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Non-Hajj Pilgrimage in Islam: A Neglected Dimension of Religious Circulation

Surinder M. Bhardwaj

***Abstract.** Emphasis by geographers on the study of the hajj to Mecca has resulted in the neglect of ziarat, or non-hajj pilgrimages to other Islamic holy places. Associated with saints, many of the Sufi order, and martyrs, these holy places attract a vast number of pilgrims. Non-hajj pilgrimages may also be considered symbolic of the regional cultural expressions of Islam, especially in the non-Arab countries. This preliminary study situates ziarat within a typology of Islamic religious circulation. It shows that ziarat is part of the dynamic tradition of religious circulation in Islam in various regions: North Africa, Shia areas of Southwestern Asia, Central Asia, and South Asia.*

Pilgrimage studies in Islam, at least those done by geographers, have been primarily focused upon the hajj to Mecca because of its pivotal importance in keeping with one of the five pillars of the faith. One of the earliest detailed studies of the hajj from the religious viewpoint was done by C. Snouck Hurgronje in 1880 (Bousquet and Schacht 1957, 171-213). Eldon Rutter (1929) may be credited with perhaps the first explicitly geographic study of hajj, in which he brings out the locational importance of Malaya compared to other Islamic countries, in generating the largest number of hajj pilgrims. Jean-Paul Roux (1958, 175-179) sets the hajj in the context of non-Arab countries with substantial Muslim populations. These early studies on the hajj were followed by Kamal (1961), Al-Naqar (1972), King (1972), Isaac (1973), Sardar and Badawi (1978), Makky (1978, 1981), Rowley and Hamdan (1978), Long (1979), and Shair and Karan (1979), to name a few.

The establishment of the Hajj Research Centre in 1975 by the government of Saudi Arabia highlights the great importance of hajj-related studies to address the many planning problems of accommodation, health, and transportation. Indeed the large volume of hajj pilgrims, due to the increased ability of more and more Muslims to undertake the once arduous journey, ensures continued emphasis on

hajj studies. Central as is the significance of the hajj to Muslims, cultural geographers have neglected to study other Muslim religious journeys, such as visits to sacred shrines of holy men, the graves of saints and Imams, and the tombs of martyrs of the faith. Journey to these places is often termed a *ziarat*, to distinguish it from the hajj. These *ziarats*, undertaken throughout the Islamic realm, are by no means a substitute for the hajj. Some Muslims may even consider them un-Islamic. Nevertheless, the places of *ziarat* attract millions of people, who travel substantial distances to these centers, and, therefore, they must be considered an integral but neglected part of Islamic religious circulation.

Focus on the hajj as the preeminent, and the most spectacular, annual event in the Islamic religious calendar has overshadowed the widespread practice of the *ziarat* to a great number of Muslim shrines. Such scholarly neglect helps to perpetuate a monolithic view of Islam, especially in the West, contrary to the vibrant cultural variety of Islamic societies in the world. Xavier de Planhol (1959) is virtually the only geographer to draw attention to the practice of *ziarat*. He devoted a section specifically to "the geography of pilgrimages in Islam" in which the hajj is emphasized, but non-hajj pilgrimages are mentioned also. It is surprising that even very recent studies of Islamic religious circulation (Coleman and Elsner 1995; Din and Hadi 1997; Rowley 1997) downplay the significance of the *ziarat*.

The main purpose of this paper is to draw attention to religious travel undertaken by a large number of Muslims to places other than to Mecca. This research shows that the study of *ziarat*, as part of the dynamic tradition of Islamic religious circulation, is necessary to understand Islam's variegated cultural manifestations. Numerous *khankahs*, shrines, mosques, tombs and mausoleums of the Muslim saints, martyrs, Sufis, and other holy personages attest to the popularity of *ziarat* in most of the Muslim countries.

In spite of the non-obligatory nature of a *ziarat*, probably many more people participate in them every year than in the annual hajj to Mecca. Unfortunately, adequate records of pilgrims participating in *ziarats* are not available. Planhol (1959, 74), however, gives a few examples of pilgrim attendance at these shrines—namely, over 250,000 pilgrims at the tomb of Ahmed Bamba in Senegal in 1937, several hundred thousand at Tana (Egypt), and about 100,000 at the shrine of Sidi Abed in Algeria. "The visitor to India and Pakistan is always amazed when he discovers the innumerable shrines, saints' tombs, and places of pilgrimage . . ." (Schimmel 1980, 126). Shrines continue to play an important role in the life of many rural Muslims.

Various functional aspects of shrines have been briefly discussed by Courtright in the *Encyclopedia of Religion* (1987, 299-302). Non-hajj pilgrimages also may be considered as symbolic of the regional cultural expression of Islam, especially in the non-Arab countries. Whereas the hajj places Islam in a global context, ziarats point up the spatially distinctive cultural traditions of Islamic populations.

