (Syria), and Cairo (Egypt). Those arriving by sea would enter Arabia through the port of Jeddah. Air travel allows pilgrims to enter through Mecca, Madinah, or Jeddah airports. While the journey was perilous in the past, with pilgrims falling ill or facing robbery, the modern pilgrim remains mindful of the journey's magnitude and anticipates the rewards in both this world and the hereafter.

Rituals play a crucial role in reinforcing the convictions of the mind and soul, acting as a means to forge the basis of commitment and trust (Lambek, 2002). They serve to remind individuals that their beliefs are plausible, imparting profound meaning to their faith (Luhmann, 2018).

The official commencement of Hajj occurs on the eighth day of Dzulhijjah, spanning five to six days. Male pilgrims attire themselves in two pieces of white cloth known as ihram, while females cover their heads and bodies, leaving only the face and hands exposed. The simplicity of clothing aligns with the principle that "one should not be able to tell a prince from a pauper (Ansari, 2013)." Pilgrims then express their intention for Hajj, a crucial step known as niyyah. They were observing strict prohibitions while in ihram is paramount. Pilgrims are restrained from activities such as hunting, engaging in sexual intercourse (including touching, kissing, or flirting), performing onanism, getting married, applying perfume, wearing sewn clothes for men, killing insects or animals, removing body hair, covering the head for men, cutting nails, or extracting teeth. These restrictions are integral to the spiritual sanctity of the pilgrimage.

The Rituals of Hajj: A Seven-Step Journey

Hajj unfolds through a series of rituals spanning Mecca and its surroundings over five to six days. The pilgrims' journey, consisting of seven distinct steps, initiates at the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad in Mecca. While the exact reason for the significance of the number seven is not entirely clear, it resonates across various rituals, possibly linked to celestial motions. The number seven also holds prominence in multiple religions, symbolizing the divine in Christianity, Judaism, and, notably, in the rites of Hajj.

First Step: Entering Ihram: The inaugural rite is entering ihram, a sacred state for pilgrims, marked by crossing the outer boundaries of Mecca, known as Miqat. Commencing on the eighth day of Dzulhijjah, pilgrims enter the ihram at *al-Haram* mosque, circumambulating (tawaf) the *Kaabah* counterclockwise seven times. This act symbolizes believers' unity in worshipping the One God, moving harmoniously around the *Kaabah* while supplicating to God.

Second Step: Journey to Mina: Subsequently, pilgrims, en masse, travel approximately 5 miles to Mina, a tent city. This journey may be undertaken on foot, by pilgrim paths, or using buses and cars. The day is punctuated with brief stops for prayers and supplications.

Third Step: Arrival at Arafah: On the second day of Hajj, pilgrims proceed to Arafah, a location with profound significance. The day at Arafah, known as the Day of Arafah, holds immense importance in the Islamic calendar. Mount Mercy (Jabal al-Rahmah) at Arafah witnessed Prophet Muhammad's final sermon. Pilgrims, having covered the nine-mile journey from Mina, spend the day praying and contemplating God. In a global show of solidarity, many Muslims choose to fast on this day, although fasting is not a mandatory part of Hajj. This act of fasting is a personal devotion to God, fostering spiritual discipline and deep contemplation of one's relationship with the divine.

Fasting during Hajj is not a publicly displayed ritual like prayers or giving alms; instead, it

remains a concealed and private expression of devotion. The act of fasting is considered a form of spiritual nourishment for the soul, undertaken with the intention of obedience to God.

In a prophetic tradition narrated by Abu Hurayra, the Messenger of God stated: "Indeed, your Lord said: 'Every good deed is rewarded with ten of the same up to seven hundred times over, except for fasting. Fasting is for Me, and I shall reward for it.'" This underscores the unique nature of fasting, where the act is considered a personal devotion to God, inviting divine reward beyond the usual measure.

Throughout history, adherents have pursued various means to experience the divine. In old England, individuals subjected themselves to fasting and immersed their lives in scripture reading, driven by a profound desire to deepen their belief in God (Luhmann, 2018). This inclination is a shared trait among many believers, exemplified by figures like Julian of Norwich, who prayed for death as a means to be in God's presence and truly know Him (Luhmann, 2018).

During the pilgrimage journey from Mina to Arafah, pilgrims collectively recite the Talbiyah, a supplication that resounds with a sense of submission to God's call. The full Talbiyah in Arabic expresses the pilgrims' response to God's call, praising Him, acknowledging His sovereignty, and affirming His exclusivity as the one and only. This communal recitation fosters a profound feeling of connectedness among pilgrims as they join together in submission to God (Islamicity.org, 2023).

