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Lambert-Hurley, S. and Majchrowicz, D. (2022) Introduction : Muslim women, travel writing and cultures of mobility. In: Lambert-Hurley, S., Majchrowicz, D. and Sharma, S., (eds.) Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women. Indiana University Press , Bloomington, IN . ISBN 9780253062048

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This article was published as Lambert-Hurley, S. and Majchrowicz, D. (2022) Introduction : Muslim women, travel writing and cultures of mobility. In: Lambert-Hurley, S., Majchrowicz, D. and Sharma, S., (eds.) Three Centuries of Travel Writing by Muslim Women. Indiana University Press , Bloomington, IN . ISBN 9780253062048. No part of this article may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted, or distributed, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photographic, or otherwise, without the prior permission of Indiana University Press. For re- use, please contact the Copyright Clearance Center ([www.copyright.com](http://www.copyright.com), 508-744-3350). For all other permissions, please visit <http://iupress.org>.

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## INTRODUCTION

### *Muslim Women, Travel Writing and Cultures of Mobility*

*Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Daniel Majchrowicz*

On the face of it, the premise of this volume is simple: a comparative study of travel narratives by Muslim women who traveled the world before the “jet age” transformed modern mobility.<sup>1</sup> In our contemporary moment, the very juxtaposition of these terms—Muslim, women, travel, mobility—instantly raises a number of questions. These may relate to practices of veiling, the need for male guardians, or perhaps restricted access to halal foods. Many of these suppositions are grounded in colonial or Orientalist notions about Muslim women and their life-worlds. No matter our background, we are all liable to make assumptions like these because the historical record about women’s lives and their mobility in these contexts is weak at best. Only the specialist really has access to material that might tell us what it meant to travel as a Muslim woman from seventeenth century Iran, nineteenth century Turkey, or early twentieth century India. Even those who live in Muslim societies today—whether Lahore or London—will perforce make assumptions about gendered mobility in centuries and decades past. The ubiquity of these assumptions is neatly captured in the interaction between one traveler in this volume, Sediqeh Dowlatabadi, and an immigration officer on her arrival in France in 1926 who reportedly said to her: “I can’t believe that I am facing a Muslim and Iranian woman. Now tell me, with whom have

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<sup>1</sup> We express our sincere thanks to our collaborator and dear friend, Sunil Sharma, for his close reading of the draft introduction, and fascinating suggestions for additions.

you come all the way here? I mean, who has brought you? . . . A Muslim Iranian woman has travelled alone from Tehran to France! How did your government permit you to leave? Where did you get this passport?"<sup>2</sup> In short, this is an unfamiliar history for most.

The present book will belie many of these assumptions, even as it affirms or inflects others. The accounts here date from the seventeenth to the middle of the twentieth century, spanning the arrival of the earliest extant travel accounts by Muslim women to the transformative arrival of the jet engine on trans-Atlantic commercial routes in 1958. They were composed originally in ten different languages. The authors are all women, but their roster is diverse, taking in queens, reformers, pilgrims, Sufis, wives, converts, captives, flâneurs, litterateurs, and provocateurs. They hailed from Asia, the Middle East, Africa and Europe, and their destinations were as varied as their points of origin: this volume will take the reader from Java to Alabama, from London to Mecca. Most of them identified as Muslim, and their writing engages meaningfully with that identification, whether from religious or social perspectives. They typically showed a distinctive concern for the lives of women at home and abroad, often with an eye to improving their own societies based on best practices encountered elsewhere. They are likewise united by their conscious decision to leave a record of their travels and to reflect on their experiences, typically for the benefit of other readers. It is this willingness to travel, combined with an inclination toward introspection and a desire for communal engagement or social and political change—and not simply their identity as “Muslim women” alone—that brings them together.

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<sup>2</sup> See chapter 27.

The kaleidoscopic array of their dispositions, cultural backgrounds and perspectives necessarily nuance how that we understand Islam and cultures of mobility. This study ruptures the seemingly bounded, transparent categories introduced above to force deeper interrogation and reflection. With each successive chapter, readers will ask themselves again and again: what *does* it mean to speak of the “Muslim woman?” To what extent is that category meaningful across the centuries and regions from which these women hailed? Islam, of course, is not a monolith.<sup>3</sup> Nor is gender or the concept of womanhood any more fixed.<sup>4</sup> How then can we speak with any consequence of the experience of travel as a “Muslim woman?” Invoking “travel” as a concept is itself fraught, for even that category is historically and culturally determined.<sup>5</sup> These questions are taken up in more detail in the two sections that follow, the first by considering the relationship between *travel writing and women*, and the second by tracing Muslim women’s participation within localized *cultures of travel*.

We hasten to note that these questions about Muslim women and travel are not only contemporary concerns. In fact, they are raised repeatedly by the women studied here. These travelers too sought to explore the multiple and contrasting ways that Muslim women lived and traveled throughout the world and across the centuries. Leaving home necessarily meant meeting other women, Muslim or otherwise, from a range of cultural backgrounds. Particularly for authors of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the novel experiences mediated by travel allowed them to examine their own ideas of womanhood and to reconcile the idea of a single

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<sup>3</sup> Shahab Ahmed, *What Is Islam: The Importance of Being Islamic* (Princeton; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017).

<sup>4</sup> Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

<sup>5</sup> James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997).

Muslim community, or *ummah*, with its immense variety. We focus on these meetings and mediations in the chapters that follow, joining these authors on their terrestrial and intellectual journeys. We find, as did they, that there is no single perspective or experience that inheres to “Muslim women.” Rather, the positionality of every person is determined not only by gender or creed, but often, and often principally, by other factors that include cultural background, race, class, political outlook, and, of course, individuality.