In this study, I shall first develop a short typology of Islamic religious circulation, to situate ziarat in the framework of Muslim religious circulation, and then examine the phenomenon of the ziarat in some detail. It is not my purpose to indulge in a debate here on whether ziarat are strictly in keeping with true Islamic principles, but rather to examine this practice in countries which have substantial Muslim populations.

Typology of Islamic Religious Circulation

Muslim pilgrimages may be divided into two broad categories: obligatory and voluntary. This is in contrast with the Christian or Hindu tradition, for example, in which pilgrimage is a non-obligatory religious practice, or Sikhism in which it is discouraged. The obligatory pilgrimage in Islam is, of course, the hajj to Mecca, although the obligation is tempered by the pilgrim's financial and physical ability (Pickthall 1930, 50). The Koran enjoins the believers to "Perform the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah."

The voluntary pilgrimage (ziarat or ziara) may be divided into two distinct types for analytical purposes. First, a religious journey may be undertaken for a purely emotive or sentimental reason. Such a non-obligatory religious journey may be undertaken to listen to a holy discourse of a Sufi saint or any other religious message by or in behalf of an Imam. Such a visit also may be made for personal spiritual uplift. In addition, such a sentimental journey may be made to participate in a periodic festival held in honor of a saint, or to commemorate a special day of martyrdom, passion, birthday, and other such occasions related to religious, or even some especially venerated royal, personages.

A second type of voluntary pilgrimage may be made for reasons related to the problems of mundane existence. Fulfillment of a vow may be a major reason for ziarat. The vows may be made for reasons related to personal health or the health of a loved one. A promise to visit a saint, or a saint's grave or tomb, may be made for chronic non-psychosomatic, as well as for psychosomatic, diseases. Supplications may be made for having an offspring, or good luck in an enterprise. Clearly, some of these pilgrimages are primarily supplicatory,

whereas others virtually contractual. But both rely upon the *baraka* (blessing) of the especially esteemed saint (Martin 1987, 116). A ziarat of this type is probably not much different from the pilgrimages undertaken by non-Muslim people. Table 1 summarizes the typology encompassing this idea. In addition, Islamic centers of ziarats may be classified as forming levels of an informal hierarchy, such as regional, subregional and local, depending upon the cultural diversity represented at each level.

Subsystems of Ziarat

The Muslim religious circulation suggested above is composed of two complementary systems, the hajj to Mecca being the overarching, religiously prescribed system, and the ziarat to all other places as the second system. An informal hierarchy of levels of pilgrimage centers in Islam ranges from Mecca at the very apex down to locally venerated shrines of holy people. Ziarats seem to be composed of subsystems that have developed in several cultural contexts, each of which shares the universal characteristics of Islam, but also reflects a cultural distinctiveness. These subsystems of ziarat may be tentatively grouped.

Islamic Holy Places Associated with the Prophet

Muslim holy places usually considered to be immediately below the level of Mecca are: Medina, and al-Aqsa (Dome of the Rock) in

Table 1
Typology of Islamic Religious Circulation

Obligatory

Hajj

Voluntary (Ziarat/Ziara)

Emotive/sentimental reasons

Spiritual quest

Participation in festivals (Urs)/commemorations

/"jihad"/martyrdom/burial (jihad is used here in its symbolic meaning of "striving")

Dawa (travel for missionary purpose)

Pathogenic (Disease/Health search) reasons

Psychosomatic ailments

Non-psychosomatic ailments

Desiderative reasons

Personal (success, achievement, fulfillment)

Loved ones (success, achievement, fulfillment)

Jerusalem. Although the person of Mohammed is not deified in Islam, these two places especially associated with his life are important. Medina was the place where the prophet found security upon his hegira (flight) from Mecca. After the hajj to Mecca, many Muslims visit Medina where the prophet's mosque and tomb, as well as the graves of the famous martyrs, Abu Bakr and Umar, are located (Martin 1987, 345). These visits are not for worship or other religious ceremonies, but rather for showing respect to the martyrs. The three places Mecca, Medina, and al-Aqsa are of pan-Islamic importance, transcending doctrinal or sectarian differences. Ziarat to Medina or to al-Aqsa may be considered extensions of pilgrimage after the hajj has been performed. Considering the political realities of the Middle East, relatively few pilgrims visiting Mecca today extend their sacred journey to al-Aqsa, even though this location is venerated as the place from which Mohammed ascended into heaven.

Shia Shrines in the Middle East

Pilgrimages have a special place in Shia Islam. According to Nasr (1987, 269), the "tombs of all the imams are considered extensions of the supreme centers of Mecca and Medina, and, thus, pilgrimage to these sites . . . are strongly encouraged by the jurists and the official religious hierarchy and play a very important role in the Shia religious life."