Upon reaching Mount Arafah, pilgrims engage in prayers near Jabal al-Rahmah from noon to sunset, a period known as wuquf. This location holds special significance, believed to be the place where Adam and Eve were reunited. The narrative recalls Adam and Eve succumbing to the temptation of Satan in paradise, leading to their expulsion to Earth. While Quranic references attribute the sins of Adam and Eve solely to themselves and their offspring to their own actions, the meeting at Mount Arafah after a 200-year separation marks a symbolic point of reunion and the beginning of conceiving children (2024).

A noteworthy point is that Mount Arafah is where Prophet Muhammad is believed to have delivered his farewell sermon during his final Hajj. In this pivotal address, he emphasized the Muslim community's primary concerns and challenges (Farooq, 2017).

Fourth Step: Journey to Muzdalifah: Following sunset, pilgrims proceed to Muzdalifah, a 6-mile journey where they spend the night under the stars. This pause allows them to collect approximately 49 pebbles of a specific size, essential for the stoning of the devil ritual (rami) the next day. Pilgrims then depart for Mina just before dawn.

The 10th day of Dzulhijjah, celebrated globally as Eid al-Adha, coincides with the day pilgrims find themselves in Mina. This day marks the greater of the two Muslim holidays.

Fifth Step: Stoning of the Devil (Rami): In Mina, pilgrims engage in the first rami, symbolically stoning the devil by throwing seven pebbles at the largest of the three columns, known as the Jamarat. This ritual draws from the historical tradition where, during God's command to sacrifice his son, the devil attempted to dissuade Abraham at this very spot in Mina. In response, Abraham threw stones to maintain obedience, reenacted by pilgrims at the Jamarat bridge.

Sixth Step: Animal Sacrifice in Mina: The culmination of the stoning ceremony leads to the symbolic animal sacrifice in Mina. This ritual commemorates the pivotal moment when Abraham, holding a blade to his son's neck, was intervened by the angel Gabriel. God, acknowledging Abraham's love and obedience, provided a ram for sacrifice. Pilgrims then sacrifice a sheep, goat, cow, or camel, symbolizing their annual reaffirmation of faith in God and upholding a time-honored tradition dating back to the prophets. The sacrificed animal is divided into thirds: one part is allocated to the impoverished, another to friends and relatives, and the last retained and consumed by the pilgrim's family.

Seventh Step: Symbolic Detachment and Completion: The final step involves the

shaving or cutting of hair, where male pilgrims are encouraged to shave their heads, and female pilgrims to have a lock or strand of their hair clipped. This act signifies detachment from physical appearances and complete submission to God. Pilgrims, having completed Hajj, remove their ihram.

Pilgrims then leave for Mecca to perform tawaf and Sai'. Tawaf entails circumambulating the Kaabah seven times, followed by the Sai', an act of walking seven times between the hills of Mount Safa and Mount Marwa. The indoor gallery between the hills, with marble floors and air-conditioning, covers approximately 1480 feet. This ritual echoes the story of Abraham's wife Hajar and her son Ishmael, emphasizing mercy, tenderness, and compassion.

Upon completing tawaf and sai', pilgrims return to their tent site in Mina, where they again symbolically stone the devil at a giant wall. This time, they throw seven pebbles at each of the three pillars (Jamarat). Despite the risk associated with sudden crowd movements, this act is carried out daily at noon for three days. Following their time in Mina, pilgrims return to Mecca to perform the final tawaf, known as the farewell tawaf (tawaf al-wada). This marks the last step for pilgrims before exiting the city of Mecca. Before returning home, many pilgrims visit Madinah, the second holiest city in Islam. This city is the burial place of Prophet Muhammad ﷺ and his closest companions, providing a profound connection for those concluding their pilgrimage journey.

Islam Faith Framework: Submission, Faith, and Excellence

The term 'Islam' signifies submission to the will of God. In Islam, believers, known as Muslims, acknowledge one God (Allah) and a succession of special messengers, with Muhammad recognized as the final prophet. The holy book, al-Quran, is considered God's revelation, conveyed through the angel Gabriel. Muslims aspire to live lives completely submitted to God, balancing the concept of divine permission with human free will.

The Islam Faith Framework finds its roots in a prophetic tradition narrated by Abu Hurayra. (Fatma, 2019). When questioned by Gabriel, the Prophet Muhammad elucidated three key components: Iman (faith), Islam (submission), and Ihsan (excellence).

According to this comprehensive framework, the journey of faith in Islam unfolds in three distinct stages. The first stage, Islam or submission, marks the initial commitment where individuals conscientiously submit themselves to perform actions in alignment with God's will. This entails the devoted execution of duties mandated by God, setting the foundation for the aspirant's spiritual journey.

As the journey progresses, the second stage, Iman or faith, emerges as a transformative phase beyond mere mechanical actions. In Iman, believers embark on a profound exploration of their relationship with God, moving beyond the surface to experience the deep essence of their spiritual connection. This stage signifies a significant evolution in the individual's understanding and engagement with their faith.