This journey into the pasts of Muslim mobility leads through terrain that is almost entirely new. Tragically, few Muslim women travelers have been the subject of academic study or popular regard. Indeed, there is a yawning lack of knowledge about the experiences of travel for women from much of what is now called the “Global South.” A vast majority of the texts here are being translated into English for the first time. Most are lost even to the literary traditions out of which they grew. Such is the state of neglect that in a few cases only a single copy remains, sometimes found in obscure and inaccessible locations that were only brought to light after years of research. The works excerpted, translated and studied in this volume thus represent a bounty of newly-discovered writing on social interactions between women across cultural and linguistic boundaries. Their obscurity is not due to their irrelevance or lack of quality: these new sources for confronting and re-conceptualizing gendered histories of mobility in Muslim societies will provide insights for scholars, students and other readers interested in these wider debates. A more detailed interrogation of this material’s broader significance to history and literature in terms of *reorienting the global* is contained in the final section of this introduction.

Travel writing can be read in many ways. Many of the voyagers in this volume wished to convey to their readers an accurate description of the destinations they visited and the places

through which they passed. This intention makes their writing a valuable source for historians, especially those interested in distinct locations and moments in the past. But our objective in introducing them now goes beyond that. We hope, principally, to gain insight into the authors themselves—their ideas of self, community, culture, service, foreignness, familiarity. The text in each chapter is essentially a form of autobiography, as the authors, intentionally or otherwise, construct an image of themselves—one that is often set against the backdrop of an unfamiliar locale. For this reason, this volume is primarily a study of the *self*.<sup>6</sup> It is, simultaneously, a study of interaction, community, belonging and alterity. In general, the accounts included in this volume take a greater interest in human than physical geography. More than the terrain, the authors record their observations of *others* while traveling, allowing us in turn to reflect on the contingent and historical nature of sociality. They interacted constantly with people from a range of social classes and diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. For some, the novel circumstances meant that the rules of sociality were altered or abrogated, even as others seem to have remained well within the bounds that ruled their everyday lives. Some women found their own ideas of community and Islamic practice challenged. For others, travel provided more affirmation than abrogation. Finally, then, this study is a meditation on the inherent diversity of Islam. There are so many experiences, and so few of them overlap, that their mere juxtaposition is a potent reminder that this category is as limiting and as it is enabling.

But, before proceeding, a word on this book's unique form. Individual authors and their writing are the focus of each short chapter, and thus we reference them by name throughout

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<sup>6</sup> This work thus builds on our other work in this area, notably, Siobhan Lambert-Hurley's *Elusive Lives: Gender, Autobiography and the Self in Muslim South Asia* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2018) and Daniel Majchrowicz's *Travel Writing and the Journey in Modern South Asia* (forthcoming.)

this introduction.<sup>7</sup> Each chapter opens with meticulously researched biographical data, literary and historical context, and textual analysis. These descriptions are themselves a major intervention, for most of the women have never been written about before and are otherwise unknown. Meanwhile, images let readers to envisage our authors on the move.<sup>8</sup> The main body of each chapter presents selected extracts from travel narratives in English translation or, occasionally, the original English. To facilitate engagement, extracts are sometimes divided into subsections with titles indicative as to their content. Generally, these subtitles have been inserted by us as editors unless otherwise noted as original. While these subtitles may interrupt the flow of text, their value in highlighting themes or guiding the reader should be evident. Annotations identify terms and figures not familiar to a general audience--though, to avoid a staccato of repetitive footnotes, commonly-used foreign terms are defined in a comprehensive glossary. Each chapter concludes with a concise list of further reading. This includes the original texts from which extracts have been translated or reprinted, as well as complementary writings, biographical or literary studies, and contextual materials. In most cases, there are links to our project website, Accessing Muslim Lives [<https://www.accessingmuslimlives.org>], where interested readers may find supplementary materials in digital form, including additional translations, original texts, and visual sources.

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<sup>7</sup> To follow up these references, please see individual chapters. We only direct readers to specific chapters when including direct quotations.

<sup>8</sup> Even when published, women's accounts rarely included photographs or images, which were typically expensive. For this reason, most of the images used in this book come from external sources accessed through our research. Just a few are reproduced from the original travel accounts. In some cases, we have included images of the texts themselves.

To emphasize thematic trends, chapters are grouped into four main parts reflecting the different motivations to travel identified by the authors. The book begins with “travel as pilgrimage” on the basis that religious pilgrimage was the longest, most consistent, and best accepted type of travel by women. While there are a dizzying range of pilgrimage practices within Islam, it is visits to Mecca (known as *hajj* or *‘umrah*), Medina, and the Shii holy sites of Iraq and Iran (*ziyarah*) that are most frequently recorded. Part II then turns to what emerged as a primary impetus to women’s mobility in the nineteenth century: “travel as emancipation and politics.” The range of political impulses here is wide: feminist in its broadest interpretation, but also nationalist, internationalist and even communist. The earliest authors in this section travelled as individuals, but, by the twentieth century, many were on governmental assignment or part of official delegations. The early twentieth century also saw Muslim women going abroad for formal and informal learning, including training programs, university courses and educational schemes, at first to Europe and later in the United States. This development is captured in Part III on “travel as education.” Finally, Part IV addresses “travel for obligation and pleasure.” This section reflects that, from the earliest author to the latest, travel for women was also about their commitments to family: the experiences of those who accompanied fathers, brothers and husbands as they journeyed into exile, for work or study, or as recreation.