The Shia Muslims venerate their Imams and saints to such a high degree that sometimes they "allow the obligatory Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca to be substituted by a pilgrimage to the tomb of a Shia saint" (Serjeant 1967, 32). Acceptance of this type of variance or interpretation of Islamic doctrine seems to be symbolic of the difference between the Arab and Iranian culture. Anwar (1960, 141-156) brings out the significance of pilgrimage activity focused on the tombs of the Imams, especially at An Najaf and Yezd. Although Shia shrines such as Mashhad (Iran) may be perhaps as venerated as Medina, and may serve even as an occasional substitute for Mecca by the Shia Muslims, in the context of worldwide Islam they may be, more appropriately, considered specific to the Iranian cultural sphere. Thus, they form part of a subsystem of Islamic religious circulation.

The major Shia shrines in the Middle East/North Africa region (Fig. 1) are: the Tomb of Musa el-Khadim (Kazimain) in Baghdad, Iraq; Karbala, Iraq; Mashhad, Iran; An Najaf, Iraq; Qom, Iran; Sammarra, Iraq; the Mosque of al-Khalil at Hebron in the West Bank; Qairwan, Tunisia; Muley Idris, Morocco (Serjeant 1986, 26).

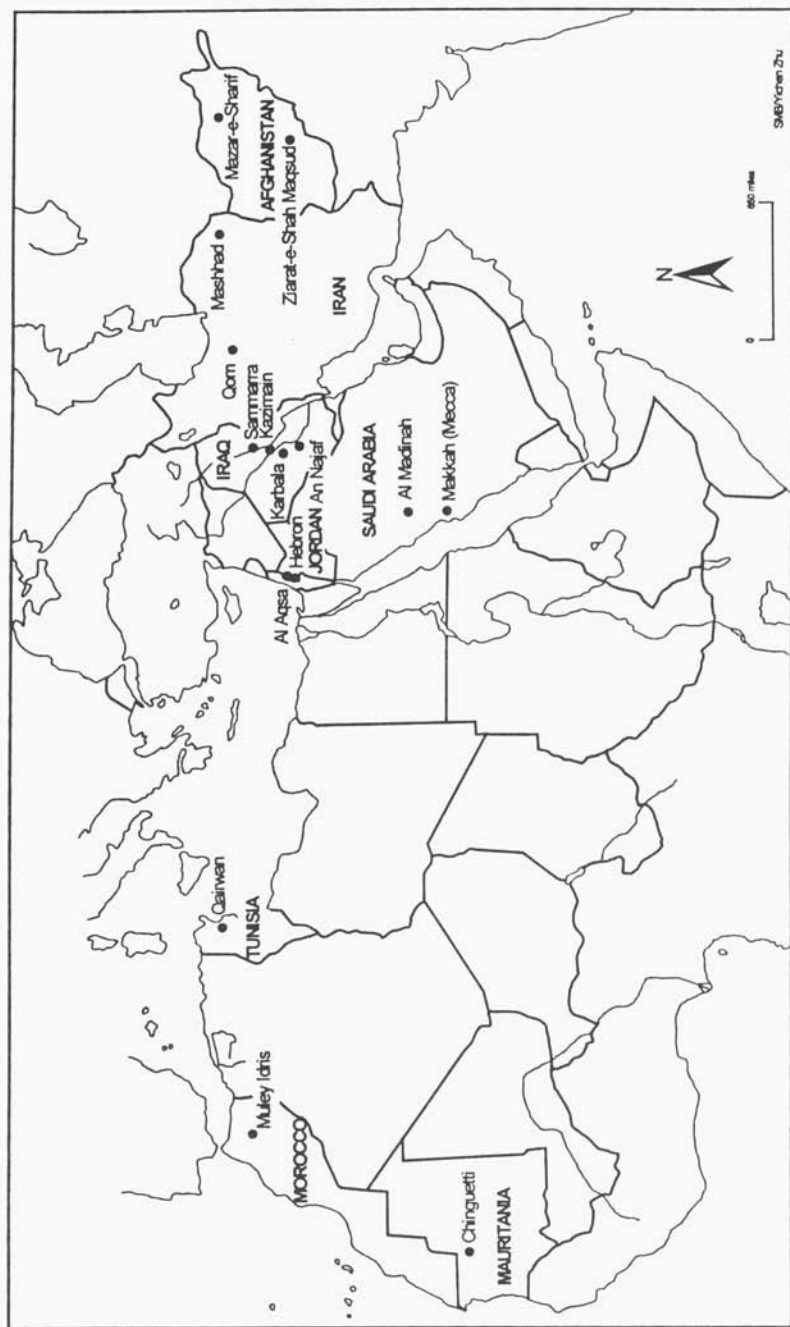


Fig. 1. Major Muslim holy places in the Middle East and North Africa. Many of these are Shia shrines. Source: based on various authors (see text).

The Sufi Shrines

The Sufi order of Islam has added a large number of shrines to the Islamic religious circulation system throughout the Middle East, North Africa, parts of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Southeast Asia, western China, and the Central Asian countries. Most of these shrines are of regional importance within the framework of the linguistic region of a domiciled saint, but some have a following that cuts across international boundaries, partly due to territorial changes or emergence of new nations. According to Ira Lapidus (1988, 262-263), Sufism became central to the structure of lineage societies after the thirteenth century.

