The History and Significance of the Meccan Hajj: from Pre-Islam to the Rise of the Abbasids

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Chapter 2

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The significance of the Hajj and its early history appear somewhat imbalanced. On the one hand, the Hajj is full of ritual significance thanks to the explicit Qur'anic emphasis placed upon it, yet, on the other, very little is known for certain about the history of pilgrimage to Mecca before Muhammad and during the first generations of Islam. The Hajj was clearly a focal point of Muslim identity and caliphal authority under the early Abbasids (AD750–800), as confirmed by their Caliphs' many and lavish pilgrimages alongside their efforts to build pilgrim roads connecting Mecca to their Iraqi heartland,[1] but the Qur'an was revealed almost 150 years before the Abbasid pilgrimage efflorescence, and when confronting that gap of time, we wonder what the Hajj might have meant during Muhammad's lifetime, what the Qur'an intended when it commanded believers to perform the Hajj, and how early caliphs and Muslims responded. This essay engages the apparent void of Hajj history from *circa* 150 years before Muhammad to the rise of the Abbasids in AH132 (AD750) via consideration of the Qur'anic verses in the context of their revelation, and via evaluation of new evidence and hitherto underutilised sources. The findings shed new light on the venerable debate over Mecca's status as a pre-Islamic pilgrimage centre, while also revealing considerable complexity to the role of Hajj in the expression of nascent Islam's political and communal identities.

Origins

One of the most remarkable aspects of the Hajj is its professed antiquity. Muslims associate most core aspects of Islam such as the Qur'an, the rules for prayer, fasting, and precedents for Islamic law with the teachings of Muhammad, but Muslims explicitly project the Hajj as long predating the Prophet, and it is one of the only unequivocally pre-Muhammadic rituals which Muslims continue to perform. To begin understanding this phenomenon and its significance, it is pertinent to recall that Muslims do not envisage Islam as beginning with Muhammad: in Muslim worldviews, Islam began at Creation, and Muhammad is considered but the last of God's prophets, hence Islam has existed longer *before* Muhammad than it has so far continued after him. Seen in this context, we perceive a unique salience of Hajj: Muslims have chosen to single out the Hajj, above any other ritual, to represent Islam's eternal existence, and they portray the Hajj across historical narratives as the signature, regularly repeating event that constructs a continuous string through time, holding together Islam's vision of monotheistic history.[2] An essential matter is therefore to question why the Hajj was earmarked for this unique status, and for answers we can begin by probing when and how the Hajj ritual acquired its symbolic significance.

The antiquity of Hajj was already being emphasised during the lifetime of Muhammad. The Qur'an affords repeated attention to pilgrimage through express references to the word *ḥajj* [3] and its rituals, and it inextricably intertwines Hajj narratives with the story of Abraham. The Qur'an describes Abraham's association with Hajj in several tracts[4] – Muslim exegetes collated these verses and expanded upon them via allusions gleaned from Biblical traditions of Genesis 16:1–16 to articulate a linear narrative of Hajj origins. They recount that after the birth of Ishmael, animosity arose between Abraham's wife, Sarah, and Ishmael's mother, Hagar, and Abraham decided to take Hagar and Ishmael to safety. God guided the family to the site of Mecca which was then but a desolate place, yet Abraham was divinely instructed to leave mother and child there under God's protection. Hagar (Hajar) was inspired to discover the Zamzam well nearby, she and Ishmael survived, and they lived on the site that would become the Ka'bah. When Ishmael grew to manhood, Abraham returned, and together they built the Ka'bah and called humanity to the Hajj.[5]

In the first centuries of Islam, Ishmael was believed to have been the ancestor of all Arabs,[6] and hence the Meccan Hajj both represented a potent Abrahamic ritual, and it became quintessentially bound within the central myths of Arab communal origins in early Muslim-era thinking. The narratives of Hajj origins set the ritual within an ethno-religious history, enabling its present participants to feel a deep communal history via performance of the Hajj, and the salience of Abrahamic narratives in the Qur'an indicates that the Qur'an intended for its initial audience to perceive the Hajj with an emotive connection to Abrahamic roots of monotheism far predating Muhammad.

By pinning Abrahamic historical sense onto the Hajj, the Qur'an transforms the pilgrimage into a 'site of memory' *i.e.* a ritual, the repetition of which enables pilgrims to 'feel' that they are members of a community that transcends their present time.[7] The Qur'an's emphatic semantic construction to stress that the Hajj has been a duty which the right-guided have owed *to God*[8] ever since Abraham, unambiguously primes the ritual to represent the annual playing-out of a historical memory of the origins of monotheism, and thus, like all sites of memory, the Hajj makes Muslim identity (which is defined via theoretical concepts of faith) materialise as a physically perceptible community to all co-participants in the ritual.

The Qur'anic mnemohistory of pilgrimage and its consequent ties to the construction of Muslim identity thereby invokes two broad issues. Firstly, whilst memory helps maintain identities, it is also a cultural force that can redefine social frameworks and create links between hitherto

Left Single folio from a Qur'an written in *mā'il* script, Hijaz, early 8th century AD, ink on vellum, 32.5 x 20.5 cm, KFQ 60

unconnected imagined communities, and thus the kinds of community which the Hajj helped create can change over time, and scholarship will want to bear that in mind. And secondly, we will want to know why it was the Hajj that was selected as *the* ritual with such unique historical resonance. It would be difficult to explain why the Hajj figures in the Qur'an with such symbolic standing if it was not already rooted somehow in the communal consciousness of the world into which the Qur'an was revealed. Study of the Hajj before Muhammad accordingly needs to bear in mind that the ritual bursts into the Qur'an's worldview with a rhetorical force that is hard to overlook.

To progress from here, we can seek more precision as to *when* the Hajj was projected as an Abrahamic site of memory. The Abrahamic Hajj narratives are developed in the Qur'an, but not uniformly. The Qur'an was revealed gradually over the final 22 years of Muhammad's life, and of its 114 surahs, 86 are dated to the first twelve years of Muhammad's prophethood when he lived in Mecca (AD610–22), while the remaining 28 were revealed when he led a community of believers in Medina (AD622–32). Concerning the Hajj, no Meccan surahs mention pilgrimage or Abraham's construction in Mecca: the lone Meccan-era verse which appears to intend the Meccan shrine, 'the House' (*al-bayt*), is *Sūrat Quraysh*, CVI, 3, and it makes no reference to pilgrimage, only an injunction to worship God, who is described as 'Lord of this House'. A holy centre associated with the Quraysh is thereby acknowledged, but pilgrimage is emphatically not part of the Meccan Qur'an. In contrast, after Muhammad moved to Medina, *i.e.* during the period when he was at war with the Meccans, references to the Hajj materialise in the Qur'an. While Muhammad thus does not appear to have preached about the Hajj when he lived in Mecca, once he established a community in Medina and engaged in conflict with Mecca, the Qur'an began to chide the Meccan Quraysh's Hajj practice: 'their prayer at the House (of God) is nothing but whistling and clapping of hands.'[9] The Qur'an also began elaborating that the correct Hajj is that which follows Abraham's divinely inspired ceremony and upbraided the Meccans for their grossly zealous prevention of Muslims from performing the pilgrimage.[10] This message would have enabled the Qur'an's audience to understand that Mecca was an Abrahamic ritual site and this in turn would allow Muslims to assert their priority over the Hajj. The legacy of Abraham was central to Muhammad's community's identity as monotheists,[11] and hence the Qur'an's Hajj narrative rather perfectly fits within a programme justifying Muhammad's efforts to conquer Mecca as an act of restoring proper Abrahamic monotheism, which he did in AH8 (AD629–30).

The coincidence of the first expressions of the Hajj as an obligation and the initial political expansions of the early Muslim community suggest that the Hajj entered Muslim communal consciousness hand-in-hand with political expediency. The obvious advantage for Muhammad to acquire a divinely articulated reason explaining why believers should conquer their rival town does not, however, entail that the Hajj as a religious ritual was merely the by-product of realpolitik, since the fact that a pilgrimage ritual was selected as a beacon for political mobilisation underlines the instrumental value of religious discourses as the currency of Muhammad's political organisation. The identity of Muhammad's community was pitched with an Abrahamic aspect, and the action described as obligatory upon the early Muslims was worship at a location identified as Abraham's original shrine to God. It seems apt, therefore, to interpret the ways in which the Hajj interacts with historical narrative as yet another layer of evidence to understand how Muhammad's community marshalled a faith basis, as opposed to a strictly regional, imperial or ethnic, to express its sense of self.[12]

We can thus date the rise of the salience of Hajj in discourses of Muslim communal identity to the period when Muhammad was organising a state in Medina, but the point at which Mecca acquired its Abrahamic origin story remains open. Herein, scholars have noted considerable parallels between Muslim Hajj narratives and practice and Judaic ideas of holy sanctums and Biblical stories of Ishmael. In addition to the shared ancestry of Abraham, the ritual spaces in Mecca such as the *Maqām Ibrāhīm* (a stone near the Kaʿbah), the *Rukn* (the corner of the Kaʿbah where the Black Stone lies, or the Black Stone itself) and the belief that Ishmael is buried under the *Ḥijr* (a sacred space next to the Kaʿbah) bear close crossovers with texts from Genesis regarding sacred spaces of Hebrew prophets.[13] The parallels lead some modern interpreters to propose that Mecca was initially a Judaic sanctuary, founded by Jewish immigrants long before Muhammad, and thence Mecca's Abrahamic connections have an ancient pedigree.[14] Others, however, prefer a more 'Arab national' interpretation that Mecca was originally a 'pagan Arab' sanctum, and that it was Muhammad who coined the Abrahamic stories to transform the 'pagan Arab' Mecca into a monotheistic Muslim shrine.[15] This approach reads Mecca's Judaic parallels as borrowings which Muhammad took from Jews in Medina to elaborate the meaning of the Meccan shrine and to present it as superior to, and a replacement of Jerusalem.

The resolution of Mecca's pre-Islamic significance likely lies somewhere between the two proposals. On the one hand, neither the Qur'an nor Muhammad's *ḥadīth* offer grounds to conceptualise Mecca as a characteristically pre-Islamic Arab pilgrimage centre. They do not summon the ethnonym 'Arab' when describing either the Hajj or the Sanctum, nor do they describe the pilgrimage as a pan-Arabian communal event. The portrayal of Hajj as a central feature

of Arab identity was added by subsequent Muslim writers:[16] at the time of Muhammad, Mecca features in poetry within more modest confines, as will be discussed below (see below, Section 3). The Judaic origins theory is accordingly attractive, but it does not entail that waves of Jews immigrated into the Arabian Peninsula and planted their religion in Mecca, as there is also scant evidence for a Rabbinic Jewish community operating anywhere near central Arabia.[17] Instead, pre-Islamic central Arabia housed fragmented groups of people, some of whom were monotheistic and seemingly attracted to ideas of Judaic origin. Their Judaism was not like the subsequently codified Rabbinic Judaism we recognise today, but some of them appear to have considered themselves as 'Jews' and they embedded their conceptions of holy shrines upon Mecca which perhaps was, to different-minded Arabians at the same time, a pagan cult centre. Such syncretic shrines are attested elsewhere in the Late Antique Middle East,[18] and we might then conceptualise the Meccan shrine before Muhammad as important from the perspective of local communal practice, which was neither specifically 'Jewish' nor 'Arab', but simply 'Meccan': a centre of worship with a meaning infused by the array of peoples who venerated it. When the Qur'an laid claim to Mecca, it was adding a new layer of memory, cast to suit the religio-political purposes of Muhammad's Medinan community.