Studies of travel writing often take a regional approach—in terms of where travelers went *to* or where they came *from*. We prefer a thematic form of organization as it allows comparison *between* authors and regions. The short introduction to each part underlines this comparative element by highlighting overall arguments and trends, including the parallels and divergences between chapters and the relationships linking authors. The chapters *within* each part are then



organized broadly chronologically to underscore the development of genre over time.<sup>9</sup> The first section, on “travel as pilgrimage,” thus begins with a seventeenth-century hajj narrative in Persian verse authored by a woman known only as “the widow of Mirza Khalil.” Later texts in prose and poetry from Qajar Iran and British India then grapple with how to write that most quintessentially Muslim journey in the “Age of Empire.” One unexpected observation that emerges from this thematic structuring is that travel writing has peculiar regional specificities: we discovered no Arab or Southeast Asian narratives on pilgrimage from before 1950, while *all* of the Ottoman and Turkish texts we unearthed fell into Part II on politics. Of course, to group materials as we do here is not straightforward: women often had multiple motivations to travel. Certainly, the hajj has historically been an opportunity for politics as much as piety. Motivations might also be public and private all at once, with the result that texts could have fit easily into multiple categories. Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, for instance, lived in Britain in the 1930s as the wife of an Indian civil servant, but she also studied for a PhD during that time. Because her available writings focus on the former experience, she is included in Part IV on obligation, rather than Part III on education. And yet, as the next section indicates, grouping texts has actually proved one of the easier tasks on this book’s route to completion.

### *Travel Writing and Women*

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<sup>9</sup> Some readers may wish that this chronological element was emphasized further by the inclusion of a date in the chapter titles. We made a conscious decision not to include a precise date on the basis that it was unclear which date was most pertinent: the date(s) of travel? The date(s) of writing? The date of first publication? The date of a more widely-circulated reprint? Relevant dates are, however, indicated immediately in the first line or lines of the introductory text.

Among the greatest challenges for this study was to simply break ground in what was otherwise a *terra incognita*. There are many reasons for the failure to preserve women's narratives. For one, the written word has not always been the primary mode through which narratives have circulated. In some periods and regions, oral culture has been dominant, while in others, access to literacy has been the preserve of men.<sup>10</sup> What is more, it appears that the tendency to view this work as "women's literature," and therefore not relevant to "general interest," has led to a lack of preservation. Thus it is likely that much literature has been destroyed, or will require significant efforts to be recuperated.<sup>11</sup> Meanwhile, "travel" and its literature, despite being a subject of enduring fascination, have long been associated with "bravado" and masculinity.<sup>12</sup> It was not until the final decades of the twentieth century that the contributions of women began even to be recognized as serious travel writing. This process began in the 1980s and 90s, as feminist scholars turned toward producing anthologies and studies of these narratives.<sup>13</sup> These efforts not only wrote women back into the history of the genre, but also undertook pioneering work to think with increasing precision about how our construction of the genre is gendered. That said, while a wealth of studies now exist on European women travelers in "the Orient," only a handful have appeared on the women *from* those same regions. In short, the "feminist turn" in travel studies has largely left non-European women behind.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for instance, Lila Abu-Lughod's *Veiled Sentiments: Honor and Poetry in Bedouin Society* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> As we go to press, we continue to make discoveries of new texts. As interest in the field grows, more are sure to follow.

<sup>12</sup> Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), 111–13.

<sup>13</sup> Some examples are: Mills, *Discourses of Difference*; Indira Ghose, *Women Travellers in Colonial India : The Power of the Female Gaze* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998); and Mary. Russell, *The Blessings of a Good Thick Skirt: Women Travellers and Their World* (London: Collins, 1986).

Muslim women have been particularly excluded, though this imbalance is gradually being addressed by a coterie of dedicated scholars.<sup>14</sup>

In writing Muslim women back into a history of travel, we must expand our archive while also following and furthering the theoretical innovations made already in the study of European travel writing, particularly in interrogating the exclusions and biases of terminology and categories of analysis. A particular concern regards form: how does narration and recording vary across cultures and time? What restrictions and possibilities have determined how women tell their stories within their own life-worlds? To seek out travel writing as defined by a European understanding of that genre is inherently exclusionary. Once we have expanded and sensitized our metric to account for local literary practice, a second step is to use theoretical insights to reassess world literatures and find where travel narratives may be hiding in plain sight—perhaps in a collection of love lyrics that may relate to a journey, but are not flagged as such. The range of “Muslim literatures” is vast and, in some cases, little known. Might there yet be travel accounts

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<sup>14</sup> Some classic studies of women travelers from India are: Inderpal Grewal, *Home and Harem: Nation, Gender, Empire, and the Cultures of Travel* (London: Leicester University Press, 1996); Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing Home, Home, and History in Late Colonial India* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Meera Kosambi, *Pandita Ramabai’s American Encounter: The Peoples of the United States (1883)* (Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press, 2003). Our previous work on Muslim women travelers is also pertinent here: Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, “Out of India: The Journeys of the Begam of Bhopal, 1901-1930,” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 21:3 (June 1998): 263-76; Siobhan Lambert-Hurley (ed.), *A Princess’s Pilgrimage: Nawab Sikandar Begum’s A Pilgrimage to Mecca* (New Delhi: Women Unlimited, 2007); Siobhan Lambert-Hurley and Sunil Sharma, *Atiya’s Journeys: A Muslim Woman from Colonial Bombay to Edwardian Britain* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2010); Daniel Majchrowicz, “Malika Begum’s Mehfil: Retrieving the Lost Legacy of Women’s Travel Writing in Urdu,” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies* (October, 2020): 860-78; and Daniel Majchrowicz, *Travel Writing and the Journey in Modern South Asia* (forthcoming, 2021). For Iran, see Amineh Mahallati, “Memoirs of Iranian Women Travelers to Mecca,” *Iranian Studies* 44 (2011): 831-49; and Piotr Bachtin, “Women’s Writing in Action: On Female-authored Hajj Narratives in Qajar Iran,” *Iranian Studies* (2020). For Turkey, see: Reina Lewis, *Rethinking Orientalism: Women, Travel, and the Ottoman Harem* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004). The work on the Arab Middle East and Southeast Asia is more scant.

lurking in the abundant but understudied *'Ajami* literature (West African languages written in the Arabic script) of Sub-Saharan western Africa? Or in the diverse linguistic and cultural space of Central Asia? This volume is just a first step, intended to lay the ground for that future study.

