

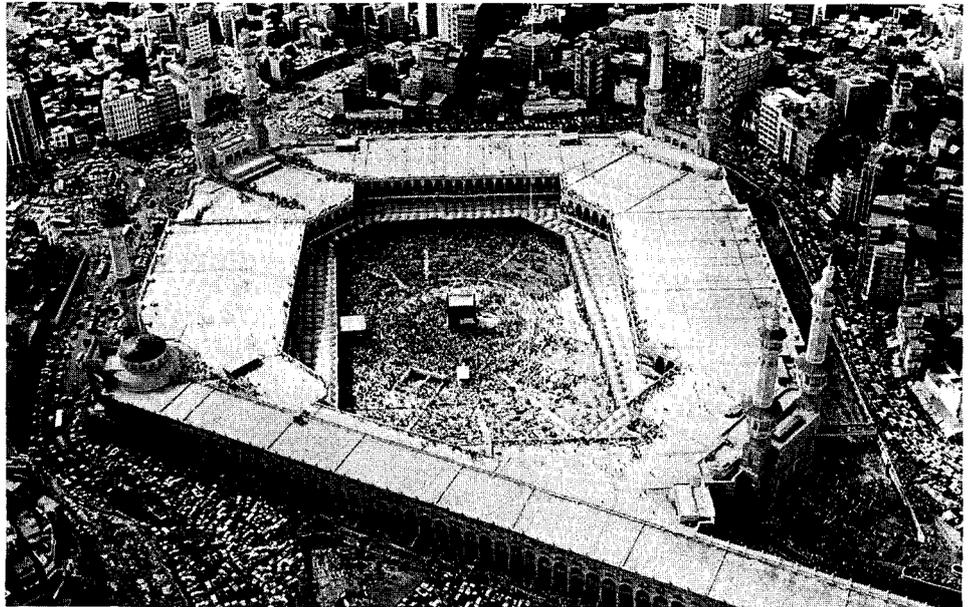
*Sami Angawi (summarized by the editors)*

Of the five pillars of Islam, the *hajj* is the only one which is tied to a very specific time and place. While Muslims throughout the world express their belief in God and prayer and give alms and fast wherever they live, they can only perform the *hajj* at the sacred places of Mecca, Mina and Arafat, and then only during the eighth and the fourteenth days of the month of pilgrimage (*Dhu'l Hijja*).

Before entering Mecca, usually through the airports and seaports of Jiddah, pilgrims enter into the state of *ihram*, donning special seamless white garments. They are forbidden to hunt, argue, cut their hair or nails or engage in sexual relations. Arriving in Mecca, they proceed to the Sacred Mosque, the Haram al-Sharif, to perform the greeting circumambulation of the Ka'aba, the *tawaf*, seven times. They then perform the reenactment of Hagar's search for water, the *sa'y*, making seven trips between the hills of Safa and Marwah. The two hills and the road between them have now been enclosed in a long, wide gallery, tangential to the Haram. On completing these rituals, they go to drink from the Well of Zamzam also located within the Haram. These rites can be performed at any time during the year or during the seventy-day pilgrimage season.

To make the *hajj* valid, on the eighth day of the *Dhu'l Hijja* all pilgrims must move to al-Mina, a village four miles east of Mecca. There they rest and ready themselves for the most crucial part of the pilgrimage, which takes place on the Plain of Arafat eight miles to the east. The pilgrims travel to Arafat in the morning of the ninth day for the "standing" (*wuquf*) from noon to sunset, then pray near the site of Muhammad's farewell sermon. At sundown they return to a place between Mina and Arafat, called Muzdalifah, to spend the night. Returning to Mina for three days, pilgrims stone three pillars representing the devil. The sacrifice of animals and a farewell *tawaf* completes the pilgrimage. Many pilgrims make the additional trip to Medina, to visit the Prophet's mosque.

The holy cities of Mecca and Medina are inextricably linked with the *hajj*. They exist to service the pilgrims, providing housing



*Mecca: aerial view of the Haram al-Sharif*

*Photo: Abdelaziz Frikha. Reproduced courtesy of Sud Editions*



*Mina this "toboggan" has doubled the rate of circulation by pilgrims to the site*

*Photo: Abdelaziz Frikha. Reproduced courtesy of Sud Editions*



*Arafat: the vast camping ground for pilgrims*

*Photo: Abdelaziz Frikha. Reproduced courtesy of Sud Editions*

and food as well as guides. The sevenfold increase of pilgrims from 1950 to the present—pilgrims now total about two million per year—has had a staggering impact on the two towns. The old urban fabric was noted for its three- to five-story buildings with overhanging shuttered balconies lining intimate shaded streets. These have been losing ground very quickly to multi-storied apartment houses, large parking lots, highways with multiple interchanges, all built and rebuilt to accommodate the ever-increasing flow of pilgrims. Efforts were made to resolve the major logistic problems as quickly and as efficiently as possible, using the newest available technology.

The impact of these multitudes on the holy places of the *hajj* has also been considerable. The Haram has had to be extended and rebuilt, with an underground approach to the Well of Zamzam and a double-storied

gallery to accommodate all who want to perform the rituals linked with the Ka'aba and the *sa'y*. The two million pilgrims all proceeding simultaneously to Mina and Arafat and back have been accommodated with vast tent cities, complete with sanitary facilities and highways. Enormous efforts have been expended to provide a safe pilgrimage for all.

Yet in the process of introducing all these new amenities, something of the spirit of the pilgrimage has been overwhelmed. The introduction of motorized transport and highways along the Mina and Arafat routes detracts from the ritual nature of the pilgrims' movement. All these changes have taken place very quickly, but the *hajj*, as the main event in every Muslim's life, deserves further consideration and study so that changes and additions of a purely technical nature do not contravene and impede its spirituality.