Mecca and Bakka: Symptoms of Syncretism

To illustrate what we mean by thinking of Meccan history as Meccan, and not as 'Arab' or 'Jewish', we can consider the enigmatic reference to Bakkah in Qur'an *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, III, 96, since the verse is emblematic of the intractable problems which scholars face when trying to rarefy the origins of Mecca and explain it as either an 'Arab' or a 'Jewish' idea. The verse alludes to the Hajj and its holy Sanctum, but instead of saying the Sanctum is in Mecca, the verse reads: 'the first House to be built for mankind was the one at Bakkah.' All surviving Muslim texts interpret Bakkah as a reference to Mecca (or a part of the Meccan shrine), and although the names sound similar, they are obviously different and the Muslim-era exegetical efforts to explain that Mecca and Bakkah are synonymous are unconvincing.[19] Since Bakkah is nowhere else cited as the name of a central Arabian shrine, it is imprudent to simply assume *prima facie* that the Qur'an's 'Bakkah' was an alternative name for Mecca.[20] From the Arabic perspective, therefore, Bakkah is a conundrum: no Arabic-speaking scholars from early Islam onwards were able to crack it, and its appearance in the Qur'an seems an outsider intervention into Arabic. This then opens the Jewish-origin possibility, as A. Regnier proposed on the basis of parallels between the Qur'an's Bakkah and Psalm 84.5–6.[21] The Psalm reads:

> 84.5 Blessed are those whose strength is in you, whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
> 84.6 As they pass through the Valley of Baka, they make it a place of springs; the autumn rains also cover it with pools.

The Psalm is interpreted as an allegorical reference to pilgrimage to Zion, its 'Baka' is defined (but not with certainty) as 'a valley in Palestine;'[22] it obviously sounds like Qur'anic Bakkah, and the Psalm's reference to 'springs' hearkens the Islamic Zamzam symbolism whereby Mecca was transformed into a valley with a spring for Hagar and Ishmael. The concept of pilgrimage in the Psalm is referred to as 'highways' or 'steps' (Hebrew: *mesillah*), which resonates with the reference in *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 26 to pilgrims arriving from 'all those mountain tracks' (*kulli fajjin 'amīq*). The term 'blessed' in Psalm 84.5 also appears in Qur'an *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, III, 96 where Bakkah is associated with 'blessing' (*mubārak*), and thus Regnier proposed that we should understand the Qur'an's Bakkah as a leftover from an early period of Islam, suggestive, in Regnier's view, that Muslim pilgrimage was initially intended towards Jerusalem.

While Regnier's proposal is ostensibly an intriguing one, there are deeper complications. The 'Baka' in Psalm 84.6 is an English rendering of the Hebrew *Bākhā*, whereas Qur'anic 'Bakkah' does not use *khā'*, and instead has a doubled consonant without long vowels. Phonetically, therefore, *Bākhā* is not much closer to 'Bakkah' than is Makkah. The identification of the Psalm's *Bākhā* with a physical place in Palestine is also not certain, since the word does not appear to exist elsewhere in Judeo-Christian traditions. Moreover, it is the pilgrims who are blessed in the Psalm, not the site of *Bākhā*, whereas the Qur'an renders Bakkah itself as blessed territory. Hence there are connections, but they point in oblique directions. Probing further, the Greek Septuagint renders the Hebrew *Bākhā* as (κλαυθμῶνος), 'weeping', which renders the phrase as a more metaphorical 'Valley of Weeping'. Weeping in Arabic is connoted by the root *bakā*, and so we are brought a little closer, but not entirely, to the Qur'anic 'Bakkah'. Thus, notwithstanding the ostensible correlations between the Psalm's *Bākhā* and Qur'anic Bakkah, one cannot confidently conclude that the Qur'an asks its audience to make a physical pilgrimage to a precise place in Palestine called 'Baka'. I suggest that the Palestinian-pointing interpretation both misinterprets the Psalm and undertakes an overly literal reading of the Qur'an, missing the point of Qur'anic discourse and style. Much of the Qur'an is allegorical and deliberately avoids prosaic description, and it might be more productive to read *Sūrat 'Al 'Imrān*'s 'Bakkah' not as a precise toponym, but instead as a resonance of Judeo-Christian scripture.

The case of Bakkah is an example of how the Qur'an couches references to the Hajj in obscure terms that confound rigid philological analysis, and it brings us to the heart of the difficult questions about how we can interpret Qur'anic verses about pilgrimage. On the one hand, the quirks of individual words, like Bakkah, and resonances with Judeo-Christian pilgrimage practice have prompted critical scholarship to seek alternative interpretations for such terms on an individual basis. But what is equally important is also to examine how the words interact with each other in the Qur'an: we ought to pay equal attention to *how* the Qur'an uses words associated with Hajj and the extent of their coherence within the Qur'anic text. After all, there is sometimes a difference between the etymology of a word and the message of a text that uses it: and if we wish to understand the text, we need to pose questions to it directly.

In the case of the Qur'an's pilgrimage semantics, five key words central in today's Muslim pilgrimage vocabulary appear: *ḥajj*, the Kaʿbah, Mecca, the Sacred Mosque (*al-masjid al-ḥarām*) and the Sacred House (*al-bayt*, *al-bayt al-ḥarām*, or, in one verse, *baytika al-muḥarram*[23] 'God's Sacred House'). The Kaʿbah is mentioned twice and Mecca once in addition to the Bakkah verse,[24] while variations on *al-bayt* occur eleven times, *al-masjid al-ḥarām* fifteen, and *ḥajj* (and its derivations) eleven. Muslim exegetes interpret each as synonymous with the Meccan pilgrimage, but since the Qur'an uses this array of different words, it is legitimate to ask whether the 'Sacred Mosque' connotes the same place of worship as the 'Holy House', and if they do intend the same location, one wonders why the Qur'an uses such different terminology?

To proffer answers, let us turn to the contexts and interrelations between the terms. According to my readings, there are eleven distinct tracts in the Qur'an where pilgrimage and/or sacred sanctums are discussed,[25] and certain patterns regarding the terminology used in these passages come into view. For example, when instructing Muslims about the direction of prayer, the Qur'an refers to the *qiblah* as the 'bearing of the *masjid al-ḥarām*' – it does not refer to the direction via the word *al-bayt*,[26] and likewise when the Qur'an describes non-believers who 'prevent [Muslims] from entering the sacred space', the Qur'an exclusively uses the term *al-masjid al-ḥarām*.[27] In the only instance where Mecca is expressly and unambiguously named in the Qur'an, in an allusion to Muhammad's conquest of the Sanctum (*Sūrat al-Fatḥ*, XLVIII, 24–5), the Sanctum is specified as *al-masjid al-ḥarām*. To a certain extent, therefore, discussion of the Sanctum in politicised contexts relevant to Muhammad's community tend to describe it as *al-masjid al-ḥarām*,[28] whereas the historical stories connecting the Sanctum to Abraham do not use that term, and instead express the holy site via variations on the word *al-bayt*.[29] Exhortations for Muslims to make the Hajj are expressed in terms of visiting *al-bayt* which strikes a consistency with the Qur'an's depiction of Hajj as answering Abraham's call after he built *al-bayt*,[30] however, there is more terminological fluidity. For instance, *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, VIII, 35 describes non-believers blocking Muslims from *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, whilst the same verse also specifies that the non-believers' own prayer at the same site takes place in *al-bayt*. Likewise, *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 26 describes Abraham's construction of *al-bayt*, but the immediately preceding verse mentions *al-masjid al-ḥarām*. And whereas the general obligation of pilgrimage refers to Hajj to *al-bayt*, the most detailed description of the actual Hajj rituals (where the word *ḥajj* also appears seven times) is narrated amongst references to *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, and in this tract there is no reference to *al-bayt*.[31] And when the Kaʿbah itself is described, it is expressed in connection with *al-bayt al-ḥarām* in language that very closely resembles the description of *al-bayt* which Abraham constructed,[32] whereas *Sūrat al-Tawbah* IX, 19 describes pilgrims as *ḥājj* to *al-masjid al-ḥarām*.

In sum, eight of the eleven pilgrimage-related tracts use two or more terms to describe the sanctum and pilgrimage. The extensive cross-over of terminology between tracts also reveals a little-acknowledged consistency of the Qur'anic pilgrimage lexicon: the Qur'an uses a plurality, but a fixed plurality of terms to speak about the pilgrimage and its sacred site, and it marshals them so consistently and interchangeably that the intention of the Qur'an does seem straightforward. While it does not pack all the verses together, and while it is impossible to reconstruct the details of the Hajj ritual from amalgamating all the Hajj verses, such a degree of precision cannot reasonably be expected from the Qur'an: its style almost never provides exhaustive coverage of one topic in one chapter, and it only rarely gives totally unambiguous juridical direction. The Qur'an is accordingly not amenable to rigid attempts to pin down specific words in isolation, and this line of enquiry can accordingly quite mislead us. If we direct our enquiry instead to question what the Qur'an *does* do, we find that it does develop consistent themes via repetitions of motifs, and in the example of pilgrimage, the regular crossovers of terminology lead us to observe that the Qur'an intends that *al-masjid al-ḥarām* to which Muslims make a Hajj (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 189–197), is one and the same as the *bayt* which Abraham constructed as the centre for the Hajj (*Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 25–26), and that this *bayt* is also *al-bayt al-ḥarām* where the Kaʿbah lies (*Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 97), and that *al-bayt al-ḥarām* is one and the same as the *al-masjid al-ḥarām* where the non-believers were preventing Muslims from entering (*Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 2; *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, XIII, 35), and that this was the place which Muhammad captured, which the Qur'an says is Mecca (*Sūrat al-Fatḥ*, XLVII, 24–25). The Qur'an indeed uses an array of words, and the

verses noted above contain less-frequently encountered names alluding to ritual sites and acts, but each of the pilgrimage tracts has lexical unity via the terms *ḥajj*, *al-bayt* and *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, and all of these verses and their terminologies feed into one patently consistent discourse.

To suggest that the Qur'an is equivocal in the way it presents the Hajj thus casts judgement *ultra vires*: such claims overlook the Qur'an's own discourse in favour of studying individual words, and rather misinterpret the Qur'an in the process by reading its vocabulary in ways which it probably did not intend its audience to do. The uniformity in the Qur'an's overall discourse is patent and a crucial factor when evaluating the meaning of Hajj in the text. The verses are linked with common vocabulary and they paint a coherent picture of a pilgrimage site in Mecca, though via multiple terms, some of which were translated into the Qur'an from earlier sources, particularly Biblical. The Qur'an retains the words' earlier resonances, but puts them to very different work to articulate its meaning for an Arabian shrine.

Returning to Bakkah and its resonance with Psalm 84.5–6, the Qur'an reconstructed the Psalm's associations with pilgrimage and it employed them in a new universe of ideas associated with *al-bayt*: 'the first House [*bayt*] to be built for mankind was the one at Bakkah.' The Psalm has no mention of a *bayt*, nor any form of sanctum, whereas, as we have seen, it is *al-bayt*, not Bakkah, that is the centre of the Qur'anic discourse: *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān*, III, 96's 'Bakkah' accordingly seems but a resonance with Judeo-Christian terminology to invoke a sense of the holy for audiences who had heard such words before, but who were also willing to have them used for new purposes.[33]

In short, the Qur'an's choice of words leads to the interpretation that the *al-bayt* at Bakkah is supposed to be understood as the Meccan shrine, but this does not mean that Bakkah was definitively an alternative name for Mecca in the contemporary local vernacular. 'Bakkah' appears to have been summoned in the Qur'an as an in-between, a hybrid word from a third space reflective of a syncretic community where the sacred nature of the local shrine was understood via allusions to faiths articulated in ritual vocabulary imported from other scriptural languages. While the name Bakkah and aspects of a Hajj ritual may seem idiosyncratic to us, when we view Mecca on the eve of Muhammad as a localised sacred site within a politically and culturally fragmented map of central Arabia, the lack of perfect clarity can be explained. There was no central Arabian state to articulate or enforce a sense of 'orthodox worship' for the Hajj, the Hajj's Meccan custodians would have had influence, but there are multiple sites of worship in and adjacent to Mecca's precinct, multiple groups would have been attracted to them, and the precise organisation of rites and their interpretation would be open to negotiation. Depending on background or the nature of engagement with religious texts from elsewhere, different terminologies spawned multiple memories of what the pre-Islamic Hajj meant and how it should be depicted. Bakkah was thus not a straightforward synonym for Mecca, but rather a device for groups which attached importance to monotheism via Judaic scripture to expressly the holiness of their space in Judaic-sounding terms. The Qur'an's Bakkah consequently represents one of what was probably a plurality of fluid traditions for conceptualising Meccan pilgrimage.

