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THE HAJJ AND GLOBAL ECONOMIC AND SOCIO-POLITICAL SOLIDARITY

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Abstract

Mankind has through the ages evolved into nations and races. Further segregation amongst human is brought about by social, economic, political and religious factors. However, whatever the differences among people, religion normally serves as a unifying factor among members of the same faith. Among the Muslims, the Mosque plays a prominent role in the unification of the Muslims. Muslims are encouraged to visit Mosque to perform congregational prayers and other spiritual activities in order to integrate them into a single, indivisible, understanding and progressive community.¹ Thus, Mosques located in various quarters serve as rallying points to the Muslims within those quarters. The Jummat Mosques in turn serve a larger audience, which is a conglomeration of people from the quarters of a certain area. The Ed Mosques are no exception. A great deal of Muslims meet to perform the Ed prayers together. All of these Mosques unite the Muslims as they make friends, share ideas and even socialise with one another. Friendships made in the Mosques usually transform into family integration. Families intermarried with one another and become best of friends. However, the unique and sacred Mosques of Ka'bah and Medina offer a stronger unification and solidarity worldwide. This paper therefore examines how the visitation of the Muslims to these Mosques promotes economic and socio-political solidarity worldwide. The paper concludes that Hajj confers some benefits both on the performers and all the other parties that are involved.

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¹ A.A. Mishad, 'Research on the Function of the Mosque in Contemporary Society' in The Fifth Conference of the Academy of Islamic Research Cairo: Government Printing Offices, 1970 p. 256.

Introduction

Hajj, which is the fifth pillar in Islam, is an essential act among the Muslims who are physically, morally, spiritually and financially capable.² Hajj operation in West Africa and in Nigeria is as old as the religion of Islam. Besides, religious awareness and fulfilment, it has continued to serve some social, political, economic purposes among the Muslim communities in West Africa and Nigeria in particular.

The organisation of Hajj in the earliest time was not as elaborate as we have it today in the sense that no particular organ was responsible for the operation. Individuals, group of individuals, and scholars went on Hajj at will, majorly on foot. However, the records of the pilgrimage of some important rulers in West Africa have survived to the present. The rulers included Mansa Musa of Mali, Askia Muhammad the Great of Songhai, Idris Aloma of Borno and Al-Hajj Umar of Futa Jallon.

The pilgrimage performed by these rulers played a major role in spreading the fame of both the rulers and their communities to the races they met on their way to the holy land and to the Arab world in general. For instance, the pilgrimage of Mansa Musa in 1394 A.D with a large retinue of about one hundred thousand,³ through Walata, Tuwat, Ghadames and Cairo made him popular and Mali appeared on the 14th C. European map. He was able to establish to the benefit of his country diplomatic and scholas tic relations with Sultan al Nasir Qalaywan of Egypt and the Ulama of Egypt and Hijaz respectively.⁴

For Askia Muhammad, his pilgrimage along with one thousand five hundred dependents in 1496 AD, through Tekedda, Air, Fezzan and

² Scholars are not agreed on the numbers of the people that accompanied him to Hajj. Figures given range from 8,000 to 100,000. One is at pain to say which one is authentic, but the whole idea is to emphasis that he went to Hajj with very many people.

³ See Abu Daud, Ahadith chapter 11 hadith 1, Hukhari, Sahih Bukhari chapter 25, hadith 34 see also Umar al-Naqar, *The Pilgrimage Tradition in West Africa*, Khartoum, 1972 p. XVII.

⁴ A. M. Kani, *Pilgrimage in time-perspective the West African experience in Zafaru-Islam Khan*, Yakub Zaki (eds.) *Hajj in Focus* London. 1986 p. 91 and J.F. Ade Ajayi and M. Crowder, (eds) *History of Wed Africa Vol. 12nd Edn* 1976, Chanters 4 & 5.

Egypt earned him the exalted position of the Caliph of the land of Tekrur (West Africa) conferred on him by the Sherif of Mecca, Maula.v al-Abbas. The journey also gave him the opportunity to interact socially and scholastically with one of the renowned scholars of the time, Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti.⁵

Furthermore, Mai Idris Aloma's pilgrimage to Macca did not only give him spiritual, political and economic achievements but also military supremacy. In deed, he acquired the Turkish musketeers and slaves skilled in firing muskets from the holy land. These he used in subduing his enemies in and around his kingdom.⁶

At this juncture, it is important to note that the people of West Africa and indeed Nigeria, up to the time of the entrenchment of colonialism performed Hajj for other reasons. For instance, while the rulers performed Hajj to increase and spread their fames far and wide, some citizens intended or performed Hajj as an expression of political dissatisfaction, escape from civil strife, droughts, economic crisis, social upheavals and injustices.⁷ However, these are beyond the scope of this paper. Our focus here is the integration of people and activities as brought about by Hajj.