Coleman and Elsner (1995, 69) characterize the Sufi shrines as "alternative routes to the sacred." This, in my view, is only partially true, since these shrines only complement Muslim religious circulation. No site can replace the centrality of Mecca, even though some Shia clerics may argue otherwise, and promoters of a particular shrine, such as Ajmer in India, may speak of it as a "second Mecca" (Coleman and Elsner 1995, 223).

Sufi Shrines of Central Asia

Bennigsen and Wimbush (1985, 115-157) have identified and mapped 32 main "working" holy places of the Sufis in the Caucasus (Fig. 2), and 59 in Central Asia (Fig. 3). They attribute the survival of Islam in this part of the former Soviet Union mainly to this "parallel Islam" rather than the official Muslim establishment, which was loyal to the Soviet regime. As newly independent countries of Central Asia articulate their national identities, it is inevitable that Islam will emerge as a major political force. This process is being already realized by other Muslim countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, immediately bordering the new Central Asian nations. In this newly developing context, Sufism may no longer be marginalized, and its shrines will become more overtly popular than just a few years ago.

Sufi Shrines of South Asia

Subhan (1960) has listed scores of Sufi shrines in India and Pakistan. These lists include the location of the shrine, and the date of death of the saint associated with each shrine. Although several locations are only vaguely identified (for example, "Bengal"), it is clear that all of these shrines developed during and after the thirteenth century. The largest number of shrines (188) is attributed to the Chishti order of Sufis, although the shrines of Suhrawardi (72),

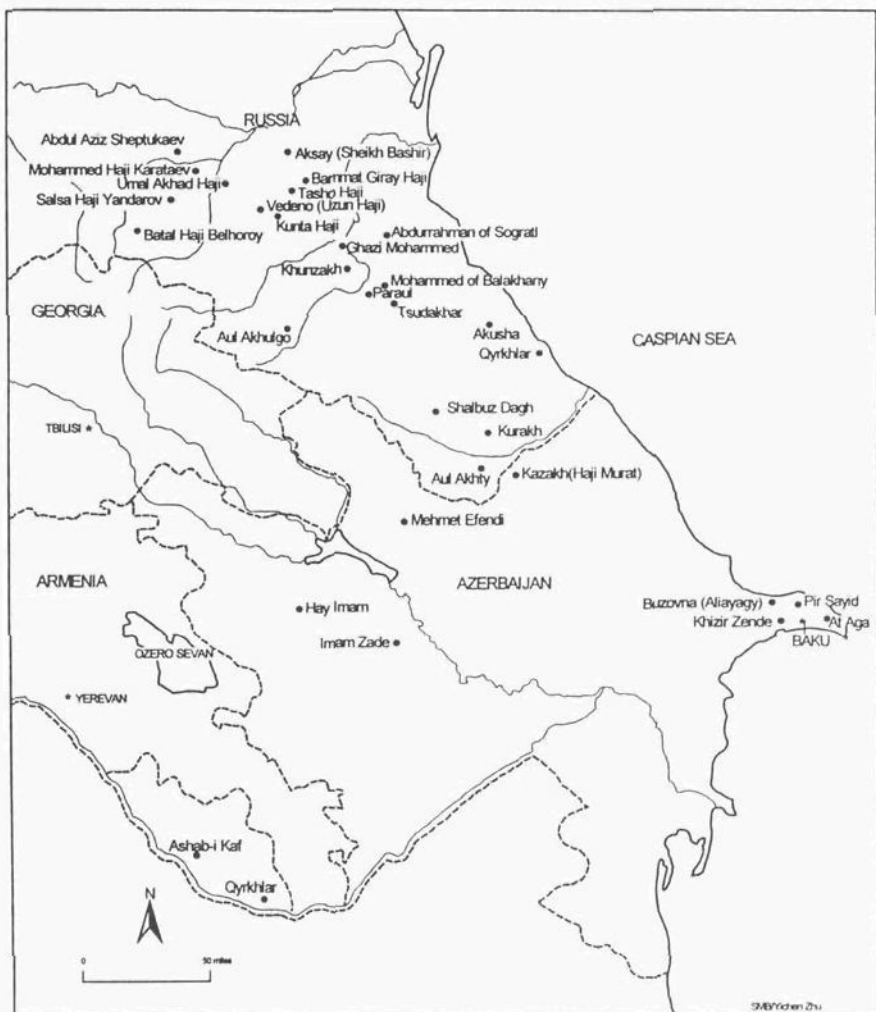
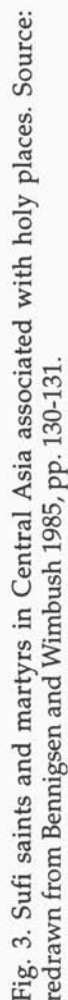


Fig. 2. Sufi saints and martyrs in the Caucasus region associated with holy places. Source: redrawn from Bennigsen and Wimbush 1985, p. 116.