It was later Arabic writers from the 8th century onwards who sought to homogenise the fluidity and added their own normative expectations of what the Hajj should have meant from their own perspective. Ibn Habib (d. 856–60) is the earliest extant author to refer to Mecca's sanctum as *Bayt al-ʿArab* (the Sacred House of the Arabs), and the earliest to elaborate extensive narratives of Arab origins as revolving around Mecca.[34] In the same vein, Iraqi writers contemporary with Ibn Habib imagined that their current Hajj rituals were essentially the same as those which they imagined had been promulgated by Abraham and followed by the peoples they imagined to be the 'original Arabs'. They consequently asserted a monolithic 'Arab' label to homogenise Mecca's past worshippers into one culturally and doctrinally unified community of 'Arabs'. They accordingly interpreted Bakkah as simply one of the 'Arabs' names' for Mecca, but this was anachronistic: the putative pre-Islamic Arab 'cultural unity' is itself a spectre of early Muslim-era imaginations. The reality of pre-Islamic Arabia was a more heterogeneous mix of faiths and traditions. To assume today, therefore, that a unified group of pre-Islamic 'Arabs' had articulated a meaning for Mecca that gained acceptance across Arabia replicates a matured Muslim-era paradigm uncritically. Aaron Hughes has similarly critiqued opinions about the putative 'normative Jewish traditions' in pre-Islamic Arabia,[35] and current research thus invites us to reconsider the 'origins' of the Hajj – labelling the ritual by monolithic ethnic terms as 'Arab' or 'Jewish' and efforts to fit the Hajj into our expectations about Arabness or Judaism are erroneous, and explains some of the difficulties scholars have encountered when trying to interpret pre-Islamic Meccan history via these labels.

The claims of medieval Iraqi historians that Mecca was the 'birthplace of the Arabs', or the counterclaims of some modern Orientalists that the Hajj was the ritual of a Jewish sect,[36] rely on a streamlined historical tableau which feeds on audience desires for the past to be simplified into readily understandable events. But in the end, all is overwrought: the seeker of Mecca's origins will do better to look for the more modest explanations. A cult centre emerged, it attracted disparate ideas from surrounding religious beliefs as fluid groups of pilgrims began using the site, and then Mecca had the unique fortune to have been lying next door

to the political centre of what would become one of the most important religious movements in human history.

Underwriting the argument so far is a tacit assumption that Mecca did exist before Muhammad, and that it had ritual significance in a central Arabian worldview. Logically, this seems obvious since the Meccan shrine is in central Arabia today, the Qur'an names Mecca expressly, the language of the Qur'an cites *al-bayt*, *al-masjid al-ḥarām* and Mecca on the same semantic continuum of Hajj. There is also an inscription evidencing that Mecca's Ka'bah was in operation within a few decades of Muhammad's death.[37] Given that the Qur'an's Medinan Surahs marshal the Hajj so prominently and with such symbolic Abrahamic importance also logically suggests that Mecca must have been a functioning local shrine in order for it to have been capable of becoming such a salient ritual obligation for Muhammad's community. But logic can only take us so far, and more evidence for the Hajj before Muhammad is in order.

The Late Antique Hajj

The major conundrum confronting study of the Hajj before Muhammad is the oft-remarked absence of evidence about Mecca from pre-Islamic sources.[38] As noted, Muslim-era Arabic texts explain that Mecca was a pan-Arabian pre-Islamic pilgrimage centre and the base of profitable long-distance trade, which made its inhabitants, the Quraysh, both religiously prestigious and commercially wealthy, but Late Antique sources themselves do not mention the name Mecca,[39] the most lucrative ancient pan-Arabian trade in incense collapsed during the turmoil of the Late Roman Empire some 150–200 years before Muhammad, and the Quraysh are not identified as a trading group by Byzantine writers, some of whom knew quite a lot about Arabia.[40]

The apparent absence of reference to Mecca in Late Antiquity fuels critical questions of whether Mecca existed as a pre-Islamic ritual and proposals for alternative origins for the Hajj.[41] The alternatives, however, lack clear evidence of their own, since non-Arabic Late Antique sources do not mention a buzzing pilgrimage centre that bears enough resemblance to Hajj rituals to posit it as an alternative to Mecca. Moreover, the oft-repeated claim that Mecca is *not* mentioned in pre-Islamic sources is itself an overstatement – Mecca and the Hajj *do* appear in a body of evidence which, surprisingly has always been available, yet little consulted to date. The source is pre-Islamic Arabic poetry. The poetic corpus contains thousands of verses composed over the *circa* 150 years before Muhammad, and it was recorded in Muslim-era collections from the 8th century onwards.[42] Because pre-Islamic poetry was only set to writing in the Muslim era, some poetry is suspect: early collectors were aware of poetry fabrication and false ascription of verses composed in the Muslim-era to pre-Islamic poets. The collectors endeavoured to weed out these 'fakes', and they did a rather good job: though bold claims in the early twentieth century argued for the corpus' unreliability, poetry experts today consider the majority of preserved poems to be genuine.[43] For a historian's purposes, therefore, any single given verse ascribed to a pre-Islamic poet recorded in Muslim-era Arabic literature bears probability of being a forgery, but trends that can be observed across an array of poems have higher probability of accurately conveying memories of pre-Islamic Arabians, and the material deserves close scrutiny for all interested in reconstructing the Late Antique Hajj.

A survey of pre-Islamic poetry uncovers two broad observations with important underlying details. Firstly, and at the broadest level, terminology similar to that of Muslim pilgrimage does appear in pre-Islamic poetry. There are references to the word *mu'tamir*, formed from the same root as the Muslim *'umrah*, to describe a pilgrim,[44] and several pre-Islamic poets invoke the word *ḥijaj* (lit. 'pilgrimages', a plural of *ḥijjah*) to express the concept of 'years' or 'years gone by',[45] which suggests that regular pilgrimages were sufficiently established to serve as metaphors for the passage of time itself.[46] Non-Arabic Late Antique texts evidence pilgrimage fairs on the fringes of Arabia and the Fertile Crescent,[47] so the pilgrimage terminology in poetry is not unexpected *per se*, and the pre-Islamic Arabic poems in which the term *ḥijaj* appears do not all expressly specify visitation to Mecca, and in one case of *mu'tamir*, the pilgrimage is to a different pilgrimage centre at Dhu al-Khalasah. Hence, the terminology identifies considerable presence and significance of annual pilgrimage in Arabian societies, but without positively identifying the Meccan Hajj specifically. This flows into the second broad observation that only a very small number of verses do mention the Meccan Hajj. These verses are crucial and hitherto unstudied evidence which we shall consider in detail presently, but from the broad perspective of pre-Islamic Arabic poetry as a whole, the general paucity of reference to Hajj helps resolve the debate between Muslim-era texts that posit Mecca as the central shrine of Arabian belief and the critical modern scholarship that doubts Mecca's very existence. The fact that so few pre-Islamic poets mention the Meccan Hajj strongly suggests that the Muslim-era narratives about the Hajj as a *pan-Arabian* pre-Islamic pilgrimage site are anachronistic exaggerations, but, on the other hand, the fact that some pre-Islamic poets *do* mention the Hajj stands as key evidence for the existence of a pre-Islamic Hajj in a form that resembles the Muslim-era ritual. The poetic evidence also seems to be quite reliable: it does not bear marks of later Muslim back-projection designed to 'prove' the history of the Hajj, and thus the poetry ought to be taken seriously.

As for the poems' authenticity, we have several grounds for confidence. Firstly, Muslim-era poetry narrators did not need to 'prove' the Hajj's pre-Islamic existence: the concept of a Meccan Hajj before Muhammad was uncontested, and this explains why the poems have run under the scholarly radar for so long: early Arab historians did not need the poetry to prove their historical narratives about Mecca, and hence the poetry did not circulate in historiographical works, and instead remained in poetry collections which are much less studied in modern scholarship. Secondly, the poems do not speak to discourses with evident connection to Muslim power politics. They do not praise the Quraysh or other pre-Islamic figures in ways that would be expedient in power struggles during the Islamic era, when some elements of pre-Islamic history were embellished via the forging of poetry to promote the ancestry of particular Muslim political factions. And thirdly, some of the poems were preserved in celebrated poetry collections, with multiple recordings, and their Hajj-related verses are consistent across a wide array of source texts.

Direct reference to the Hajj and Mecca appears in al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani's celebrated ode addressed to the Lakhmid king, Nu'man ibn al-Mundhir: [48]

> I swear by the life of He, whose Ka'bah I have touched,[49]
> And I swear by the thick blood poured upon the sacrifice stones,
> By the Lord who preserves the birds in His sanctum,
> And the riders to Mecca, passing the wells of al-Ghayl and al-Sa'd.[50]

Alongside the reference to Mecca, al-Nabighah's verses also encapsulate three essences of the Meccan Hajj as still known today: physical contact with Mecca's central shrine (the Ka'bah), the invocation of a monotheistic God, and sacrifice. It is pertinent too that the verse mentions the shrine together with sacrifice, evidencing the pre-Islamic connection of Hajj rituals both inside and outside of the central sanctum. And moreover, al-Nabighah's summoning of the ritual aspects of the Hajj and Hajj-specific geography in a solemn oath testifies to Mecca's venerated status in pre-Islamic conceptions of the sacred.

Similar express references to Hajj appear in two poems by Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma, including his most famous and widely-circulated poem, the *Mu'allaqah*: [51]

> I swore by the House circumambulated by
> Its builders, Quraysh and Jurhum,
> And by al-Lat and al-'Uzza whom they worship
> At Mecca, at the noble inviolable House [*al-bayt al-'atīq al-mukarram*]

The last half of the excerpt may be an example of Muslim-era additions, as it is only attested in outlying manuscripts, but the reference in the first two lines to the sacred House and the circumambulation by its resident tribes, Jurhum and Quraysh is reported consistently in the sources, and stands as a pre-Islamic indicator that the Quraysh were known before Muhammad as custodians of a sacred House, and that the ritual was worthy of being subject of an oath. In the second poem, Zuhayr makes another oath: [52]

> I swore solemnly by the campsites of Mina,
> And by the shaven forelocks and lice-laden hair.

Mina is the Hajj pilgrims' campground, and shaving hair remains one of the mandatory Hajj rituals for men; Zuhayr's poem provides pre-Islamic testimony for both, as well as their reputed sanctity during Zuhayr's lifetime, given his employment of both to construct an oath.

Oaths articulated via pilgrimage rites (both inside and outside Mecca proper) also appear in verses ascribed to lesser poets preserved in some of the key and early collections of poetry specialists. Abu Tammam's *al-Hamasah* contains a poem by a pre-Islamic poetess Habibah bint 'Abd al-'Uzza: [53]

> I swear by the Lord of the prancing camels [*al-rāqiṣāt*] at Mina,
> Around Mecca, leading sacrifice animals...