Attentiveness to localized approaches are needed, for travel writing is a notoriously amorphous genre located at the interstices of a multiplicity of forms: autobiography, history, fiction and others. Its indeterminateness has long bedeviled the scholars who grapple with its contours, unable to say with much conviction or agreement just what constitutes it. What does it mean to travel? How is one to speak or write about it? Mobility is certainly as universal a human trait as any, but narratives of and ideas about it vary greatly across cultures and time, and even within a single, supposedly homogenous context. Many of the pieces included in this study--which include magazine articles, speeches, diary entries, poems, and book excerpts--would, until very recently, not have been properly considered to be travel writing at all. By the same token, the majority of the women who wrote these pieces--a woman accompanying her husband on a diplomatic mission, for instance--have not always been considered true "travelers."<sup>15</sup> The inherent unconventionality of this volume offers us a starting point from which to unpack these terms and understand how they have been historically determined and gendered.

Women have long been so excluded from being considered serious travelers or travel writers that most readers will likely struggle to think of a single such figure from any historical or literary tradition. What is more, those that may come to mind will surely be western women considered oddities, outliers, or, quite simply, masculine. As Debbie Lisle has observed: "It is still

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<sup>15</sup> The issue of women travelers as "the exception," in a European context is taken up early on. See, for example, Clifford, *Routes*, 105. For more on a South Asian context, see Majchrowicz, "Malika Begum's Mehfil."

the case that women must overcome their 'natural' limitations as women and become 'extraordinary' in order to be manly enough to travel and write books about it."<sup>16</sup> Muslim women travelers are rarely accorded even this limited recognition, but are instead twice-neglected: once for being insufficiently masculine, and again from the Orientalist assumption that they belong to a religious or cultural background that demands meekness. Rather than ask whether or not the women here are "travelers," or whether their writing constitutes "travel writing" proper, the more compelling and telling question is: how have our ideas about travel and methodologies for the study of travel and travel writing neglected the experiences and voices non-European women, particularly Muslim women?

Travel is not a neutral concept: a simple word referring to the act of going from point A to point B. Likewise, a traveler is not merely a person who traverses that same line. Like all concepts, words like "travel" and "traveler" are deeply embedded in the cultural contexts that employ them. Our lives are filled with all forms of mobility, but not all mobility constitutes travel. What does count is culturally and historically determined. The voyages of Magellan or Lewis and Clark are surely considered travel, yet others who traversed similar paths have not been equally acknowledged. Think, for example, of the men and women, the Sacagaweas, who guided or accompanied them as they went about "discovering" new lands.<sup>17</sup> The honorific title "traveler" likewise is rarely extended to enslaved Africans on the Middle Passage, Eritreans traversing the

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<sup>16</sup> Debbie Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 97.

<sup>17</sup> Sacagawea was a Shoshone woman who was kidnapped by a rival tribe and subsequently sold into marriage with a trapper from Quebec. She was subsequently made to serve as guide and interpreter for Lewis and Clark in their expedition of the American West. It is likely that her presence was critical to their success. Most guides like her are never recognized. When they are, they are still rarely accorded full status as "travelers."

Sahara *en route* to Europe, migrant Filipino workers seeking temporary employment in Dubai, or to those who travel with a spouse on assignment. These men and women are often given labels—migrants, temporary workers, staff, guides—but rarely “traveler.”<sup>18</sup>

Even today, the category of “travel” remains gendered, stratified, and, above all, closely linked with a European history of exploration, upper-class recreation and colonial expansion.<sup>19</sup> As the anthropologist James Clifford writes: “I struggle, never quite successfully, to free the related term ‘travel’ from a history of European, literary, male, bourgeois, scientific, heroic, recreational, meanings and practices.”<sup>20</sup> Travel, in short, has remained the province of an elite, or aspirants toward it. Over time, the concept became closely linked to lofty ideals that obscured the link between money and travel. Thus, even as anyone might attempt to become a traveler, the ideal of “good,” proper, praiseworthy travel remained predetermined by idealistic concepts such as independence, free-will, sturdiness, and initiative. These are the very qualities that have been denied to women, the colonized, and the impoverished in discourse and practice alike. When Muslim women were already considered by Euro-American society to be living the very antithesis of free lives (as they continue to be by some today), it was almost natural to exclude them from the hallowed category of the traveler, defined as it was by the unencumbered expression of a supposedly independent, inquisitive spirit. As Nyonya Aulia-Salim, one of the Indonesian authors here, observed astutely in 1954 after traveling to the United States: “It’s often forgotten that many wives suffer the same misery as their husbands while traveling... They

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<sup>18</sup> Clifford, *Routes*, 107.

<sup>19</sup> See, among others: Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (University of California Press, 2013); and Johannes Fabian, “Time, Narration, and the Exploration of Central Africa,” *Narrative* 9:1 (January 1, 2001): 3–20.