Qadiri (116), Naqshbandi (64), and those of a number of minor or irregular orders (103), are also listed. Some of these shrines are virtually of international importance, for example Ajmer, whereas others are more modest, being patronized in the framework of a local dialect region.

Incorporation of Pre-Islamic into Islamic Religious Circulation

Another component of the Islamic religious circulation system is based on a ziarat to shrines which were holy places in pre-Islamic



times, but which were incorporated into more local or national Islamic culture without being associated with the Sufi order. Cuisinier (1960, 251-274) gives some examples of *ziarat* in the cultural context of Javanese Islam. Ira Lapidus (1988, 261-262) comments on the fusion of Islamic and pre-Islamic identities among village societies focused upon shrine worship. Ikram (1964, 124) has suggested that the rapid diffusion of Islam in Bengal after the thirteenth century had its basis in the utilization of a pre-Islamic, Buddhist religious circulation system by the Muslim saints who migrated to Bengal in the wake of Islamic conquest. Wholesale incorporation of the nodes and pathways of a preexisting religious circulation system must have given ready-made access to a vast rural population. Ikram (1964, 124) specifically states:

When the Islamic missionaries arrived they found in several instances that the conquering armies had destroyed both the temples of revived Hinduism and of the older Buddhism; in their place—often on the same sites—they built new shrines. Moreover, they very frequently transferred ancient Hindu and Buddhist stories of miracles to Muslim saints, fusing the old religion into the new on a level that could be accepted by the masses.

Although Ikram's views about Islam's diffusion are not shared by Roy (1983), it seems plausible to accept Ikram's general contention that the religious centers of the pre-Islamic religion served as convenient nodes for the new religion. In this manner the preexisting religious circulation system was simply taken over, though the message and the pilgrims that circulated in the system were Islamic.

Centers of Local Piety: Graves, Mazars, and Tombs

Islam is a vibrant religion intertwined in the daily life of people at the local level. At that level, components of the Islamic religious circulation include tombs, *mazars* (small memorial shrines) and even humble graves of locally respected saints and holy men credited with wisdom, and even miraculous curing. Small periodic gatherings of the devotees on Thursdays, Fridays, or holy occasions may remind the outsiders of their existence. These holy spots are an integral part of the village communities in which they exist. Finally, the local mosque serves as the focus for the affirmation of Muslim beliefs on a continuing daily basis.

Thus, the Muslim religious circulation is composed of several subsystems. No religious hierarchy defines the level of a place, except that all Muslims accept Mecca as Islam's *axis mundi*, and that

each local mosque is truly oriented to that focus. Between these levels there are numerous holy places that have developed as Islam replaced other beliefs, and utilized their circulation manifold. Muslim religious circulation may then be considered as a complex system. Within it though there is no single religiously defined hierarchy, except Mecca's unquestioned primacy, but there may be intertwined hierarchies; some based upon the sheer number of pilgrims, others associated with the major branches of Islam or based on sectarian allegiances. Overriding all the above considerations (except the position of Mecca) national political boundaries may influence the development of a system of pilgrimages.

The Ziarat and Regional Cultural Symbolism

The regional cultural variety of Muslims is reflected in the *ziarats*, not in the hajj. The hajj transcends Islam's cultural mosaic. All Muslims on the hajj, irrespective of their region of origin or social status, must be clad in the *ihram* garb of two white cotton sheets. This dress and the rites of the hajj are visible symbols of the universal Islamic brotherhood.

On the contrary, the non-hajj *ziarat* reflects the cultural dimensions of Islamic people. There are no uniformly prescribed rules comparable to *ihram*, and the individual pilgrim in the *ziarat* follows the rules specific to the place and local culture. The difference between *ziarat* and hajj is sharply brought out by the fact that many non-Muslims freely participate in the *ziarat*, but the hajj is exclusive to Muslims.

The behavior of the individuals in the *ziarat*, moreover, reflects the cultural context, and the individual's existential quest, rather than a universal Islamic canon. In fact, individuals in the *ziarat*, may be seen expressing behavior not related to Islam as a religion. It is not uncommon to see pilgrims in *ziarat* singing devotional songs, expressing their frailty, or asking for the intercession of a local saint in personal problems. In some respects the hajj and non-hajj circulation systems may be analogous to the complementarity of the "great" and "little" traditions, which the anthropologist Robert Redfield (1963) developed four decades ago. In such a formulation, the non-hajj religious circulation is reflective of the regional cultural distinctions in Islam. In fact, it could be argued that the non-hajj pilgrimages are symbolic of the distinctive regional/cultural contexts of Islam. Four of these are suggested below, although many other more localized ones could be identified easily.