Habibah's allusion to camels refers to the gathering of pilgrim travellers, she identifies the holy site by name, and she attests to the centrality of sacrifice for the Meccan ritual. Likewise, al-Mufaddal al-Dabbi's *al-Mufaddaliyyat* records lines by 'Awf ibn al-Ahwas: [54]

> I swear by Him to whose precincts the Quraysh
> Make pilgrimage, and by the gatherings under Mount Hira',
> And by the holy month of Banu Umayyah
> And soaking blood of bound animal sacrifices...

Al-Sukkari's collection of the Hudhayl's poetry articulates similar expressions, such as that of Sa'idah ibn Ju'ayya: [55]

> I swear by my camel, and by every
> Sacrificial animal, covered in dust,
> Corralled at the narrows of Ma'zim
> And driven by al-Akhshab.

Ma'zim and al-Akhsab refer to tracks between 'Arafah and Muzdalifah and a mountain near al-Mina, respectively, and, once again, the poet

emphasises the centrality of sacrifice in the Meccan ritual. Together, the collection of verses makes a coherent point that the ritual spaces of the Hajj, pilgrimage and sacrifice were objects of solemn veneration suitable for oaths in the pre-Islamic period.[56]

Beyond the realm of oaths, the Hudhayl's poetry also marshals the animal sacrifice in invective: al-Muʿattal al-Hudhali chides one of his Quraysh opponents:[57]

> Your aunties are of Qamaʿi stock
> They do not sacrifice at al-Muʿarraf.

Al-Muʿarraf was a term to describe ʿArafah (and, probably Mina too). Al-Muʿattal's intention was to disparage his rival by expressly excluding him from the wider community, of which al-Muʿattal's clan were members, and it is instructive that the poet selected matrilineal genealogy and nonparticipation in communal sacrifices to assert the rival's outsider, inferior, alien status. A poem by Abu Dhu'yab al-Hudhali composed around the time of Muhammad makes even more explicit references in five verses to Meccan topography, the market at Dhu al-Majaz, pilgrim campsites at Jamʿ (Muzdalifa) and Mina, and the ritual cutting of hair, and there are further, similar poems in the Hudhali oeuvre.[58]

Pre-Islamic poetry therefore provides unequivocal references to Hajj rites and pilgrimage locations. While the numbers are small, the verses do share a coherence of tropes that paints a picture of an important communal sacrifice which took place at Mecca in the name of a single deity. History of the pre-Islamic Hajj is thus much assisted by the poetic indicators which direct us to perceive a ritual sacrifice in and around Mecca, and the hitherto overlooked poetry places a high burden of proof on arguments that would place Mecca elsewhere, or propose that Muhammad and his followers invented the ritual for themselves. The evidence is also noteworthy from the perspective of geography, since all of the poets cited above, with the possible exception of Habibah bint ʿAbd al-ʿUzza (whose lineage is unknown) lived relatively near Mecca. The Hudhali poets and Zuhayr resided in mountains only a short remove from Mecca, while al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani lived at the northern edge of al-Hijaz, which is further, but nonetheless within the same subregion of Arabia. Added to this, the very large quantity of poetry ascribed to pre-Islamic poets from elsewhere in Arabia is effectively silent on Hajj-related matters. The exceptions are a northeastern Arabian poet at the dawn of Islam, al-Aʿsha Maymun ibn Qays, who invokes the Hajj in two oaths, one of which reads,[59]

> By the life of He to whom the Quraysh make the Hajj,

Another easterner, ʿAmr ibn Qamiʿa of the Qays ibn Thaʿlaba expressly describes how his people sacrifice (*nasakū*) and perform *ḥajj*.[60] These verses seem to be authentic, yet they are exceptional outliers within the corpus of non-Hijazi poetry which is emphatically silent on Mecca, the Quraysh and Hajj.

Poetry engenders the impression, therefore, that during the years leading to Muhammad's lifetime, the Hajj, the House of God, and sacrifice at Mina were part of the vocabulary of poets whom the sources describe as living near Mecca.[61] The findings underline our central argument that the pre-Islamic Meccan Hajj was a rite particular to its local population, attracting participants from al-Hijaz, and only rarely from further afield. The pilgrimage appears as an event most relevant for the Quraysh, since they are identified by name not only as custodians but also the participants of the Hajj. Other groups seem to have been present at times, but it is rather unlikely that they felt a particular obligation to attend: if the Hajj was such an important festival as to be attended regularly by all residents of al-Hijaz, its footprint in pre-Islamic poetry from that region would be greater. Instead, we find an awareness and indeed a respect for the ritual of the Quraysh, but it was a minority trope of pre-Islamic poetic repertoire, suggestive that the Hajj existed before Islam as one of various regional-specific sacred rites.

The fact that some of the poetry's terminology does not wholly correspond with the precise parameters of Muslim Hajj is also an encouraging sign when considering authenticity and the meaning of Hajj before Muhammad. Al-Muʿattal's toponym 'Muʿarraf' is an unusual term to refer to the pilgrims' gathering point at ʿArafah, 'Awf ibn al-Ahwas' reference to gathering under Mount Hira' does not reflect Muslim Hajj practice, and the sacred month of Banu Umayyah was not remembered in Muslim times.[62] Since Muslim commentators barely understood these references, it is remote that they invented the lines: had Muslim-era writers been in the business of falsely ascribing verses about the Hajj to pre-Islamic poets, we would expect them to use terminology familiar to Muslims. The survival of these old words indicates a flow of memories about Meccan Hajj rites from before Muhammad, and the apparent array of pre-Islamic Hajj practices abandoned in the Islamic period supports the conceptualisation of the pre-Islamic Hajj as a pluriform festival of varied rites attended by different groups. Nonetheless, the consistent focus on the Hajj's sacrifice and its single deity whose sanctuary was in Mecca fits with what Muhammad would preach. The Late Antique Hajj existed in a form which the Qur'an's monotheistic Abrahamic discourse could adopt and co-opt for itself.

The Muslim Hajj: from Muhammad to the End of the Umayyads

The infrequent and brief pre-Islamic allusions to the Hajj as a regionally bound ritual sacrifice of the Quraysh are both emphatically amplified and noticeably modified at the dawn of Islam. The Qur'an brings the Hajj into history with its clearer description of rituals to which the pre-Islamic poets only alluded figuratively, and it entrenches the Abrahamic connection to Hajj, a matter on which the earlier poetry is silent. The Qur'an's amplification of the Hajj flows directly into a wide array of further historical evidence from early Islam that tracks an unprecedented ascendance of the Hajj in various cultural fields. Herein, some pre-Islamic Hajj motifs were preserved: for instance, the metaphor of referring to years as 'pilgrimages' (*ḥijaj*) continues in Arabic poetry, and the Hajj is cited as a symbol for perpetually repeating time.[63] Arabic chroniclers recorded the names of the Hajj ritual leaders for each successive pilgrimage season after Muhammad's conquest of Mecca in AH8 (AD629–30), indicating the entrenchment of the Hajj as a conceptual mainstay of the passage of time for historians, too.[64] Disagreements in later Arabic historiography over the identities of some of the Hajj leaders evidence imperfect recollection of the early pilgrimages, but inscriptions near Mecca, including a reference to the Ka'bah in AH64 (AD684),[65] suggest that the rise of Islam accompanied a clearly perceptible rise in Mecca's popularity as a pilgrimage site, and this impression of the Hajj's ascendant significance following Muhammad's lifetime is sustained through the evidence of early Muslim-era and Umayyad poetry, where, in contrast to the absence of reference to Hajj in all but a few poems clustered around al-Hijaz in pre-Islam, virtually every collection of Umayyad-era verse mentions the Hajj in various contexts. Furthermore, the Qur'an's Hajj vocabulary enters Arabic poetry from early Islam too, illustrating how poets' newfound interest in the Hajj flowed, at least in part, from their incorporation of Qur'an Hajj passages. For example, al-Hutay'ah[66] composed an oath in verse that directly invokes the phrase *kulli fajj* from Qur'an *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 27:

> I swear by the prancing camels *on all those mountain tracks*
> Of the riders, heading to fulfil their promise at Mina.[67]

The upsurge in poetic invocation of the Hajj is commensurate with self-evident political changes inaugurated by rise of the Caliphate. Muhammad's successors created an unprecedentedly hegemonic political–religious power that centralised its ritual practices and stimulated a novel concentration of pilgrimage energy onto Mecca. But, the precise contours of the Hajj's rise in early Islam are nonetheless complex, as are questions regarding how early Muslims interpreted the Quranic obligation to perform the pilgrimage. The Qur'an's exhortation evidently cemented the Hajj ceremony in Muslim consciousness, but understanding the extent to which the Hajj was enforced, by whom, and the rituals undertaken, alongside the significance of participation, take us beyond the Qur'an into the memories of nascent Islam, and these are topics in need of further research, since the narrative historical accounts of the Umayyad period were only recorded some generations later, and the thrust of the later, generalising narratives cover over some important contours of the Hajj in early Muslim society. It is those contours which we shall visit to close this Chapter.

Moving beyond Abraham: Adam's Hajj

Whereas the Qur'an traced the Hajj to Abraham, Muslim scholars from an early period began to formulate a new narrative that the first Hajj was undertaken by Adam, or by angels even before Adam was created.[68] These stories emerged in tandem with novel Muslim geographical narratives that identified Mecca as both the nodal point from which the terrestrial earth itself was created, and the point directly beneath God's throne, entailing that Mecca's pilgrims about the Ka'bah both precisely mirror the celestial circumambulation of angels around God, and worship on the topography of Creation itself.[69] Additionally, it was claimed that *all* prophets since Adam performed the Hajj, and that large numbers of the prophets (if not nearly all of them) were buried in Mecca.[70] Given that the Qur'an offers no indication about Adam's Hajj or the pre-Abrahamic aspects of pilgrimage, proponents of the new narratives were challenged to reconcile their Adam stories with the Qur'an, and they did so by positing that the 'original shrine' built by Adam and his sons was effaced by the Flood, and that the Qur'an's reference to Abraham's building of the Ka'bah refers to its postdiluvial *re*-construction. For good measure, narratives added that Noah's Ark performed a floating circumambulation on the sea about the submerged Ka'bah, thus fitting in a Hajj for Noah, too.[71]

Although the Adam stories bear signs of Muslim-era invention,[72] and disagree with both the Qur'an and Prophetic *ḥadīth*, they appear to have emerged only a few generations after Muhammad. They appear in early texts, such as Muqatil ibn Sulayman's *Tafsir* (d. AH150/AD767), they gained traction through the 9th century, and became widely and approvingly cited by the 10th.[73] To understand the emergence of the Adam stories, we can return to our observation about the Hajj's connection to Muslim identity as one of Islam's preeminent 'sites of memory'.