<sup>20</sup> Clifford, *Routes*, 106.

are no less brave in opposing danger and persevering in the face of misery. Would there be victory if they were not just as fully committed in the struggle? Now, only the civil servants are awarded!”<sup>21</sup>

For many, whether they live in the West or even in a predominantly Muslim context, the historical Muslim woman is an imprisoned figure, not an itinerant, curious traveler. For many years now, there have been significant efforts to reject these exclusionary ideas of oppressed women, located as they are at the very heart of imperialist discourses, to offer up more sensitive and sympathetic models.<sup>22</sup> The most recent efforts have come partly in response to a wave of xenophobic and neo-colonial discourses that present Muslim women as a monolithic instance of religiously-based misogynistic oppression in the service of new imperialist projects.<sup>23</sup> But for all this, these associations persist. Moreover, where allowances *are* made for the freedom of Muslim women, the credit for their “liberation” is often laid at the feet of the West itself. There is little space in this type of discourse for women, or even for Muslims of any gender, to be regarded as true “travelers,” particularly those born after the age of the great Islamic empires. Indeed, Ibn Battuta--subject of a handful of popular books and an IMAX documentary--is perhaps the most recent Muslim traveler to be celebrated globally, and he traveled in the fourteenth century CE. Most non-specialist readers will struggle to name anyone more recent than him.

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<sup>21</sup> See chapter 45.

<sup>22</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Lila Abu-Lughod, “Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others,” *American Anthropologist* 104: 3 (September 1, 2002): 783–90; Lara Deeb, *Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shi’i Lebanon* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).

Unfortunately, few of the pieces here disrupt the pervasive association between travel and privilege, particularly as regards class and wealth. Several of the authors were royalty, occasionally in possession of immense power and resources (Jahanara Begum, Sikander Begum, Melek and Zeynep Hanim, Nazli Begum). Others hailed from influential and frequently moneyed families (Atiya Fyzee, Shareefah Hamid Ali, Begum Sarbuland Jang). Only a few came from more “modest” backgrounds (Dilshad, Nur Begum, Suharti Suwanto), though even these women were privileged by dint of their access to literacy and the possibility of writing about their experiences. In colonial India, for instance, female literacy was recorded at less than one percent in 1901. By 1947, around the end of the period under consideration in this book, that figure had risen to a mere eight percent.<sup>24</sup> By comparison, in early communist Uzbekistan literacy was around five to ten percent in cities, but just one percent in rural areas in the 1920s.<sup>25</sup> As explored in the next section, women who may have been from less influential backgrounds were travelers themselves, but unfortunately their voices have not been preserved.

Just as the concept of “travel” is entangled in a range of associations that link it to European, masculine practices, so too are many reigning assumptions about what constitutes travel writing. This concern has guided us to abandon the usage of terms such as “travelogue,” with its historical associations and genre claims, to the more general “travel writing.” In most of the linguistic and cultural contexts under study here, the travel account was not a prominent or

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<sup>24</sup> Lambert-Hurley, *Elusive Lives*, 57.

<sup>25</sup> Marianne Kamp, *The New Women in Uzbekistan: Islam, Modernity, and Unveiling under Communism* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006), 222.



coherent genre.<sup>26</sup> Even where it was, the ability of women to publish cohesive, first-person prose narratives in book form (as we typically expect of travelogues) was circumscribed. In turning away from the term travelogue, we not only eschew its association with colonial epistemologies, but also acknowledge that narratives often occur in a variety of forms which are often gendered (much as they have been in a Euro-American context).<sup>27</sup> Women chose the format of their writing by balancing the forms available to them against considerations of their objective.<sup>28</sup> In some cases, this might mean writing anonymously, avoiding the first person, writing letters to an imaginary female interlocutor, or even rejecting prose altogether.

This is also, of course, a reflection of the reigning literary aesthetics of the cultures that produced these accounts. Many of the travel accounts here are accordingly “unconventional” only to the English reader. Undoubtedly, many do meet our expectations of what we instinctively consider a travelogue, and saw themselves as participating in that genre (Sikandar Begum, Halide Édib, Zainab Cobbald, Amina Said, Nyonya Aulia-Salim, among others). Other accounts are less intuitive. Several are excerpted from autobiographical writings and were not intended as standalone travel accounts (Salamah bint Said/Emily Ruete, Qaisari Begum, Huda Shaarawi). Still others are private diary entries or letters that were never intended to be published (Muhammadi Begum, Begum Hasrat Mohani), and thus can be more intimate as they were drafted away from a public gaze. A few are magazine articles (Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, Sughra Sabzwaria, Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, Shams Pahlavi). Two of the accounts here were written entirely in

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<sup>26</sup> Barbara Daly Metcalf, “The Pilgrimage Remembered: South Asian Accounts of the Hajj,” in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration, and the Religious Imagination*, ed. Dale F. Eickelman and James P. Piscatori (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 86.

<sup>27</sup> Lisle, *The Global Politics of Contemporary Travel Writing*, 97.

<sup>28</sup> Majchrowicz. “Malika Begum’s Mehfil.”

rhyiming couplets (the widow of Mirza Khalil, Nur Begum) in keeping with the popular literary genres. Several were initially intended for circulation exclusively among family members (Begum Sarbuland Jang, Ummat al-Ghani Nur al-Nisa), while two come from public lectures (Safia Jabir Ali, Iqbalunnisa Hussain). Some appear to be political treatises more than standard travel writing (Zeyneb Hanoum, Melek Hanim, Suharti Suwarto).