Hajj and Socio-political Integration

Today Hajj operation has been standardised; so also its power as a tool for integration and unification of Muslims worldwide. The processes

⁵ Ibid p. 92 and Chapters 4 & 5. See also Mahmud Kati et al, Tarikh al-Fattash ed. And trans. O. Haudas and M. Delafosse, Paris 1913. Al-Suyuti is an intellectual of great repute in the Muslim world; and his works are very numerous on many aspects of Islam, man and society.

⁶ See also P.B. Clarke, *West Africa and Islam* Britain: Edward Arnold, 1982 pp. 43, 81, 95. H.R. Palmer *Sudanese Memoirs* trans. vol. III. Lagos: Government printer. One of the traditional political enemies fought with Musketeers was Amsaka. For details see *A Sudanic Chronicle: The Borne Expeditions of Idris Alauma (1564-1576)* Franz Stiner, 1987 p. 38. Lansine, K. *Evolution of Islam in West Africa: The Wahabi Movement and its contribution to political Development, 1945 - 1958*. Unpublished Ph.D Thesis. B.U.K 1972.

⁷ Kani, 'Pilgrimage in time-perspective' op. cit. p. 97.

of Hajj right from the state, national and international levels strengthen the wall of friendship of the Muslims at each level. At the state level, each state appoints some people into the board that is charged with Hajj operation. The board is called differently, but the most popular name is Pilgrims Welfare Board as it is called in Kwara state. The members so appointed may not have known one another before their appointments, yet they become a group working for the same interest. In addition to this board, each state appoints some personnel such as health personnel pilgrims guides etc, to ensure that the pilgrims are well taken care of, to and from the holy land. These individuals again become integrated as members of the various committees, professions and as Muslims.⁸

The processes of integration among the officials are carried further by the National Council on Hajj. This is a body usually constituted by the Federal government. The members are usually drawn from some states of the federation and from all walks of life relating to Hajj operation.⁹ The council, for adequate national preparation invites all states representatives to a meeting where the nitty-gritty of Hajj operation is usually discussed. At this meeting, opportunity of unification and integration of all the officials both from the states and the national level is provided as 'members are made to serve on different committees and in different capacities. The National Council also tours the different zones to check situations and admonish pilgrims.¹⁰

Furthermore, the members of the National Council on Hajj are usually given the opportunity to interact with their colleagues from other Islamic countries by the Saudi authority. They usually attend meetings that bring all the representatives worldwide together to discuss areas of strength and weaknesses or commendations and complaints arising from former

⁸ Interviews with the current Chairman Kwara State Pilgrims Welfare Board the Imam Imale of Ilorin Alhaji AbdulHammed Abdullahi, at his Office on the 22/12/2003. Age 52. Also, Interview with Alhaji Ibrahim Oniye, Member of the Pilgrims Board, at his house, Eruda, Ilorin on the 23/12/2003. Age 54.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Interview with Alhaji Dr. Lanre Badmus Yusuf, Member National Hall Council, and Current Provost Kwara State College of Arabic & Islamic Legal Studies, Ilorin. At his house on the 26th Dec. 2003. See also the Report of the Amiru Hakk and the Federal Government Delegation on the 1995 Hail Operation p.5.

Hajj operations and the solutions are proffered. At this level, the officials become friends to one another and share ideas on common and individual interests.¹¹

On the part of the pilgrims, taking Kwara as an instance, the pilgrims are drawn from different localities of the state. They are usually camped at the Hajj camp where necessary instructions, enlightenment, and materials for identification are issued to them. It is worthy of note that from here the pilgrims see themselves as brothers and sisters and as keepers of one another. They assist themselves in their areas of needs. For the days usually spent before they are air-lifted to the holy land, the pilgrims show to one another a high sense of solidarity and oneness. Stressing the solidarity and oneness among the pilgrims, Saida who performed Hajj in 1967 from Egypt writes:

Just as we were about to go through to the departure lounge, a hand was laid on Yusry's arm (her husband going together on hajj). He turned to be hailed by a young ex-student of his, whom he later told me he had not seen for about ten years... the young man explained that he was unable to accompany his mother to Mecca. Could we look after her? Yusry agreed at once...¹²

The National Council on Hajj (NCH), for administrative conveniences created nine zones. Abuja, Ibadan, Ilorin, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Maiduguri, Sokoto and Yola.¹³ The coordinator at each zone coordinates the activities of states under his control. For instance; in Ilorin zone, there are three states - Ekiti, Kwara and Ondo. Thus, in each zone pilgrims from the different states that make a zone who may not have met before, are gathered together for the purpose of Hajj. The meeting here is usually translated into real friendship whereby they continue to communicate with one another for the rest of their lives.¹⁴

¹¹ In 1995, the Saudi Authorities under King Fahd Met with Federal delegations worldwide at Hyatt Regency Hotel. See 1995 HaJj report p. 2.