During Muhammad's prophecy, the Qur'an accorded the Hajj a special ritual-historic function symbolising the continuous history

of monotheism as the legacy of Abraham. From the perspective of Muhammad's community (which likewise articulated its origins in Abrahamic terms), their most significant historical horizon was Abraham and thus the origin of Muhammad's Muslim community and the Hajj align. Over the effluxion of two generations, however, the Muslim community was transformed into the conquering elite of an empire controlling almost their entire known world. The conquerors encountered other peoples with different historical traditions and concepts of geography, and, in particular, Mesopotamian notions of ancient kingship and a geographical imagination which posited Iraq as the centre of the world. Islam's world was now bigger than Arabia, and Muslims' historical horizons projected far beyond Abraham, and it seems that they responded to their new geographical and chronological senses by tracing the Hajj backwards too, to ensure that *all* human history could be fitted within a widened ambit of their Hajj. Official geographers at the height of Abbasid power continued the pre-Islamic Mesopotamian view of Iraq as centre of the world, but pious-minded Muslims outside the caliphal court would prefer 'their' site of Mecca to take centre stage, and they advanced new theories: early iterations appear in late 8th-century Meccan histories, and the Meccan-centric model became common in writing across the Muslim world from the late 9th century.[74] Once a Hajj had been affirmed for Adam, it was the natural next step to adduce that *all* prophets made the Hajj, and while there is considerable divergence in the sources over the particulars of ancient prophetic hajjes, and while the stories are clearly not empirical history, their proliferation reveals the evident desire of Muslim writers, and their manifold efforts to encase all human history within the rubric of Hajj.[75]

The emergence of the Adam and subsequent prophetic Hajj stories can thus be understood as a natural corollary to the evolution of Muslim senses of communal identity, and while some cautious medieval scholars continued to cast doubt on the Adam narratives,[76] these were minority voices. With the Hajj established as one of Islam's preeminent sites of memory, it became imperative that Hajj acquire a history as old as the world itself, and the widespread success of the narrative expansion to transform the Qur'an's Abrahamic ritual into a pan-historical, pan-human event demonstrates the uniquely intimate ties between Meccan pilgrimage and Muslim identity.

The Hajj and Umayyad Politics

The nexus between Hajj and Muslim communal unity bears natural crossovers with the politics of early Islam. The early Caliphs asserted religious authority as leaders of the Muslim community, and given that the Hajj stood as the community's signature ritual, it would seem natural for Caliphs to capitalise upon leading the pilgrimage as a means to demonstrate their legitimate authority. This appears to manifest at the outset of Islam, since the first three of the 'Rightly-Guided' Caliphs (*al-Rāshidūn*) – Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, and ʿUthman – are recorded in Arabic histories as leading the Hajj in almost all years of their reign, but the sources for these early Hajjes were only written some 150 years after the events, and closer inspection of the relationship between Hajj and political power from Abu Bakr to the end of the Umayyads shows greater complexities.

The Qur'an is silent on the issue of Hajj leadership, neither prophetic *ḥadīth* nor early historical traditions stipulate that the leader of the Muslim community must lead the Hajj,[77] and Muhammad only led the Hajj once (in AH10/ AD632).[78] From the perspective of Islam's foundational texts and the practice of the Prophet, therefore, the political aspects of the Hajj are not at the centre of the ways in which the Hajj functioned and its importance articulated. The obligation of Hajj on each believer is expressed independent of political concerns. And whilst the 'Rightly-Guided Caliphs' were said to have led the Hajj each year, subsequent Umayyad caliphal presence on the Hajj was intriguingly muted. Most Umayyad Caliphs did lead the Hajj, but only two led it more than once (Muʿawiyah and al-Walid ibn ʿAbd al-Malik), and many only led it when they were crown princes, and never pilgrimed to Mecca after they became Caliphs.[79] Likewise, official caliphal expenditure on Hajj infrastructure was limited: the Umayyads controlled a vast empire, but unlike the Abbasids who replaced them, Umayyad expenditure on Hajj roads was virtually non-existent, and while three Umayyad caliphs, Muʿawiyah, ʿAbd al-Malik and al-Walid ibn ʿAbd al-Malik did fund considerable constructions in Mecca, other Umayyads hardly spent anything on the shrine.[80] Equally, the opponents of the Umayyads exhibited some ambivalence vis-à-vis the Hajj. One of the Umayyads' major rivals, ʿAbd Allah ibn al-Zubayr, established a Caliphate of his own in al-Hijaz, embellished the Kaʿbah, and led all but one of the Hajjes during his ten-year reign (AH62–72/ AD682–692), but during the three inter-Muslim conflicts (*fitnah*) of the Umayyad period, different factions only occasionally mobilised their own pilgrim groups to perform the rites separately.[81] As a pertinent example, an anti-Umayyad group attacked Mecca during the pilgrimage of AH129/ AD747, but they waited outside the town until the pilgrimage had been completed by its leader (a member of the Umayyad family), and only then did they assume control over Mecca.[82] These rebels, who were not members of the Quraysh, evidently did not intend to wrest control of the pilgrimage from its leader, and a rather good argument seems tenable that they did not attach importance to taking over the Hajj itself, and were more concerned to take over Mecca politically, while leaving the ritual to its local custodians.

Overall, survey of the leaders of the 120-odd Hajj pilgrimages between the death of Muhammad and the fall of the Umayyads reveals that only those Caliphs who resided near Mecca accorded repeated attention to the ritual (i.e. Abu Bakr, ʿUmar, ʿUthman and Ibn al-Zubayr), whereas ʿAli, who moved his capital to Iraq, and all the Syrian-domiciled Umayyad caliphs only occasionally attended the Hajj, and in fact only quite rarely was the reigning Caliph present. The Umayyad-era Hajj therefore appears to have had a recognised potential for political connection, but was neither wholly nor universally capitalised upon by Umayyad-era political actors.

I discuss the politics of Umayyad Hajj in greater detail elsewhere;[83] in short, the predominant absence of the Caliph's person on the Hajj suggests that the Caliphs did not consider the ritual as one easily amenable to politicised co-opting. The Hajj, conceptually bound with deep pre-Islamic history and prophetic origins via Abraham (and, eventually, Adam), may in fact have been 'bigger' than the office of the Caliph. Caliphs were entitled to lead the Hajj in person and to have their name invoked in supplication during the rituals, but more broadly, the Hajj's significance spoke to the community as a whole, and was perhaps therefore not an event which the Umayyads believed they could readily transform into an exclusive celebration of their legitimacy. With the exception of al-Walid (whose expenditures on ritual structures and participation on the Hajj were exceptional), the overall muted presence of Umayyad Caliphs on the Hajj suggests they indeed did not expend great efforts to manipulate the Hajj for their own benefit.

Poetry composed in praise of the Umayyad Caliphs sheds further light upon the limited presence of Caliphs in Mecca. Across the many collections of poetry in praise of the Umayyads, only a very small number of verses invoke the Hajj as a means to extol the Caliph. We noted above that al-Walid ibn ʿAbd al-Malik was exceptional in the largesse he expended on the Meccan and Medinan shrines, and he was duly praised by al-Ahwas al-Ansari (d. AH110/ AD728–9) for this charity:

> Don't you see him gift to the pilgrims [*al-ḥajīj*] [84]

But in general, such lines are extremely rare across the vast extant oeuvre of official panegyrics: Umayyad-era poetry instead perpetuates the pre-Islamic poetic sentiments that counted the Hajj as a proprietary right of the Quraysh. For examples, al-Akhtal makes oaths such as: 'For so long as the Quraysh offer sacrificial offerings' (*mā ahdat quraysh*), he refers to the Hajj as the ritual of the Quraysh, and he names subgroups of the Quraysh as synonymous with Mecca's ritual spaces.[85] Likewise, al-Ahwas al-Ansari swears an oath to God phrased as 'By He to whose house the Quraysh make pilgrimage,'[86] Kuthayyir ʿAzzah swears by the sanctum 'built by the Quraysh to which they offer sacrifice',[87] and Jarir refers to the Quraysh via toponyms associated with Hajj rites:

> Boy, from al-Muhassab, through Mina to Thabir
> The Quraysh talk of your people's dishonesty![88]

The three toponyms cover the ritual areas of Mecca, and such verses express Meccan territory as Quraysh space. Even a rebellious Kharijite poet whose political outlook was decidedly anti-Quraysh nonetheless accepts that Mecca was a ritual space synonymous with Quraysh.[89]

The close nexus of Quraysh and Hajj resembles the poetic depictions of the pre-Islamic ritual, and suggests key continuities from pre-Islam into the Umayyad period. The Hajj appears to have remained proprietary to the Quraysh in general and not a ritual that the Caliphate could monopolise for itself. Taken together, the poetry engenders impressions that the dawn of Islam brought new energy to organising the Hajj on a broader scale, yet the Hajj continued to be articulated as a Meccan ritual and not the prerogative of the Caliph *per se*. The Caliphs hailed from the Quraysh, but the wider tribe retained considerable power,[90] and hence if the pilgrimage was understood as a rite of the Quraysh, and not merely of the narrow Umayyad clan, we can begin to understand the muted presence of Umayyad Caliphs leading the Hajj and their rather limited sponsoring of pilgrimage constructions: the Hajj was not *their* ritual, other clans of the Quraysh retained old entitlements to manage aspects of the Hajj, and the Umayyads evidently did not seek to wrestle all of the Hajj-related limelight into their exclusive camp. As a result, the early Hajj may have lacked sufficient potential political capital to attract Caliphal attention: Hajj rites continued perpetually as a function of God's Will under the auspices of the Quraysh, and on this crowded dais, Caliphs could not take full credit for themselves. Hence they deemed one performance of Hajj sufficient to demonstrate their personal religious credentials, and they otherwise delegated the ritual to other members of the Umayyad and Quraysh aristocracy to organise.

In support of the above impression, most Umayyad-era panegyric poetic references to Hajj pointedly do not praise the Caliphs for their personal presence in leading the Hajj, rather the poets describe the supplication which pilgrims make on the Caliph's behalf at the Hajj. For example, one of the Umayyad-era's preeminent poets, Jarir ibn ʿAtiyyah (d. *circa* AH110/ AD728–9) declares:

> The pilgrims' entreaties to God for mercy upon the Caliph
> Nearly shake the earth at the Gathering Place.[91]

Jarir intends to express that *all* Muslims universally praise the Caliph, and they invoke Hajj imagery to do so since it seems that the Hajj was understood as a ritual which all Muslims were expected to attend and which a very large number did. Accordingly, the Hajj in this verse stands not for Caliphal prerogative, but instead as a metaphor connoting the totality of Muslim community. An event depicted as occurring at Hajj thus rhetorically expressed an event endorsed by all Muslims. This brings us to the Hajj's biggest footprint in Umayyad poetry: its communal aspect.

Hajj and Umayyad Community

Whilst reference to the Hajj is infrequent in Umayyad-era panegyric, the Hajj is, in contrast, a very common trope across the era's other poetic genres. The Hajj evidently became close to poets' hearts, and one of the most productive contexts of Hajj citation was in boastful poems and lampoons where poets laud their own clan for its presence at Mecca, and ridicule their foes for their absence. For example, Jarir uses the pilgrimage instrumentally to disparage the kin of the Christian poet, al-Akhtal (d. *circa* AH92/ AD710):

> They make their Hajj to St. Sergius
> While the Meccan pilgrims exult praise of God.[92]

And similarly, Jarir derides al-Akhtal's people:

> Their hands never touch the Sovereign House [*al-Bayt al-ʿAtīq*] [93]
> No, they stroke the Cross at Mass.[94]

Having chided al-Akhtal's Christian kin for their absence at Hajj, Jarir then praises his own people for their presence: they are the 'group always camped in the plains at Mina' [95] and there are further variations on Jarir's definition of his people via Hajj participation metaphors:

> Are we not the greatest of all people:
> The most noble at Mina, with the grandest tents! [96]

The thrust of Jarir's line is that when he sought to conceptualise the widest ambit of his communal boundaries to express the absolute superiority of his kin, he selected the Hajj as the rhetorical device to define those boundaries. The Hajj acted as a means to exclude Christians from the Muslim-Arab community, patently showing how the Hajj at the end of Islam's first century stood as the means to demarcate communal 'inside' and the sense of 'us'. Such poetic sentiments also mirror *ḥadīth* reported in early sources that: 'He who dies without having made the Hajj … might as well die as a Christian or Jew,' [97] and a *ḥadīth* ascribed to 'Umar ibn al-Khattab:

> I seriously considered [*hamamtu*] sending emissaries to the garrison towns [*al-amṣār*] with the order to impose the poll tax [*jizyah*] on anyone they found who had the means but who had not made the Hajj. By God such people aren't Muslims! They aren't Muslims! [98]

In exactly the same vein, another of the Umayyad era's signature poets, al-Farazdaq (d. AH110/ AD728 or AH112/ AD730), lampoons the Christian Tayyi' for not offering sacrifices at Hajj and not praying in Mosques, and he emphasises the polemic by declaring how 'all the Muslim pilgrims' are witness to the absence of the Tayyi' at Mecca. On the flipside, and like Jarir, al-Farazdaq praises his own kin for their pre-eminence amongst Meccan pilgrims.[99] Performance of the pilgrimage thus emerges as both a necessary and essentially sufficient condition to enter the 'inside' of Muslim identity: Hajj goers are *ipso facto* Muslims, whilst those who do not attend can be excluded.