Historically, travel writing has hewed toward an informative, rather than an experiential, mode. Indeed, in Islamic contexts, travel literature once played this very role in the development of various sciences, physical and intellectual.<sup>29</sup> From this perspective, a set of letters exchanged between mother and daughter would not have been considered worthy of the categorization, much less publication. Yet the purposes of writing about travel have not only shifted over time, but also that those purposes vary across cultural, class, and gender. A fascinating example of this comes from Begum Sarbuland Jang, who wrote a deeply personal account of her journey through the Middle East and Europe. Her account was only published twenty years later, after her husband's death. Her husband, on the other hand, published a number of accounts of the same journey almost immediately. They are not at all personal but are rather filled with topographical observations and notes on distances. The radically different trajectories of writing of a single trip by a husband and wife exemplify these gendered distinctions. Travel writing had other itineraries, too: recording one's journey may, for instance, also be considered a *devotional* act. In nineteenth and twentieth century India, accounts of the hajj and other pilgrimages allowed readers/listeners to become fellow-travelers on a journey that may otherwise be unrealizable, while also allowing

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<sup>29</sup> Touati, *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages*; Fabian, "Time, Narration, and the Exploration of Central Africa."

the author to accrue religious merit (*thawab/savab*) or to announce their changed social or spiritual status.<sup>30</sup>

Another common purpose was to stake out positions on matters political or social. To what extent should women participate in the public sphere? Did women of “the Orient” require saving (Zeyneb Hanoum)? These and many more debates were explored in travel accounts with varying degrees of polemic. Others were not concerned with gender and instead threw themselves into a hornet’s nest of issues surrounding colonialism (Muhammadi Begum), pan-Islamism (Fatima Begum), contemporary calamities like the demise of the Ottoman Empire and the Islamic Caliphate (Sughra Humayun Mirza), the Palestinian crisis (Amina Said), or the contributions of Communism (Suharti Suwato). Still others adopt an anthropological tone, detailing practices encountered abroad and, frequently, weigh in on their relative merits and limitations (for instance, on childcare in Iraq, as discussed by Begum Hasrat Mohani, or Sikandar Begum’s assessment of Arab women).

All of these examples point to the inherently global nature of Muslim travel writing. And indeed, it has always been so. The genre first appeared in Islamic literatures not in the so-called “Islamic heartland” of Iraq, Syria, or Arabia, but at the far fringe of the known world--the Maghrib, Andalusia, and Persi--though none of its known writers were women.<sup>31</sup> Travel writing was not, however, a *prominent* genre in any pre-modern Islamic language, with the sole exception of early modern Safavid and Mughal verse travel narratives, which flourished particularly in the *masnavi*

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<sup>30</sup> Majchrowicz, *Travel Writing and the Journey in Modern South Asia*, forthcoming.

<sup>31</sup> Abderrahmane El Mouddeh, “The Ambivalence of Rihla: Community Integration and Self-Definition in Moroccan Travel Accounts, 1300-1800,” in *Muslim Travellers*, ed. Eickelman and Piscatori, 69–84.

form.<sup>32</sup> This broad lack counterintuitively butts up against the understanding that travel itself has been crucial to the spread of Islam, and indeed to its intellectual evolution. The most convincing and sustained attempt to account for the relationship between travel and Islam (and, in passing, the role of travel writing in that development) is to be found in Haouri Touati's *Islam et Voyage au Moyen Age*.<sup>33</sup> Focusing on a period between the eighth and twelfth centuries, Touati argues that travel first emerged as the solution to a logistical problem Muslim intellectuals faced as Islam rapidly expanded. Initially, information about the Prophet Muhammad and his era were conveyed exclusively in oral form. However, as the Islamic world expanded, those who possessed *reliable* information became diffused across a vast, continuously unfurling empire. Thus, for the researcher or aspiring scholar to become well-rounded in his knowledge, he had to travel widely to learn from these sources. At the same time, geographers traveled to familiarize themselves with Islam's new domains. Sufis meanwhile took to travel to deepen "their mysterious knowledge of reality." Ultimately, it was travelers themselves who formulated the idea of an entity that could be called the Islamic world (*dar al-Islam*). Yet even as countless intellectual works were produced thanks to the use of travel as a methodology, travel writing itself was late to make its appearance. Even then, its efflorescence, if it can be called that, was a relatively short-lived crescendo. From the tenth century until the fourteenth, a number of well-known travel accounts appeared, with the *Rihla* of Ibn Battuta perhaps representing the zenith of the medieval Arabic travel account. From the fourteenth century (until perhaps the nineteenth), Touati shows that travel writing became increasingly negligible in the Arabic-speaking regions of the Middle East.

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<sup>32</sup> Sunil Sharma, *Mughal Arcadia: Persian Literature in an Indian Court* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2017).

<sup>33</sup> Houari Touati, *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

Yet this was not the end of Islamic travel writing. The genre instead re-appeared in regions where other languages were dominant. Between the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries, the most influential works of travel belonged to the three great empires of this era: the Ottoman Empire centered in today's Turkey, the Safavid Empire in Iran, and the Mughal Empire in India. Touati's thesis does not apply to the travel writing of this era: travelers were not motivated by a desire to formulate an Islamic world so much as they were working within the imperial contexts that hosted them. It was an "age of exploration," one that would parallel an emergent tradition of travel writing in Europe. Despite this, it is difficult to make the claim that travel writing was a fixture of Islamic literatures in this period. Sanjay Subramanian and Muzaffar Alam have argued for the existence of a corpus of travel writing from this period, but one is still hard-pressed to escape the conclusion that the genre was never fully formed, other than in the Persian poetic tradition (exemplified by the chapter on the widow of Mirza Khalil).<sup>34</sup> Despite patchy or intermittent production, several works were nevertheless landmarks of their time, including the monumental (and never fully translated) *Siyahatname* of Evliya Celebi.<sup>35</sup>