The culmination of this spiritual journey is encapsulated in the third stage, Ihsan or excellence. In the pursuit of Ihsan, individuals are urged to worship God with a profound awareness of His constant presence. The aspirant is encouraged to envision worship as if they directly see God, fostering a level of devotion and connection beyond physical sight's limitations. Even in the absence of direct visual communion, believers are called to maintain a heightened awareness that God sees them. This ultimate stage intensifies the journey toward the Divine, propelling individuals to pursue truth and divine knowledge. The three stages intricately weave together, forming a holistic framework that guides believers on their spiritual odyssey in Islam.

Scholars view these three stages as a continuous path, representing a gradual ascent in spiritual growth and understanding of the divine. As individuals traverse this journey, the intensity of their connection with God deepens, leading toward excellence in their worship and pursuit of divine truth. Asad's work suggests that religion, instead of affirming something specific about the nature of reality, helps individuals develop a positive attitude toward the disorder or uncertainties

in life. In the case of the Hajj, the pilgrimage can be seen as a response to the uncertainties and challenges the pilgrims face, providing a structured way to navigate these complexities.

Muslims follow a foundational framework governed by the Five Pillars of Islam and the Six Articles of Faith. The Five Pillars, including Shahada (Declaration of Faith), Salat (Prayer), Zakat (Almsgiving), Sawm (Fasting), and Hajj (Pilgrimage), serve as fundamental tenets guiding daily life. Shahada affirms belief in God and Muhammad as His messenger, Salat involves five daily prayers, Zakat requires charitable donations, Sawm entails fasting during Ramadan, and Hajj involves a pilgrimage to Mecca. The Six Articles of Faith encompass Tawhid (Belief in One God), Al-Qadr (Belief in Predestination), Malaikah (Belief in Angels), Akhirah (Belief in the Day of Judgment and the Afterlife), Kutub (Belief in Holy Books), and Nubuwwah (Belief in Prophets).

This comprehensive framework also incorporates Ihsan, an often-overlooked component emphasizing excellence, perfection, beauty, and discipline. Ihsan encourages Muslims to approach tasks with excellence, striving for perfection in alignment with the teachings of Sheikh al-Qardawi. This holistic framework serves as the basis for Muslims' spiritual growth and guides ethical conduct in their daily lives.

Performing the pilgrimage is a tangible manifestation of the Islamic Faith Framework. Devout Muslims, through their acts of sacrifice and commitment during the pilgrimage, affirm the reality of God. The three stages of Islam, Iman, and Ihsan, are actively applied by devotees as they embark on this sacred journey. Pascal Boyer aptly captures the essence, noting that beliefs often arise as occasional and elusive consequences of ceremonies rather than being their foundation, emphasizing the profound impact of observing rituals in the flesh. The pilgrimage, rooted in the core tenets of Islam, becomes a transformative experience, reflecting the believers' deep connection with their faith and the divine. (Luhmann, 2018)

Embarking on a pilgrimage demands significant sacrifices from devotees, encompassing their time, finances, relationships, opportunities, and family ties. This pilgrimage becomes a profound experiential challenge, delving into the intricate problem of suffering, as analyzed by anthropologists like Clifford Geertz and Bronislaw Malinowski. Geertz notes the existential threats at the limits of human analytic capacities, endurance, and moral insight, suggesting that religion aids individuals in navigating situations of emotional stress through ritual and belief in the supernatural (Lambek, 2002). Pilgrims grapple with uncertainties, such as financial concerns, leaving loved ones, and work insecurities, marking moments of emotional stress. However, as they engage in the rituals, conviction, and faith intensify, providing a framework to endure suffering (Lambek, 2002).

People often undertake pilgrimages in the face of suffering, seeking solace and meaning in the divine. In the current global context, the COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated suffering worldwide, raising questions about the role of God in such challenging times. Theodicy, the exploration of why prayers may seemingly go unanswered, becomes a central concern (Luhmann, 2018). Clifford Geertz suggests that the problem of suffering lies not in avoiding it but in determining how to suffer in a bearable manner. Pilgrims, in undertaking this purifying journey, navigate the intricacies of theodicy, grappling with the sufferableness of their experiences. In Geertz's view, religion enables individuals to affirm the bearability of suffering by providing a framework for understanding and enduring the world (Lambek, 2002).

The relationship between religion and suffering extends beyond explicability to an affirmation of sufferableness, according to Geertz. Religion, he argues, anchors our ability to formulate analytic ideas and express emotions, moods, and sentiments, allowing individuals to comprehend and endure the world. Talal Asad, on the other hand, suggests that religion need not provide specific affirmations about the nature of reality. Instead, religion fosters a positive attitude toward the disorder, aligning with the human need for a framework to navigate the complexities of suffering and find meaning in the face of chaos.