Jarir and al-Farazdaq's Hajj imagery tallies with our interpretation in Section 1 of this Chapter that the Qur'an deliberately constructed the Hajj as a touchstone to define belonging to Muslim monotheistic community, however, the different effects of the way Hajj is cited in the texts of the Qur'an and Umayyad-era poetry reveals changing contexts of concepts of community. In early Islam, in the context of the establishment of Muhammad's monotheistic community, *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, IX, 28 expressly excludes pagan worshippers from participating in Hajj, thus employing the Hajj instrumentally to draw a line between monotheists and pagans. One century later, Jarir and al-Farazdaq summon the Hajj to chide Christians as outsiders on the basis of their nonparticipation. In both cases, it is the Hajj which serves as the rhetorical device to illustrate communal exclusion, but the shift in the nature of the group excluded is indicative that lines of demarcation between Muslims and other monotheists had become more salient during the Umayyad era. Whereas the Qur'an is silent on Christian and Jewish association with pilgrimage, and while Christian groups such as al-Akhtal's Taghlib were allied with Muslims in the conquests of the generation immediately following Muhammad, by the end of the 7th century, moves were afoot to exclude Christians and restrict the 'inside' of elite Caliphal identity to Muslims. Christian non-participation in the Meccan Hajj became a device to epitomise their outsider status. The Umayyad-era poets would only have summoned the Hajj to lampoon Christians in this way if pilgrimage was gathering Arabian populations to demonstrate their inclusion inside the Muslim political order via participation at the Hajj. As such, the Hajj was less about the office of the Caliph than it was a means for groups to express Muslim belonging.

The prospect that large numbers of pilgrims from across Arabia were actually gathering annually at the Hajj finds valuable corroboration in the Umayyad-era emergence of a new genre of love poetry, where male poets celebrate the advent of the Hajj season by relishing the prospects of meeting beautiful young women, either from aristocratic Umayyad families who returned to Arabia from their Syrian domiciles for the Hajj, or from tribes living so far from the Hijaz that the Hajj represents the only opportunity for meeting. Pre-Islamic poetry makes no reference to this form of pilgrimage romance; however, it is a salient feature of the famous early Umayyad-era poet, ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabiʿah (d. AH93/ AD711), whose poetry is replete with references to Hajj toponyms as places of romantic encounters, and verses, wistfully musing that more beautiful lovers would come visiting:

> If only Hajj month was upon us more often:
> Visits to the Sanctum obliged every two moons! [100]

ʿUmar ibn Abi Rabiʿah's poetry lampoons traditional Arabic poetic heroic ideals, and one might question whether he actually spent the Hajj season seeking new romance, but the genre matures amongst manifold poets of the Marwanid era, such as Dhu al-Rummah, Kuthayyir ʿAzzah and Ahwas al-Ansari engage with the theme repeatedly. Kuthayyir offers a representative example:

> The pilgrims by their thousands dispersed from Mina
> Now scattered by their different callings, to a journey of four.
> Never before had I beheld such a happy place,
> A meeting ground of thronging pilgrims,
> But though happy, it was but a place of temporary abode,
> Most of the neighbours departed without me saying goodbye! [101]

Kuthayyir then shifts to lament the departure of the pilgrims – *i.e.* the young women who left him, as he gazed on the remains of their camps, with nothing but memories of happy encounters.

Dhu al-Rummah is ascribed a noteworthy verse in this genre:

> The Hajj is not complete until the camels stand
> Before Kharqa', she with her veil lowered.[102]

Dhu al-Rummah plays both lexically on the sense of *standing* at ʿArafah, one of the key events of the Hajj, and on the Hajj's general organisation as a route of stations that need completion in order: for Dhu al-Rummah, a visit to the alluring Kharqa' must be included (interestingly, al-Waki''s guide to the Hajj routes written two centuries after Dhu al-Rummah includes mention of where her dwelling was!).[103]

Lest one interpret the Hajj-romance poetry as whimsical fancy, the actual ramifications of lovers meeting on the pilgrimage can be felt in other genres of writing, such as the Umayyad-era jurist Qatadah (reported via his student Ibn Abi ʿUrubah, d. AH156/ AD772–3) who notes that Mecca is the only place on earth where men and women were allowed to be in public contact with each other.[104] Hence the Hajj indeed would have presented unique opportunity for young Umayyad-era men to meet women on terms impossible elsewhere, and during the Marwanid period, pilgrim numbers seem to have grown such that the issue of contact became more pressing: Muslim historiographers report that a governor of Mecca, Khalid al-Qasri, instituted a new ruling aimed to segregate male and female pilgrims, and a hadith was also circulated that admonished those male pilgrims tempted to gaze too long in the direction of their female compatriots.[105]

As with the tribalist/communal poetry of Jarir and al-Farazdaq, the Hajj-romance poetry could only realistically have emerged if the Hajj was bringing large groups of people together, and the emergence of both genres of poetry contemporaneously with the maturation of the Caliphate underlines that the mass of pilgrimage congregation at Mecca was likely a new phenomenon in the Umayyad era. The Qur'anic command, the emergence of a Muslim-run state, and the desire of Arabian tribes to show their belonging to that new community all coincide with the new resonances of Hajj in Arabic poetry which speak to the ritual having communal significance and mixing of far-flung peoples. The rise of Islam as a religio-political force inaugurated unprecedented increase in pilgrim numbers to Mecca, and the evidence indicates that by the end of the 7th century the Hajj appears to have achieved the status of a pan-Arabian gathering.

The Meaning of Hajj

Our sources reveal that the Umayyad-era Hajj was well-attended, and our final question is to ponder what the Hajj might have meant to the growing numbers of congregating worshippers. Given the indications we have seen so far, we sense that diversity is at the core of our answer.

The pilgrim lover poets reveal that some youthful pilgrims saw the gathering as an opportunity for romantic encounter, and for them, the finer points of Hajj as a site of memory and community and the theological matters of the ritual's significance were probably of but limited relevance. For others, however, the Hajj evidently signified the essence of Muslim community, and it presented opportunity to express social status. In an early period when Islamic learning was in the process of codification, and when the definition of being a Muslim was itself in debate, physical participation in the Meccan ritual was a sure-fire

means to understand who was 'inside' the Muslim community and who was not. This is a crucial change from pre-Islamic poetry, where such essential communal ramifications of pilgrimage are not attested beyond the one poem of al-Muʿattal al-Hudhali quoted above, and it shows that by the end of the 7th century, the urge to define the Muslim community as a distinct form of monotheism had taken root firmly, such that poets could marshal the notion of Hajj instrumentally as definitive of communal membership. For many pilgrims, therefore, the Hajj likely represented a physical proof of faith: for these pilgrims, the Hajj was an act to be undertaken in public, and for them, understanding the minutiae of its rituals might have been less important than the broader satisfaction of knowing that they were performing rites in unison with their fellow believers, and thereby proving their belonging.

While the Umayyad-era Hajj therefore spoke to a deep feeling of Muslim community, it had not yet matured as a marker of political legitimacy, as the Umayyad Caliphs largely stayed away, and it appears that the Quraysh as a tribe enjoyed the most widely recognised status as a collective who controlled the Hajj. Ibn al-Zubayr and the Umayyad al-Walid ibn ʿAbd al-Malik evidently sought to stamp their own personality on the Hajj, but they constitute the minority of early Muslim leaders: most evidence suggests that Hajj participants conceptualised the Hajj as the Quraysh's right, and indication of the Quraysh's preeminence as a clan atop the Muslim community.

What is intriguingly muted in the evidence considered so far is the feeling of piety or personal religiosity. Hajj participants articulate membership within a Muslim community, but the poets express this in terms of collective belonging, not individual spirituality. Equally, the Qur'an does not articulate the Hajj in terms of a personal accrual of merit or spiritual awakening: the Qur'an instructs Muslims to undertake the pilgrimage inasmuch as the pilgrimage is, of itself, a duty owed to God. Performance of the Hajj stands as proof of being Muslim, and the early pilgrims seem to have held closely to that spirit. Poets swear by the Hajj, its toponyms and its rituals, which demonstrates that pilgrimage was a solemn matter connected to their conception of the Divine, and their depictions of Hajj accord it obvious communal significance too, but the poets refrain from praising the Hajj in terms of their own personal enlightenment. Even beyond the Umayyad era, early Abbasid ascetic poets likewise refrain from mentioning the Hajj when they articulate the ways and means to greater religious satisfaction.[106]

The lack of obvious personal pietistic aspects of the Hajj should not be surprising. If the Umayyad-era Hajj was a festival designed to gather throngs of people who interpreted participation as a show of belonging to the Muslim community and fealty to the Quraysh's ritual, alongside acquiescence to the Caliphal order too, there is limited scope for individualised devotion which could interfere with the ritual's communal significance. From the perspective of poetry, overt spiritual interpretations of Hajj only emerge in Sufi verses composed from 9th century onwards, which coincides intriguingly with important changes in pilgrimage politics.[107]

Nonetheless, the Umayyad Hajj was not just an affirmation of Muslim identity with incidental romantic opportunity, since there is a further wrinkle to consider. Jurists began writing about the Hajj in the Umayyad era too, and early *ḥadīth* collections, which contain material dating to at least the 8th century do contain hints of personal benefits which were believed to accrue to devout pilgrims. Ibn Abi Shaybah's *al-Musannaf*, the largest of the early compendiums which contains substantial material from Umayyad-era jurists, opens its section on pilgrimage rites with 33 *ḥadīth* discussing the personal religious merits of performing the Hajj and circumambulating the Kaʿbah.[108] Some *ḥadīth* declare the Hajj equivalent in merit to Jihad, some even narrate a promise that a successful Hajj *guarantees* entry to Paradise;[109] the *ḥadīth*'s most common theme is that performance of the Hajj entails forgiveness of all sins accrued up to that time. The Qur'an is silent on any such connection between Hajj and forgiveness of sin, but it is evident that a pious-minded body of early Muslims sought to explain why one should perform the Hajj beyond the public demonstration of Muslim belonging and fealty to the Quraysh. Such currents also appear in early 9th-century historiographical material, which weaves supernatural aspects of the Kaʿbah's history and Hajj together with formulations of pietistic benefit to individual pilgrims. For example, al-Azraqi's *Akhbar Makkah* reports several variations on the theme that each step taken by a sincere pilgrim about the Kaʿbah gains merit worth 500 good deeds, or merit of 70,000 good deeds alongside forgiveness for 70,000 misdeeds.[110] Similarly, al-Azraqi reports that two *rakʿat*s of sincere prayer at the Maqam Ibrahim near the Kaʿbah earn the same merit as freeing fourteen Arabs from slavery.[111]

Given the absence of such sentiments in contemporaneous Arabian poetry, the emergence of personal pietistic opinions about the Hajj in *ḥadīth* circles lends the impression that the discourses flourished amongst a different category of pilgrim-goers, *i.e.* the milieu of *ḥadīth* collectors in the urban centres of the Umayyad-era world in Iraq, Syria and Egypt. There is logic to conceptualise the rise of pietistic Hajj discourses amongst urban Muslim populations, since the *ḥadīth* collectors' milieus differed markedly from the Arabian tribesmen who composed much of the Umayyad-era Hajj poetry. Urban populations hailed from various backgrounds: many were converts to Islam, others

were originally Arabians who left their homelands to settle in the Fertile Crescent, and all urbanists thus lived lives increasingly separate from the tribal contexts of Arabian groups who, as we have seen, mustered at Mecca and submitted to the Quraysh's pilgrimage rites to articulate their belonging to the Muslim order. The urbanists were compelled to make the Hajj given the Qur'anic injunction, but as they were outsiders to Arabia and outsiders to tribal politics, and came to Mecca from a different context, they eschewed the issues of communal membership in favour of more overtly pietistic interpretations, which accord with their predilection to collect *ḥadīth* and begin the definition of Islamic law's legitimate contours.