¹² S. M. Khalifa, *The Fifth Pillar: The Story of a Pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina*. New York: Exposition Press, 1977 p.9.

¹³ See Hail Report of 1995 and 2003 p.7 and Appendix 7 Respectively.

¹⁴ Interview with Alhaji Aliyu Olarongbe, Coordinator Ilorin Zone, at his Office Hail Zonal Office, Ilorin 20/12/03 Age 52.

When the pilgrims are air-lifted, the first point of sojourn is Jeddah, where all Nigerian pilgrims and those of other Muslims countries worldwide meet. At these place different races with different colour, height, size, dress and language are brought together. Even though they have language barrier, the intention remains the same and they greet one another with the world Salam! Salam! They looked at each other and praise God for His power to create the different races, tribe, colour and size yet brought them together for the purpose of hajj.¹⁵ On pilgrims experiences at Jeddah a pilgrim writes:

I see people of all ages and of an extraordinary diversity of races and physical types, some people who express themselves in elegant speech and others in the simplest ways. But the amazing fact was that no differences of any kind counted, because, no matter what the background or customs or rank in life, the ultimate purpose of the journey makes all men brothers and all women sisters. Kings and princes, presidents and diplomats bankers and merchants, writers and university professors mingle with farmers and shopkeepers, students and clerks, tailors and cobblers and many a friendship is made on the Hajj.¹⁶

While at the holy land the pilgrims do things in common as Muslims. They stay in the same place, though at different camps in Muna. And at the Arafat, they dress and chant Abraham's ancient call in the same way thereby uniting those who were hitherto strangers to one another.¹⁷

The accommodation and transport facilities provided for the pilgrims in Mecca and Medina and between Mecca and Medina also provide the pilgrims the opportunity for social interaction. The pilgrims are usually accommodated at different hotels in different places and are transported in batches from one area to another. Those accommodated in the same quarters usually pray on ordnaty days together in a quarter

¹⁵ Interview with Alhaji Mujahid (who performed Hail in 2000) at his residence, Agbaji, Ilorin Age 32.

¹⁶ Khalifa, 'The Fifth Pillar...' op. cit. P.12.

¹⁷ Interview with Alhaji Abdullahi AhdulRaheem, (a cashier at the Ilorin West Local Government. He performed Hail in the Year 2003) at a ceremony in Ilorin, on the 3/2/04. Age 35.

Mosque thereby affording them the opportunity of knowing each other better.¹⁸

It is worthy of note that since the pilgrims are warned to desist from abusive, provocative speeches and disputation during hajj, it is believed that the number of days spent and given the crowd a pilgrim mixed with, this injunction would have gone a long way to stabilising the emotion of a pilgrim in such a way that he or she would have changed for better upon return from Halj.¹⁹ On returning from Hajj, the performers social status is enhanced. On this Raji observes:

...to be an Al-Hajj or Hajiya is a sure means of boosting up one's social and economic status. A Muslim trader who has performed the pilgrimage stands a better chance of getting more customers than those who have not... a Muslim woman who has made the journey becomes more attractive to men than others who have not.²⁰

Furthermore an Al-Hajj or Hajiya is held in high esteem and treated with respect everywhere. Among the Yoruba, he or she is exempted from removing caps for the purpose of greeting or carrying load for someone. A newly returned Al-Hajj who has no wife or son of a new Al-Hajj/Hajiya without a wife could easily get his choice.. Pilgrimage enhances the social and economic status of an individual because most Muslims see it as a proof of piety and wealth.²¹

¹⁸ Interview with Prof. Hassan A. Salihu, head department of Political Science, Unilorin. He narrated his experience of sleeping together in a room with some Bororo (cattle rearers) without a hitch for one second.

¹⁹ See Quran Chapter 2 verse 197. See also Cyprian Ekwensi, *Gone to Mecca* New edn. Nigeria: Heinemann, 2003 pp. 23, 68, 72.