Sub-Saharan Africa

The ziarat is generally undertaken in most other parts of the world to seek the intercession of the saint based upon a belief in his baraka (divine power emanating from the holy man) (Lapidus 1988, 919). In the context of the sub-Saharan region, however, Trimingham (1980, 74-77) makes the point that a true saint cult and asceticism concomitant with the concept of baraka have not become integral parts of Islam because of differences between the world views of the Arabs and the Africans. The concept of baraka is the *sin qua non* of the ziarat in the Middle East, but, according to Trimingham, it did not penetrate in Africa beyond the Sahel. The underlying reasons present a scholarly challenge. Likewise, asceticism, which is fundamental to the lifestyle of Muslim saints and holy men in most other regions of the world, seems life denying to the African cultures (Trimingham 1980, 75). Perhaps due to such reasons the ziarat has had a limited appeal in Africa south of the Sahara.

In Northern Africa, by contrast, the cult of holy men, the marabouts "through whom the supernatural pervades," has a very special place (Eickelman 1976, 10). The marabouts, living or dead, are perceived to have the power to communicate God's power to their clients (Eickelman 1976, 284). Accepting the observations of Trimingham and Eickelman, that asceticism related to sainthood has limited appeal in the life affirming cultures of sub-Saharan Africa, it is not unreasonable to suggest that ziarats are less likely to develop there in contrast to North Africa. This would explain, to some degree, the paucity of pilgrimage shrines in sub-Saharan Africa. The same, however, does not apply to the increasing popularity of hajj among the Muslims of sub-Saharan Africa. For many relatively recent converts to Islam, to perform hajj is to publicly affirm their conversion. The hajj is likely to intensify as Islamization proceeds in sub-Saharan Africa, but ziarats may take some time to develop.

Iran and the Neighboring Shia Areas

Islam's manifestation in Iran has been very different than in the Arab cultural region, and this has impacted the development of a distinctive pilgrimage tradition in Iran. During the Safavid Period (1502-1736) the state in Iran controlled the religious establishment to an extraordinary degree (Lapidus 1988, 302). The Safavids, who established Shiism in Iran in early sixteenth century, violently suppressed Sunnism (Lapidus 1988, 297). They destroyed many Sunni shrines, and even de-emphasized the pilgrimage to Mecca in favor of ziarats to the shrines of Shia Imams, especially to Karbala (Imam

Husayn) and An Najaf (Imam Ali). The practice of pilgrimage to Imam shrines, especially related to martyrdom and the associated effusive *ziarat* seems to characterize the Persian Shiite cultural region of Islam. This distinctive tradition of *ziarat* to the Imam shrines has become a national symbol of modern Iran. Upon Imam Khomeini's death in 1989, his golden-domed place of burial has become a national shrine, visited by hundreds of thousands of Iranians from all parts of Iran (*Akron Beacon Journal*, 13 June 1989).

Louis Dupree (1976) has reported a number of *ziarat* shrines in Afghanistan. He notes that even though saint cults have been forbidden or discouraged in Islam, it has been impossible to eliminate them. Afghans build *ziarats* around local *malangs*, who are a special class of wandering holy men touched by God (Dupree 1976, 1).

Indonesia

The island world of Indonesia and Malaysia has had a very different system of *ziarat*. These countries were Islamicized on a base of Mahayana Buddhism and Hinduism, in both of which the practice of pilgrimage to various shrines was a commonplace. Whereas in the coastal areas the influences of Arab Islam and of Indian Muslim merchants from Coromandel and Malabar were considerable due to the trading and commercial connections with the Arab lands and India, in the interior a very modified Islam spread. Drewes (1955, 286) maintains that Indonesian people have retained some of their fundamental pre-Islamic ways including their tradition of visiting shrines. Similarly, according to Planhol (1959, 117-119), conversion of Indonesia to Islam for a long time was very superficial and there was what he terms a "cultural symbiosis." Many Javanese peasants still venerate the rice goddess Dewi Sri (the consort of the Hindu god Vishnu) (Koentjaraningrat 1984, 361). Pilgrimages to pre-Islamic sacred centers continue in Indonesia. In some cases a Muslim saint (*marabout*) is now the object of pilgrimage in place of a former, but non-Muslim (Cuisinier 1960, 251-273). Lapidus also emphasizes that from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries in Ache and Malay villages, people followed both Muslim and non-Muslim practices as well as the practice of visiting holy places and people (Lapidus 1988, 477).