Overall, we cannot discount that some Arabian individual pilgrims also interpreted the Hajj as a having personal benefits and merit on a religious plane, and as they mixed with pietistic Iraqis, Syrians and Egyptians in Mecca, each pilgrim's motivation and belief would naturally be communicated, but it is nonetheless pertinent that the overtly pietistic feelings do not become expressed in poetry until early Sufi verse in the century following Ibn Abi Shaybah. By the 9th and 10th centuries poets wholly embraced the paradigm of personal salvation via pilgrimage, finally bringing poetic descriptions of the Hajj into line with the discourses of the *ḥadīth*, but in the Umayyad Era, the silence of the majority of (non-*ḥadīth*) sources on the Hajj suggests that the direct correlation between Hajj and piety was less salient for many pilgrims than the physical manifestation of communal belonging achieved via Hajj performance.

Conclusion

During the period studied in this Chapter, starting from the century before Muhammad until the beginning of the Abbasids in the mid-8th century, the Hajj to Mecca exhibits clear ritual significance, but also one which fluctuates with winds of political and social change. Pre-Islamic poets were aware of the pilgrimage, and those who lived in the vicinity of Mecca considered it a rite appropriate to summon when making solemn oaths. The rite appears to have been the prerogative of the Quraysh and to have attracted a modest local following who embraced the Hajj as a core act of devotion to a deity in the Meccan shrine. This background explains the footprint of Hajj in the Qur'an: the ritual was locally significant, and presented Muhammad and his Medinan community with (i) a rite around which they could define the most fundamental fabric of their communal identity, and (ii) a target to wrest from the Meccans in a show of their divinely approved righteousness. Muhammad articulated the legitimacy of his state via monotheistic belief and via his community's priority right over Mecca, and the Qur'anic verses about Hajj can be fruitfully read as intertwined political and religious messages for a new state that defined itself, to a large extent, around its new faith.

As a consequence of Islam's success, the rise of the Caliphate across an immense region, and the centrality of the Hajj in Muslim worldviews inherited from the Qur'an, the Hajj was primed to be sung on the lips of a far greater number of poets than ever before, and to collect far larger numbers of pilgrims than its pre-Islamic format. This constituted a major change in Hajj history and a seismic widening of its significance, but continuities with the past remained. The Meccan Quraysh established themselves as the preeminent elite of the Muslim world, and they appear to have kept control over the Hajj and its related rights. Participation in the Hajj therefore involved an expression of loyalty to God, but equally of fealty to the Quraysh, and poets continued to speak of the Hajj in the Qurayshite terms of their pre-Islamic forebears. New, however, was the vigorous employment of Hajj to define Muslim communal boundaries, and the Caliphs evidently considered taking the Hajj limelight, but from the evidence available so far, the Umayyads only began this process, for the most part their Caliphs stayed away from Mecca and left the leadership of the Hajj to their relatives and the Quraysh. Individual Muslims also began theorising about the personal merits of Hajj, but from the voices of early Hajj goers, it does seem that community was more important. By the Abbasid Era, the two new trends of political legitimacy and personal piety would mature – Caliphs monopolised the Hajj and Sufis undertook pilgrimages for reasons much disconnected from communal solidarity, but these developments take us into medieval Islam. For our purposes of studying the early Hajj, we can conclude that, thanks to the Qur'an, the Hajj cannot be far from Muslim consciousness, but thanks to political realities within the Muslim world, quite how the Hajj operates on that consciousness is destined to change and evolve.

1 The Abbasid-era Hajj is detailed in Kennedy 2012; Zadeh 2016; the archaeological finds of the Abbasid Hajj road – the 'Darb Zubayda' – are extensively surveyed in al-Rashid 1980, and updated in al-Rashid 1993.

2 The salience of the Hajj in reckoning time in Muslim historiography is considered below, Section 4.1.

3 It has been noted that one reading of *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān* III, 97 about the pilgrimage obligation vocalises the word as *ḥijj* (see Hawting 2004, p.92), but almost all attested readings of the verse actually do render the word as *ḥajj*; al-Khatib 2000, V, p.104.

4 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 124–7, *Sūrat Āl ʿImrān*, III, 95–7, *Sūrat Ibrāhīm* XIV, 35–41, *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 26–7.

5 The story is widely reported: each narrator has slightly different expansions to the Qur'anic base narrative, but the general thrust is common to all. See al-Yaʿqubi 1883, I, pp.25–8, al-Azraqi 1983, I, pp.54–9; al-Tabari 1965, I, pp.251–71. For a modern critical survey, see Firestone 2000, pp.76–9.

6 The projection of Ishmael as the progenitor of all Arabs is often reported; the complex ways in which this genealogical construction was derived, elaborated, and eventually superseded are traced in Webb 2016, pp.205–22.

7 Memory studies discussion of the nexus between sites of memory and communal identity are indebted to Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de memoire*; see his monumental volumes on French national identity, Nora 1996–98, and in particular III, pp.163–405 for the role of geography in communal memory.

8 Exegetes, such as al-Zamakhshari 1995, I, pp.382–3, seem right to comment on the decidedly emphatic syntactical structure the Qur'an employs when describing the Hajj obligation (*Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, III, 97).

9 *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, VIII, 35.

10 *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, VIII, 34.

11 See Athamina 2004 for the significance of Abraham to Muhammad's Medinan community.

12 The impression of the first Muslims as a faith community is the thesis of Donner 2010; for the issue of ethnos and Muhammad's community see Webb 2016, pp.116–52.

13 See Hawting 1982, pp.40–6.

14 The Jewish origin theory was first articulated in Dozy 1864. Peters 1994a reports subsequent elaborations of the theory; Hawting 1982 argues for an attenuated and more nuanced version of this thesis. Hughes 2017, pp.37–8 and 43–53, casts rather apt doubt on the foundations of these theories and critiques the modern scholars' imposition of a 'normative corpus of Judaic tradition' into pre-Islamic Arabia.

15 This is the more common interpretation in modern scholarship; it was first articulated in Snouck Hurgronje 1880.

16 The Muslim construction of the Arab character of pre-Islamic Hajj discussed in Webb 2016, pp.82–3 and 261–9.

17 Traditionally, Western scholarship has identified Jewish communities in Muhammad's Hijaz, see Newby 1988; Wasserstrom 1995; however recent scholarship casts insightful critique to the straightforwardness of these projections; see Hughes 2017, pp.43–50.

18 The syncretic cult centre at Mamre in Palestine is well-known; Christians' and others' worship at the martyrium of St. Sergius in the Syrian Desert is another good example; see Fowden 1999.

19 Ibn Wahb 2003, I, p.31; al-Tabari 1999, IV, pp.11–15; and al-Zamakhshari 1995, I, p.379. For modern critique, see Hawting 2004, p.97.

20 Abdel Haleem 2004, p.41, *n.b*, translates the word as Mecca, and notes in the footnote: 'The original reads Bakka, which was an old name for Mecca', which is, in all likelihood, quite incorrect.

21 Regnier 1939. See a modern approval of this theory in Gross 2017, p.319, and Gross & Ibn Warraq 2014.

22 See the entry in Strong's Hebrew word 1056, Biblehub 2015.

23 *Sūrat Ibrāhīm*, XIV, 37.

24 Mecca: *Sūrat al-Fatḥ*, XLVIII, 24–5; Ka'bah: *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 95 and 97. For this exercise, we do not count the 'Bakkah' verse as a reference to Mecca.

25 (i) *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 125–7; (ii) *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 158; (iii) *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 194–217; (iv) *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, III, 97; (v) *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 2 and 97; (vi) *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, VIII, 34–5; (vii) *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, IX, 7–28; (viii), *Sūrat al-Isrā'*, XVII, 1; (ix) *Sūrat Ibrāhīm*, XIV, 37; (x) *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 26–37; (xi) *Sūrat al-Fatḥ*, XLVIII, 24–5.

26 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*,II, 149–50.

27 The Qur'an employs a consistent phrase to describe this, *taṣuddūn 'an al-masjid al-ḥarām*: *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 217; *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 2; *Sūrat al-Anfāl*, VIII, 34; *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 25, and *Sūrat al-Fatḥ*, XLVIII, 25. *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 196 contains a variation on this wording.

28 Of the other five expressions of *al-masjid al-ḥarām*, three are in a clearly politicised context (*Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 191; *Sūrat al-Tawbah*, IX, 7, 26)

29 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 127 refers to *al-bayt*; *Sūrat Ibrāhīm* XIV, 37 expresses *bayt* in a possessive with God: *baytika al-muḥarram*; *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, uses both *al-bayt* on its own (verse 26) and *al-bayt al-'atīq* in two subsequent verses (verses 29 and 37).

30 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 125, 158; *Sūrat Āl 'Imrān*, III, 97; *Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 26–29.

31 *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 189–97, 217.

32 *Sūrat al-Mā'idah*, V, 97; *Sūrat al-Baqarah*, II, 125–7. Both verses use a very similar construction that describes the Sanctum as an asylum/security for men.

33 For the common Semitic vocabulary between Hebrew and Arabic and pathways of borrowing, see Pregill 2007.

34 Ibn Habib 1982, p.74; Ibn Habib 1942, pp.5–7.

35 For the problematic nature of cohesive 'Arab' ethnic and 'Jewish' doctrinal identities in pre-Islamic Arabia, see Webb 2016 and Hughes 2017, respectively.

36 For the nexus of Mecca and Arab origins, see the texts of Ibn Habib listed in note 34, above, and for elaborations of the widespread early-Muslim-era narrative of the Meccan-domiciled Ishmael as the first Arab, see Webb 2016, pp.211–15 and the sources referred to therein. For modern impressions about Judaic origins of Muhammad's Hajj, see the studies listed in note 14.

37 There is no archaeological evidence from the Sanctum itself, however a recently discovered inscription (for an image, see: Islamic Awareness 2015) offers a uniquely strong indication that Ibn al-Zubayr did indeed reconstruct the Sanctum as the later Arabic narrative sources describe.

38 For a detailed survey of the current state of the field on Mecca's pre-Islamic history, see Munt 2016.

39 Ptolemy's *Geography* §6.7 refers to a 'Macoraba', which sounds nearly like 'Mecca' and is positioned nearly in the same place on his map, but Crone 1987, pp.134–7 and Morris 2018 deny that Macoraba intended Mecca. Ptolemy (or his source) may have copied the name incorrectly, but 'Macoraba' may indeed intend a different place, and Morris demonstrates that modern efforts to read Macoraba as Mecca should be discounted.

40 Critiques of traditional approaches to narratives about pre-Islamic Mecca are detailed in Crone 1987; Peters 1994a, pp.10–54; Peters 1994b, pp.5–19. A group 'QRŠ' are attested in a South Arabian inscription, Ja 919, but it is not clear whether this is the Meccan Quraysh, and the inscription dates to the early 3rd century AD. This is too early to be of material relevance to Muhammad's Quraysh, and no reference to a name resembling 'Quraysh' appears again until Arabic texts and the rise of Islam. If the Quraysh had been steadily increasing their power to dominate the Arabian scene in the centuries before Muhammad, we should expect some further attestations. See DASI 2013.