All of this would rapidly change in the latter half of the nineteenth century when the production of travel writing, including by women, suddenly appeared across the Muslim world. A number of causes may be attributed to this, including the advent of affordable printing, increased literacy, and, as we see in the next section, revolutionary changes in access to efficient and affordable transport. This was also, not coincidentally, the era of high imperialism and

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<sup>34</sup> Muzaffar Alam and Sanjay Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

<sup>35</sup> Evliya Çelebi, *An Ottoman Traveller: Selections from the Book of Travels of Evliya Çelebi* (London: Eland, 2011).

colonial influence. New regimes of knowledge, conceptions of geography, and literary styles were being introduced in colonies with large Muslim populations. Travel writing, including by women, had already become a major genre in Europe at this time—indeed, it was *the* quintessential genre of colonial literature.<sup>36</sup> This popularity and pervasiveness contributed to its spread in the colonized world and among uncolonized empires that wished to emulate, or perhaps better translate, Europe’s recent successes.<sup>37</sup> Ironically, just as Europeans began to write extensively about the women of “the Orient,” so those same women began to compose their own accounts of Europe and other regions.

In fact, one of the first Muslim women to write a travel account in the colonial-era was herself at least partially of European descent: Melek Hanim was the granddaughter of a French officer in the Ottoman Empire who converted to Islam and married a Circassian woman. Melek Hanim would eventually leave Istanbul for Europe, where her two memoirs were welcomed by audiences hungry for “true” accounts of “the harem.” In this, Melek Hanim’s account participated in a booming industry of European travel accounts that sought to offer readers ever more “authentic” (and often salacious) descriptions of life as a woman in the Ottoman Empire.<sup>38</sup> Where earlier authors had only been able to describe their experiences, Melek (and, in 1913, her sister Zeyneb), offered European readers a firsthand experience as *members* of a harem. Their accounts were not always found to be entirely convincing, though readers eager for this type of affirmative material consumed it avidly. In terms of European accounts, the two sisters would later be

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<sup>36</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>37</sup> Majchrowicz, *Travel Writing and the Journey in Modern South Asia*, forthcoming.

<sup>38</sup> Rethinking Orientalism, 13.

followed later by the far less sensationalized account of a convert, Lady Evelyn Zainab Cobbold, who wrote an account of her *Pilgrimage to Mecca* in 1934.<sup>39</sup> These accounts show how travel literature by Muslim women could even attain transnational circulation. Cobbold, for instance, was quickly translated into Urdu to offer a “guiding light” for “wayward Muslims” in India.<sup>40</sup> The book appears to have found a wide and avid readership. Indeed, travel writing by European converts was of great interest to Indian readers in particular, as exemplified by a translation of an account of a visit to India’s religious sites by a woman identified only as “a German Muslim Woman.”<sup>41</sup>

Unsurprisingly, though, the great majority of travel writing was produced in Islamic societies outside of Europe, though, as indicated already, it was anything but equal across geographic, linguistic regions or social backgrounds. We note that very little material seems to have been produced by women in Arabic-speaking Middle East and North Africa. As travel writing by Muslim men is first found here as early as the last centuries of the first millennium, it might be expected that this is where we would identify similar writing by women. Alas, works in Arabic appear to be almost non-existent before the twentieth century, with two of the earliest known accounts being Huda al-Shaarawi’s memoir, *Mudhakkirradi*, from the 1940s, followed by the travel account of reformer and feminist Amina Said’s 1946 *Observations from India*.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Another author worthy of note here is Isabelle Eberhardt, of Swiss descent, who, after moving to Algeria in 1897, converted to Islam and adopted the name Si Mahmoud Saadi. See her compelling “cult classic,” *Dans l’ombre chaude de l’Islam* (Paris: Charpentier, 1921), translated from the original French and republished as *In the Shadow of Islam* (London: Peter Owen Publishers, 2003).

<sup>40</sup> Zainab Cobbold, *Lady Evelyn Cobbald Zainab Ka Safarnamah-Yi Haramain* (Hyderabad, 1939).

<sup>41</sup> Khwaja Mu’in al-Din Ahmad Makrani (trans.), “Jama’ Masjid Gulbarga--Ek Musulman Jarman Khatun ke shauq-i siyahat ka natija,” *Saheli* 6:1-2 (1929?): 76-77.

<sup>42</sup> Only in the final stages of the project were our attentions drawn to the remarkable fifteenth-century poet and scholar, ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’uniyyah of Damascus, who described her experiences as a pilgrim in Mecca. See Th. Emil Homerin, “Living Love: The Mystical Writings of ‘Ā’ishah al-Bā’uniyyah (d.

A similar situation inheres at the opposite end of the Islamic world. Southeast Asia, despite boasting one of the most populous Muslim regions on earth, seems to have very few instances of travel writing by women. As in Arabic-speaking regions, these appear only in the 1940s and 50s. Perhaps a reflection of Indonesia's location near the Pacific (and the time-period when travel writing emerged there), two of the three accounts are of travel to the United States while a third, overtly political piece, is written by a group of women on a sponsored trip to view technical and social advances taking place in the Soviet Union (Suharti Suwanto). Sub-Saharan Africa is even more poorly represented in the selections here. From the entire continent, there is only the late nineteenth-century account of Sayyida Salamah bint Sa'id, later known as Emily Ruete, whose father belonged to the ruling class of the Omani Empire and who bore the title Sultan of Zanzibar. To date, no accounts have come to light in the many Muslim civilizations of West Africa (though, as indicated already, this is a region whose literature is tragically understudied).