South Asia

The *ziarat* is a popular aspect of Muslim religious circulation in South Asia (Fig. 4). Pilgrimages to shrines of Muslim saints in Bangladesh and India are in a state of considerable revival. The number of pilgrims to such shrines seems to be increasing, though it

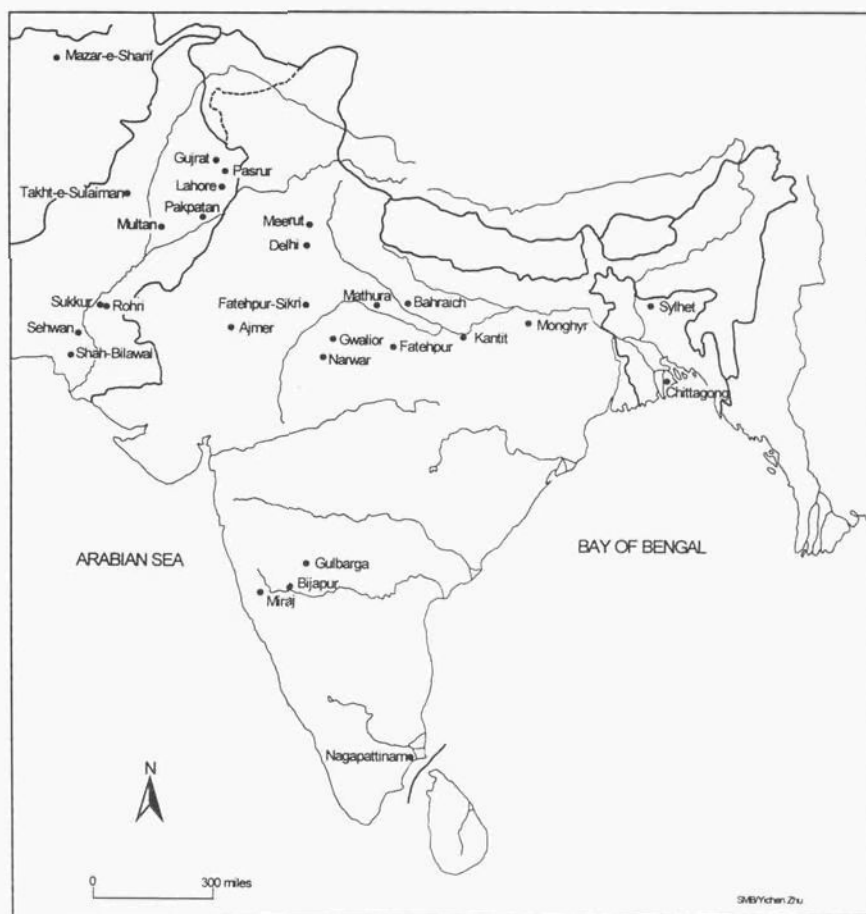


Fig. 4. Major Muslim non-hajj pilgrimage (ziarat) sites in South Asia. Source: partly based on Subhan 1960.

is not clear whether this increase is simply a function of growing population or increased accessibility. Schimmel (1980, 126) has examined the importance of the shrines and places of pilgrimage in the South Asian countries. Major Muslim shrines of South Asia have been mapped in *A Historical Atlas of South Asia* (Schwartzberg 1992, 41, 47). Several places in India and Pakistan are associated with relics of the prophet and of the Sufi saints (Schimmel 1980, 126-127).

The organization of some of the major Muslim shrines, such as that of Muinuddin Chishti at Ajmer (Rajasthan), and of Shah ul Amir Qadir at Nagore (Tamil Nadu) resembles somewhat that of the major Hindu pilgrimage centers. Several organizational similarities

between Sufi shrines and Hindu pilgrimage places are well-known (Eaton 1978, 294). Agents of the Muslim *dargah* (sanctuary), just as the *pandas* of Hindu places, conduct the pilgrims to various aspects of the shrines, and ensure that the wealthy patrons, Muslim and non-Muslims, make contributions and record their pilgrimage in the shrines' record books. Pilgrims from Pakistan, and Bangladesh form the largest contingent of foreign visitors at Ajmer. Schimmel (1980, 129-138) makes several keen observations regarding the *ziarat* to these shrines, but the most important motive for the *ziarat* is supplication for personal problems.

Multireligion pilgrimages to many Muslim shrines (as differentiated from mosques), especially Sufi shrines, have become a characteristic of Indian pilgrimages. Before the emergence of Pakistan and Bangladesh, Hindus frequently patronized Muslim shrines in India, and even today many Muslim shrines attract Hindu pilgrims. This practice occurs at the local, as well as at the national level, despite frequent images of religious discord in the media.

The spirit of this type of *ziarat* is captured in Schimmel's perceptive description of the common elements of *ziarat*, and of the specific *ziarat* of Muinuddin Chishti's mausoleum and several other shrines. My own visit to this shrine in 1986 (Fig. 5) impressed upon me the fact that religious boundaries are not impermeable, and the "confluence of Muslim and Hindu ideas and forms of asceticism" which Schimmel (1980, 137) talks about, occurs particularly at shrines which have become a resource for the human quest for the "ultimate well-being" (Prozesky 1984). A vast number of people undertake *ziarat* for supplication and many must combine their visit for fulfilling a previous promise along with the day of *Urs* fair held to commemorate the saint's death.