41 Most scholars today assume that the Hajj did begin in Mecca, and they base their theories from earlier work of Snouck Hurgronje 1880 and Wellhausen 1887, pp.79–81; Munt 2016 lists other proponents of this theory, but also notes the lack of evidence to prove it. Nevo & Koren 1990 propose a site in the Sinai; Holland 2012, pp.330–33 suggests the pre-Islamic Hajj was made to the ritual site of Mamre in Palestine; Gibson 2017 pp.172–9 argues that the *qiblah* pointed to Petra in Jordan, and that it constitutes the original *al-Masjid al-Ḥarām* until the sacred stone was removed during the Second *Fitnah* (for a critique of Gibson, see King 2018–19). See Gross 2017, pp.316, 319–20 for scholars who believe the Hajj originated in Balkh in modern Afghanistan. Another set of scholars built from the Judaic aspects of Muslim Hajj terminology to suggest it originated with Jewish communities outside of Arabia (see Crone 1987, pp.176–80; Hawting 1982).

42 I am aware of only one other discussion of the Hajj in pre-Islamic poetry, a short section in Nathaniel Miller's PhD dissertation (Miller 2016, pp.103–5).

43 A fair assessment of poetry's authenticity is outlined in Bauer 2009, pp.703–4.

44 al-Asma'i 2005, p.100.

45 al-A'sha 1974, p.417; Labid 1962. See also al-Marzuqi 1968, III, p.1329.

46 It appears the term *ḥijjah* also could be used to connote a specific number of years too: Salamah ibn Jandal says 'two pilgrimages' to mean two years (al-Asma'i 2005, p.154). *Sūrat al-Qaṣaṣ*, XXVIII, 27 also uses the compound *thāmāniyah ḥijaj* to express eight years.

47 See Binggeli 2007.

48 al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani 1990, p.25; the poem is also narrated in al-Tibrizi 2000, I, pp.528–9. This and the poetry quoted in this paper are translated by the author.

49 Another version of this line reads: 'I swear by He whom I have visited on hajjes' (al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani 1990, p.235).

50 There is debate over these toponyms: they appear to have been forgotten by the time Muslim collectors began commenting upon the poem in the late 8th century (see the commentary in al-Tibrizi 2000, I, p.529). The fact that these names were unknown to Muslims is a good argument that the verse was not composed in the Muslim era.

51 Zuhayr 1982, p.23, compare with Ibn al-Anbari 2005, pp.252–60.

52 Zuhayr 1982, p.85.

53 al-Marzuqi 1968, IV, p.1635. Her lineage is unclear, according to al-Marzubani, she may have been from the Taghlib, but it appears the poem was remembered without precise knowledge of the poetess.

54 al-Anbari 2005, p.431.

55 al-Sukkari 1963–65, III, p.1101. A similar oath sworn by the sacrificing animals of the Hajj is at al-Sukkari 1963–65, III, p.1172.

56 Another example may be a poem of Khidash ibn Zuhayr of the 'Amir ibn Sa'sa'a who swears an oath by 'the House of God' (*bayt Allāh*); the verse does not include references to Hajj rituals, so he could be referring to a different 'House', though it might indeed intend Mecca (al-Qurashi 1967, p.415).

57 al-Sukkari 1963–65, II, p.638.

58 al-Sukkari 1963–65, I, p.95. For further references, see al-Sukkari 1963–65, I, pp.39, 144.

59 al-A'sha 1974, pp.173, 241.

60 The poem is discussed in Miller 2016, p.104, where a cogent argument for the poem's authenticity is made.

61 Miller 2016, pp.105–7 comes to similar conclusions and extends his analysis to other topics in order to argue for a highly regional view of pre-Islamic poets from al-Hijaz, a view I consider to be apt and an important corrective to the former assumptions of pan-Arabian cultural uniformity and cohesive pre-Islamic 'Arab identity' (see also Webb 2016, pp.77–85).

62 Ibn al-Ahwas's reference to the 'month of Banu Umayyah' seems to be a unicum, and whilst the modern study of Jawad 'Ali uses the verse as proof that the 'pre-Islamic Arabs' named the pilgrimage month of *Dhū al-Ḥijjah* after the Umayyad clan ('Ali 1968–73, XI, p.350), it is a rather bold and unsubstantiated claim, however, since medieval philologists do not attest this meaning: see al-Marzuqi's *al-Azminah wa-l-amkinah*, where alternative names for *Dhū al-Ḥijjah* are listed, and do not include reference to Banu Umayyah (al-Marzuqi 2003, I, p.251).

63 See Abu Dahbal al-Jumaḥi 1972, pp.65, 90; Ziyad al-A'jam 1983, p.103; Jarir 1969, I, p.186.

64 The first annalistic chronicle in Arabic, Khalifah ibn Khayyat caps each year's entry with a reference to the Hajj leader, and he was followed in this model by al-Tabari and subsequent annalists. The detailed lists of Hajj leaders in al-Qurashi's *Ghayat al-maram* indicate the attention paid to, and disagreements over the Hajj leaders.

65 See footnote 37 above.

66 al-Hutay'ah's exact death date is unknown, though he likely died during the Caliphate of Mu'awiyah.

67 al-Hutay'ah 1987, p.97.

68 For the Hajj of Angels before the Prophets, see al-Azraqi 1983, I, p.53.

69 Muslim geographers borrowed cartographic principles from Ptolemaic and Persian traditions, but the decision to place Mecca at the centre of the world marks a pietistic-minded departure from the pre-Islamic models.

70 See intriguing reference to the Hajj of 70 Jewish prophets, and the Hajj and/or Umrah of Moses (al-Waki' 1999–2000, p.202); see also discussion of Hajj between Noah and Abraham (al-Azraqi 1983, I, pp.52–3). *Ḥadīth* describing the 300 tombs of prophets near the Ka'bah and 70 tombs of prophets between al-Rukn al-Yamani and al-Rukn al-Aswad are also reported (see al-Halabi, 2002, I, p.223). Al-Azraqi notes that 70 prophets have performed the Hajj, and records different prophets' *talbiyyah* (the saying Pilgrims make on Hajj) (al-Azraqi 1983, I, p.73).

71 al-Azraqi 1983, I, p.52; al-Tabari 1965, I, p.185; al-Waki' 1999–2000, pp.237–8.

72 Webb 2013, p.10–11.

73 Muqatil 1979–89, III, p.125, and a more oblique references to the Adamic narrative, I, pp.99, 138. For a list of later sources, see Webb 2013, pp.8–12.

74 The earliest geographies compiled by Iraqi scholars placed Baghdad at the centre of the world and at the opening of their books (Ibn Khurdadhbih 1889, p.5; al-Ya'qubi 1892, pp.233–4, Sohrab 1930, p.30). Al-Azraqi's Meccan history relates the Meccan-centric narratives on the authority of his grandfather who died *circa* 836 (al-Azraqi 1983, I, pp.71–6). By the later 9th century, Iraqi geographical texts placing Mecca as the centre of the world emerge: e.g. Ibn al-Faqih, and Ibn Rustah (fl. AH290–300/ AD903–13) (see Ibn Rustah 1892, pp.24–5); and the 10th-century Arabic geographies, written after the Caliphate had largely disintegrated, all begin with Mecca as the world's conceptual centre.

75 Some disagreements are listed in al-Halabi 2002, I, p.224. A claim that the Prophets Hud and Salih did not perform the Hajj is noted in al-Waki' 1999–2000, p.238, whereas other sources accord a Hajj to both prophets, and that both died in Mecca (for Hud: see Ibn Qutayba 1958, p.28; for Salih: see al-Tabari 1965, I, p.232).

76 Ibn al-'Arabi 1957–1958, I, p.283. Al-Azraqi narrates one option suggesting that the Sanctum is not the world's *oldest* dwelling, but this is a minority view, even in al-Azraqi's text (al-Azraqi 1983, I, p.76).

77 Modern interpretations of the Hajj's embeddedness with Caliphal authority stems from a statement by al-Ya'qubi 1883, II, p.188, although this is in fact a unique opinion in pre-modern Arabic, where the Hajj is more pervasively depicted as a delegated responsibility of the Caliph, at most (see Webb forthcoming).

78 Muslims controlled Mecca during the Hajj season of AH9/ AD631, but Abu Bakr led the pilgrimage.

79 For discussion of crown prince hajjes in the Umayyad era, see McMillan 2011.

80 Details on Umayyad expenditures on Mecca's shrine are examined in Webb forthcoming.

81 For discussions of Hajj leadership during the Umayyad-era *fitnah*s, see McMillan 2011 and Webb forthcoming.

82 For separate narratives of the Kharijite attack on Mecca, see Khalifah ibn Khayyat 1993, pp.308–10, al-Tabari 1965, VII, pp.474-6, al-Isfahani 1992, II, pp.107–19.

83 Webb forthcoming.

84 al-Ahwas 1990, p.247.

85 al-Akhtal 1996, pp.231, 237, 314.

86 al-Ahwas 1990, p.88.

87 Kuthayyir 1971, p.166.

88 Jarir ibn 'Atiyyah 1969, II, p.858.

89 Ma'ruf 1983, p.223.

90 Different clans of the Quraysh furnished all the effective contenders for the Caliphate in the Umayyad Era, underlining that the Quraysh clan constituted the highest elite and a pool of potential contenders for legitimate power: it was not under the thumb of the Umayyads.

91 Jarir 1969, I, pp.150–9, see also pp.178–9.

92 Jarir 1969, I, p.231.

93 *Al-Bayt al-'Atīq* – the 'house controlled by no authority other than God' – is a common sobriquet for the Ka'bah. The Qur'an twice refers to the Sanctum by the same term (*Sūrat al-Ḥajj*, XXII, 29, 33).

94 Jarir 1969, II, p.840. For other examples, see I, pp.67, 158, 237.
95 Jarir 1969, II, p.676, i.e. his people continuously practise the Hajj and are represented there. See also I, pp.248, 390.
96 Jarir 1969, II, p.823.
97 See the variations on this *ḥadīth* recorded in Ibn Abi Shaybah 2010, VIII, *ḥadīth* 14665–14671 and cross-references in the notes to other versions elsewhere.
98 Ibn Abi ʻUruba 2000, no.3,4. See also al-Tirmidhi 1999, *al-Manāsik* no.812.
99 al-Farazdaq 1987, pp.108, 34; for a similar example, see p.60.
100 ʻUmar ibn Abi Rabiʻah 1955, p.176.
101 Kuthayyir 1971, p.410.
102 Dhu al-Rummah 1972, III, p.1913.
103 al-Wakiʻ 1999–2000, p.348.
104 Ibn Abi ʻUrubah 2000, p.67.
105 al-Azraqi 1983, II, p.20; al-Qurashi 1986, I, pp.196–7. The *ḥadīth* is recorded in Ibn Abi Shaybah 2010, VIII, p.529.
106 For example, the *Diwan* of the early Abbasid era's most celebrated ascetic poet, Abu al-ʻAtahiyah, is completely silent on the Hajj across 600 pages of ascetic poetry.
107 The changes to the Hajj during the Abbasid era and the rise of Sufi poetry are the subject of Webb forthcoming.
108 Ibn Abi Shaybah 2010, VIII, pp.21–34.
109 Ibn Abi Shaybah 2010, VIII, pp.22–24, 28.
110 al-Azraqi 1983, II, pp.4–5.
111 al-Azraqi 1983, II, p.4. The wording of the slaves' identity as from 'The Sons of Ishmael' suggests this is an early *ḥadīth*, likely circulating already in the 1st century AH (7th century AD).