²⁰ R.A. Raji, 'Socio-Economic and Political uses of the Hail (Pilgrimage) in Nigeria' in *Hamdard Islamicus* Vol. XI No. 4, 1988 p.77.

²¹ T.G.O. Gbadamos, *The Growth of Islam among the Yoruba (1841 - 1908)* New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1978 p.61.

Hajj and Economic Integration

Pilgrimage to the holy land though arduous, has some economic implications for those performing the Hajj on the one hand and the generality of the people of the nation on the other hand. The pilgrimage performed by the early West African Muslim rulers like Mansa Musa, Muhammed Askia, Idris Aloma and others, though, bankrupted most of them especially Mansa Musa, it later brought to their various communities unprecedented economic and social fames. Traders from various Arabian countries found their ways into those areas for the purpose of commerce. This no doubt increased their prosperity in terms of the goods and finances available at those countries. It is important to note that the musketeers acquired by Idris Aloma with which he subdued his political enemies must have increased his revenue as the newly conquered areas paid taxes in addition to war booties gotten from them.²²

In Nigeria and in Ilorin in particular up to 1980 what an intending pilgrim needed to do was to declare his or her intention as early as possible even if he or she has no money. From the time of the declaration of intention, families, friends, Muslim brothers and so on visit him or her and lavish gifis in cash and kinds on him or her in order to alleviate him or her of the financial problems and thus, make the journey not only possible but easy.²³ On the above claim Raji provides us with the situation among the Yoruba of the South West:

...Among the Toruba Muslims there is a belief that once a Muslim has made up his mind to perform the Half it is the Hajj itself that takes care of the financial aspect... the common practice... is to organize series of prayer - gathering to raise funds for the journey.²⁴

²² Ajayi and Crowder, *History of West Africa* Vol. 1 2nd (edn) 1976 Chapter 4 & 5.

²³ Interview with Alhaja Ramata Eleran who said her father who died about 30 years ago declared his intention to go on hajj if Allah wills, eight months before hajj time. According to her, the father got more than enough in cash and kind. Age 55. 9/10/03 Olorun Oje Compound, Alore, Ilorin.

²⁴ Raji, *Socio-Econornic and Political uses of hail...* op. cit. P.78.

Untill now the idea of showering gifts on an intending pilgrim is still there but with moderation. The idea of public fund raising for the purpose of Hajj is no longer practiced in harm, however, members of a family do contribute to send an elderly person whom they believe should be assisted financially to go on Hajj. Mosque members too do contribute to send their Imams and disciples or students do contribute to send their Mallam. Above all, politicians, Muslim philanthropists and businessmen and women do send people on Hail. On the issue of political sponsorship Raji writes.

...in 1964 a conscious attempt to politicize the pilgrimage was made in Yorubaland by the leader/founder of the Nigerian National Democratic Party (NNDP), Chief S. L. Akintola. Financial grants to go on pilgrimage in Makka were awarded for some Muslim supporters of the party in the said region. This contributed to chief Akintoia's victory in the elections of that year...²⁵

It is worthy of note that this trend, which perhaps started in 1964, continues till date. Successive governments in Nigeria whether led by Muslim or not, Military and Civilian, sponsor their supporters to the holy land to either appreciate their support or solicit for their spiritual prayers at the holy land. In the same vein, successive governments in Kwara state send people who are close to the government, on pilgrimage to Mecca. The list is always alarming during civilian rule.²⁶

The business people, in order to be able to buy more goods, as they are always given limits as to the amount of money and goods a person can take to and from Hajj, sponsor people to Hajj but collect their Basic Travelling Allowance (BTA) which is meant for feeding from them, to buy

²⁵ Ibid p. 82. See also Cyprian Ekwensi, *Gone to Mecca* New edn Ibadan: Heinemann Educational Books p.25.

²⁶ According to Alhaji Shehu Koto, the Chairman Alanamu Ward Peoples Democratic Party, the ruling party in Kwara State, each ward throughout the state was given four (4) Hajj seats for 2004 hajj distributed among members. The population of Nigeria pilgrims which used to be 50 plus increased to 78,000 in 1981. This figure has since been checked by the Saudi authorities. The population now ranges between 40,000 to 65,000.

more goods in order to maximize their profits in Nigeria.²⁷ It is surprising to note that not only Muslim merchants engage in this act, Christian merchants do send and even go to Hajj in disguise for economic reasons.²⁸ People going to Hajj on business ground usually swell the numbers of people going on Hajj from Kano, Lagos, Kaduna, Kwara and some other commercially inclined states. Just as in the era of the great Trans-Sahara trade, when the Arabs and the western Sudanese were given the opportunities to barter goods among themselves and cross-fertilise ideas and cultures, Hajj also provides such opportunities between Nigerians and other nationalities that usually gather in Saudi Arabia during Hajj. Articles usually brought down to Nigeria from Saudi Arabia include Arabian and Asian wears, jewelries, toys, electronics, fibre materials for Aso-oke weaving, tailoring use, bags, shoes of different types and style.²⁹ From the above, it could be said that the institution of Hajj confers on individuals who intends or performs Hajj some economic benefits.