Ziarats in South Asia are undertaken as a matter of individual commitment, obligation, and conviction, not as a result of religious command (Bhardwaj 1987, 457-468). Pilgrims at these places seem expressive. Individual emotions predominate. Perceptible religious diversity rather than total uniformity prevails (since non-Muslims also participate). Inclusion rather than exclusion, intimacy rather than formality, and above all relationship rather than ritual seem to characterize the *ziarat*. No wonder then that such places have become the symbols of syncretism, so clearly Indian in its essence, and precisely due to this reason, so disagreeable to the religious orthodoxy, both Hindu and Muslim.

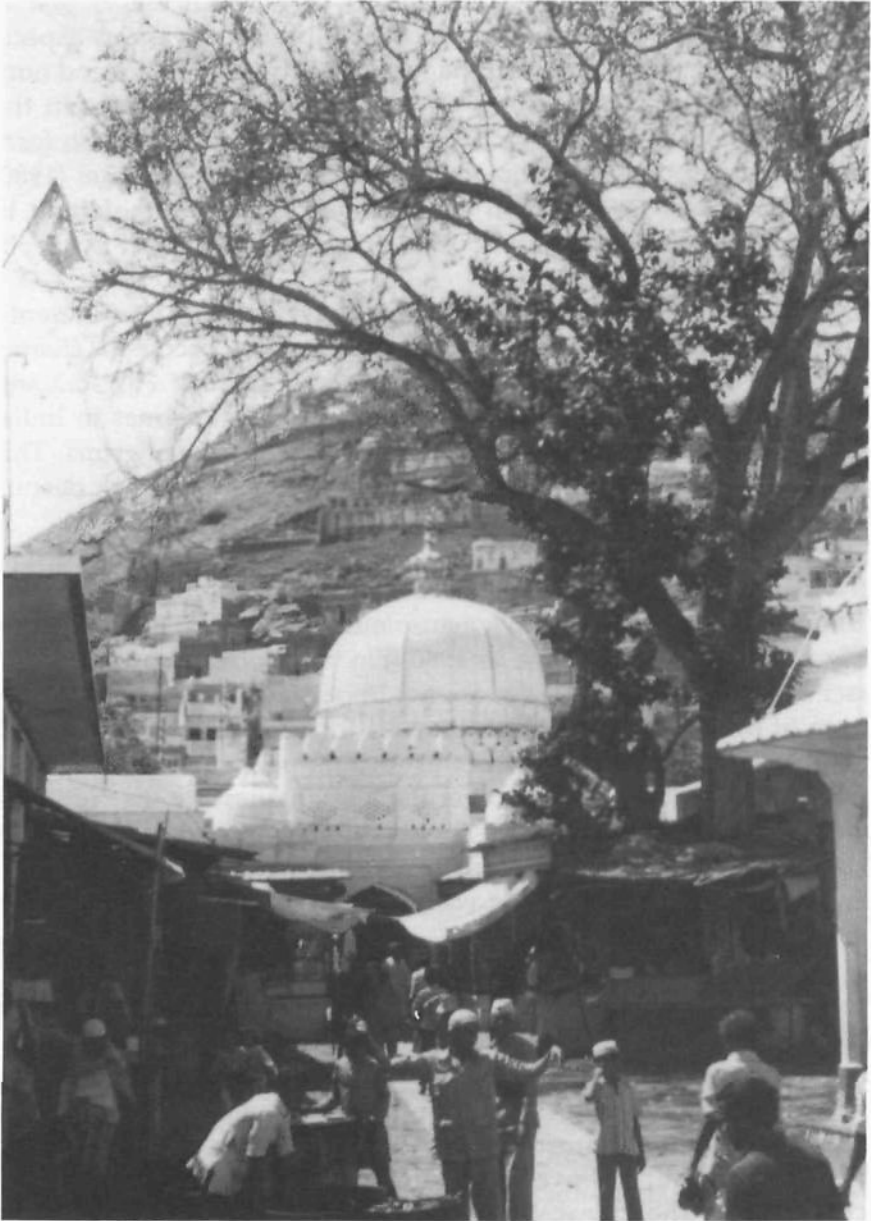


Fig. 5. *Dargah* (shrine) of the Sufi saint Khwaja Muinuddin Chishti (1136-1233 C.E.) at Ajmer in Rajasthan, India. This is the most well-known center for non-hajj pilgrimage (*ziarat*) in South Asia. Many pilgrims at this holy place are non-Muslims.

Conclusions

Non-hajj religious journeys have received very limited professional attention from geographers. They are an integral part of the Muslim religious circulation in the world even though they are discouraged by the orthodoxy. A variety of focal points exist for such religious circulation, for example, saints, Imams, and martyrs. Their commonality is that pilgrims come to these shrines for supplication, to cope with problems of mundane existence.

In this sense they complement the hajj to Mecca, which Muslims visit due to religious obligation, and where they participate in the "re-actualization" of the momentous formative events of Islam. Thus, the hajj represents the universal aspect of Islam whereas the non-hajj ziarat is the emblem of the regional cultural variety of Islam. These complementary patterns together constitute the Islamic religious circulation. Only further studies can help determine the true nature of this circulation.

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