Religion as a Lifestyle

The role of religion in our lives is a complex and multifaceted aspect that influences social relations, behavior, and overall lifestyle. Examining responses from students in California, as presented by Bonnie Powell for UC Berkeley News, highlights diverse perspectives on the significance of religion. While some acknowledge following a particular religion, many express the view that religion may not necessarily save them from life's challenges and may not play a substantial role in their daily lives. Talal Asad's perspective, discussed in 'The Construction of Religion as an Anthropological Category,' challenges the separation of religion and power, asserting that these domains are intricately intertwined and should be culturally incorporated into public and private spheres (Lambek, 2002).

In contrast, Mahatma Gandhi's ideology of Ahimsa (non-violence), peace, and unity serves as a powerful example of embracing religion as a lifestyle. Gandhi emphasized virtues such as self-discipline, self-restraint, and self-development as foundational to his cultural beliefs. Despite his deep religiosity, Gandhi advocated for a secular state, not in opposition to religion, but as a means to honor all religions and promote the essential unity of humankind. His profound belief that life is sacrosanct and the world is one's country resonates with the idea that doing good is the essence of his religion. Gandhi's influence on embracing secularism without denying religion demonstrates a harmonious integration of religious principles into one's way of life.

In conclusion, the relentless quest for truth and divine knowledge is an intricate and cyclical journey that spans belief, action through rituals, and profound experiential components. The pilgrimage, particularly the Hajj, emerges as a poignant manifestation of this spiritual odyssey, offering adherents a transformative experience that transcends the boundaries of mere belief. The pilgrim embarks on a sacred journey that intricately weaves together faith's vertical and horizontal dimensions, as outlined by the two-stage approach – *hablum minallah* and *hablum minannas*. The vertical axis involves establishing a profound connection with God through rigorous rituals, prayers, and submission to divine will, while the horizontal axis emphasizes communal bonds and shared religious identity, echoing the universalist perspective supported by Talal Asad's anthropological insights.

This holistic engagement during the pilgrimage profoundly impacts the pilgrim's mind, body, and cultural understanding. The enduring influence extends beyond personal piety, encapsulating the Balinese "Tri Hita Karana" concept – harmony with God, nature, and society. The pilgrim emerges from this sacred journey with a heightened sense of integrity, accountability, and interconnectedness with fellow believers. Talal Asad's concept of religion as an anthropological category enriches this understanding, challenging Western dichotomies and emphasizing the cultural integration of religion into both public and private spheres.

The transformative power of pilgrimage lies in its ability to harmonize the diverse elements of religious belief, individual actions, and collective experiences. Having communed with God, angels, and prophets, the pilgrim becomes a living embodiment of the comprehensive lifestyle that religion entails. This cyclical process of seeking divine knowledge through belief, ritualistic actions, and experiential engagement is not a mere isolated event but an ongoing journey that shapes and sustains faith. As this paper delves into the intricate tapestry of religious engagement through the lens of pilgrimage, it contributes to the broader discourse on the interplay between religion, lifestyle, and the enduring pursuit of spiritual truth. The rich implications drawn from the theories of Geertz, Luhrmann, and Asad underscore the profound connections between the ritualistic aspects of Hajj and the broader framework of religious life. This exploration of the pilgrimage experience enriches our understanding of Islam and invites a deeper contemplation of the universal human quest for meaning, unity, and divine knowledge.

Conclusion

The relentless quest for truth and divine knowledge is an intricate and cyclical journey that spans belief, action through rituals, and profound experiential components. The pilgrimage, particularly the Hajj, emerges as a poignant manifestation of this spiritual odyssey, offering adherents a transformative experience that transcends the boundaries of mere belief. The pilgrim embarks on a sacred journey that intricately weaves together faith's vertical and horizontal dimensions, as outlined by the two-stage approach – *hablum minallah* and *hablum minannas*. The vertical axis involves establishing a profound connection with God through rigorous rituals, prayers, and submission to divine will, while the horizontal axis emphasizes communal bonds and shared religious identity, echoing the universalist perspective supported by Talal Asad's anthropological insights. The theoretical framework aligns with Geertz's definition of religion as a system of symbols that engenders enduring moods and motivations by crafting conceptions of a general order of existence. This interpretation resonates with the act of pilgrimage, particularly Hajj, where devotees 'seek communion with God through' spiritual sentiments and rigorous rituals. The convergence of Geertz's theory with the works of Luhrmann and Asad forms the basis for comprehending the motivations that propel Muslims onto the well-trodden path of pilgrimage.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank and express my gratitude to Dr Claire Fanger and Dr David Cook for their guidance for this paper will not come to fruition if not for the concepts class.

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