Looking critically at the processes involved in Hajj operation in Nigeria one would see that the economic benefit to all and sundry is enormous. For instance, as soon as the processes of Hajj start, intra-state transporters' revenues swell tremendously. People troop out in large numbers to greet one relation or the other whom they have learnt of his or her intending journey. This is closely followed by exodus of people to the

²⁷ According to the Hajj report of 1995, Basic Travellers Allowance was issued to the pilgrims at the Airport departure centres to curb the incidence of foreign exchange trafficking and particularly to avert the problem of duping the pilgrims by their sponsors taking away the foreign exchange and leaving the pilgrims to travel to Saudi Arabia with insufficient or no subsistence allowance p. 12.

²⁸ Hajj Report, 1995 page 21.

²⁹ Interview with Alhaji AbdulMumini Alawaye (who has been going on Hajj nonstop since 1989) at his shop Kajola Motors, Taiwo Road, Ilorin 2/12/2003. Age 40. The Arabs bartered goods like salt with Sudanese goods like gold, ivory, ostrich feathers and slaves. See T. A. Osae and S.N. Nwabara *A Short History of West Africa* Bk one. London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1978 p.17.

pilgrims' camp twenty four hours to keep the pilgrims company and give them food before they are air-lifted.³⁰

It is also important to note that the citing of pilgrims' camps in some states has helped in opening up the sections of the state where they are located. For instance, the location of that of Ilorin at the outskirt of Adewole has opened the place up for industrial, commercial and agricultural practices and also removes temporarily the psychological problems of the workers and the guards in those places for working in isolated place. And transport is easier this time for the workers.³¹ The Hajj camps and Airports during Hajj operation are a mini-Market. All consumables - food, soft drinks and articles for domestic uses are sold not only to the pilgrims but also the teeming population that accompany them. These activities, apart from helping to meet the needs of the pilgrims assist the food and other vendors financially as they make money from a ready market.³² At the Airports, the Airport authorities also impose tax on vehicles that would prefer entering into the Airports. For instance, in Ilorin a vehicle is charged fifty Naira (₦50.00) per entry.³³ This no doubt provides a lot of revenue to the airport authorities, as the pilgrims stay for days before they are airlifted and people keep coming to see them.

At the official level, a lot of other people and authorities as well as agencies benefit financially from the Hajj operation both in Nigeria and Saudi Arabia. On the Nigerian side, the Hajj council and Boards, the Airport Authorities, the airlines, the banks both Central and Commercial, some textile and leather companies (who made identification clothes and bags respectively), tailors, immigration and custom departments and a host of others derive financial benefits from hajj operation in Nigeria. For instance, each pilgrim pays administrative charge to the board, airfare to

³⁰ Interview Conducted with Alhaji AbdulRashed Elelu, Chairman, Alanamu ward Taxi Drivers Association. At his residence, Elelu Compound. Ilorin. Age 55. 12/10/03.

³¹ Some Small Scale industries like block industries, Poultry Farmland, Lubcon Oil are Cited along the road.

³² Alhaja Funmilayo Sherifat, Age 42,, a food vendor who has two stands (one at the Airport and one at the camp) said that these places are marketable. She said they are paying a token to the authority for allowing them to sell 20/1/04.

³³ The writer personally witnessed this during 2004 Hajj. A token of ₦50.00 was issued.

the airliners, one percent bank charges to the Central Bank for transferring charges on royalty, accommodation and transport to Saudi and to the commercial banks to collect their Basic Travelling Allowance, buy suit case and uniform, pay some amount of money to the customs and Immigration for passport and other travel documents.

On the side of Saudi Arabia, each pilgrim pays some amount of money as royalty to the Saudi authorities as well as for accommodation and transportation of pilgrims during their stay in the holy land. The following tables Ai - iii and B give details at a glance of the charges deducted from the Hajj rate paid by each pilgrim and what for.