Iran and India, on the other hand, have a far more evident history of women's travel writing. It is in Persian, a language with a vast and varied literary history, that we find the earliest instances of women writing about their travels, including two contemporaneous authors from the seventeenth century. The first is the anonymous writer from Iran already introduced, and the other the well-known Mughal princess Jahanara (1614-1681). Yet these two authors are more of

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922/1516)," *Mamluk Studies Review* 7 (2003): 211-234 (especially 219). We were also unable to include a mid-twentieth century 'umrah pilgrimage by the professor, scholar, and political commentator, Bint al-Shati, who, like the other Arabic-language authors in this volume, was committed to the emancipation of women in the Middle East. See Richard van Leeuwen, "In the 'Land of Wonders': Bint al-Shāṭi's Pilgrimage," in *Muslim Women's Pilgrimage to Mecca and Beyond*, eds. Marjo Buitelaar, Manja Stephan-Emmrich, Viola Thimm (London: Routledge, 2020). We are grateful to Marilyn Booth, Margot Badran, Ceyhun Arsalan and Greg Halaby for their efforts, however unsuccessful, to find other material in Arabic.



a happy anomaly than heralds of a new tradition. Pending further research and discovery, it appears that there are no other instances of travel writing that predate the late nineteenth century, when women writers suddenly spring to life. Indeed, most of the pieces here were written between the 1870s and 1950s. Though it is likely that works of travel from many regions and languages have yet to come to light, it is certain that three languages have been far more productive than any others: Turkish, Persian and Urdu.<sup>43</sup> Turkish and Persian in particular were long affiliated with major empires and were used trans-regionally for quotidian communication and intellectual exchange. Yet women's writing—by Christians, Hindus and Bahais, as well as Muslims—only appears in those languages after those empires had largely faded. In short, for all that travel has been intertwined with Islam, the history of Muslim women's travel writing has been largely a modern affair.<sup>44</sup>

These points raise the question of readership and audience. Who were the works studied here actually intended for? One such category has already emerged, namely, European audiences interested in Muslim perspectives, particularly those that would fuel Orientalist fantasies. More typical, though, was for literature to be consumed in the places whence its author hailed. Many authors here wrote for their own societies and did not imagine a gendered audience: men and women alike might be expected to read their accounts, and they were published accordingly. In

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<sup>43</sup> Our observations here are corroborated by: Roberta Micallef and Sunil Sharma (eds), *On the Wonders of Land and Sea: Persianate Travel Writing* (Boston: Ilex, 2013).

<sup>44</sup> This observation complements Metcalf's description of hajj narrative from South Asia as a "modern phenomenon." See her "The Pilgrimage Remembered: South Asian Accounts of the Hajj," 87, 101. We should also note that this lack of women's voices is not specific to travel literature: "although women surely partook of Persian literature, they represent a minority voice that is often hard to identify...women are a regrettably minor presence in Persian literature of the fifteenth to eighteenth centuries." Alam and Subrahmanyam, *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries*, 24.

other cases, particularly in India, women published for an audience imagined to comprise their “sisters”—an exclusively female readership, in other words (though these materials were undoubtedly consumed avidly by men too!) Other women, for a variety of reasons, opted not to publish at all, but instead circulated their writing through more exclusive channels: in courtly circles, family newspapers or passing a single copy from family to family. It was in the nineteenth century that women began to participate more extensively in literary spaces, composing novels, poetry, memoirs *and* travel writing.<sup>45</sup> As the readership varies widely according to the context of the writer, the question is explored further in the introduction to each chapter.

### *Muslim Women in Cultures of Travel*

If *travel writing* has been limited historically in many Muslim contexts, *travel* has certainly not. The history of Islam is filled with mobility as its followers crisscrossed the globe on their adventures and errands. It is often forgotten that women, too, were riding, sailing, and walking these same paths. At the level of doctrine, Islam itself may be seen to offer all Muslims, male and female, the motivation and opportunity to travel. No single word in Arabic corresponds to the Christian concept of “pilgrimage” with its more recent metaphorical connotations. Instead, we typically find the terms *ziyarah/ziyarat*, *‘umrah* or *hajj*, all of which refer to fixed journeys. *Ziyarah*, which literally means “visitation,” incorporates journeys to sacred shrines and tombs of all sorts. *‘Umrah* refers specifically to visits to Mecca that may occur at any time of the year. In contrast, undertaking the *hajj*, or pilgrimage to Mecca, is considered a “pillar” of Islam for those who have the means: one *must* undertake this scripted journey on a specific date in the annual

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<sup>45</sup> Lambert-Hurley, *Elusive Lives*, 3.

lunar calendar at least once in a lifetime, if it can be afforded.<sup>46</sup> Beyond this, Muslim travelers often cite a more general Quranic exhortation to “travel the earth.”<sup>47</sup> Islam also encourages travel for education: *rihla* or *talab al-‘ilm*. The celebrated Arab historian Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406) wrote: “Travelling in search of knowledge is absolutely essential for the acquisition of useful learning.”<sup>48</sup> The Prophet himself encouraged travel for knowledge: “Those who go out in search of knowledge will be in the path of God until they return.”<sup>49</sup> The Qur’an might even inspire travel for the purpose of migration: the *hijra* from an “abode of war” (*dar al-harb*) to an “abode of peace” (*dar al-Islam*).<sup>50</sup> How Muslims in different times and places experienced this Islamic doctrine was, however, incumbent on a wide range of different factors.

Muslim travel is most often associated with the hajj, but economic limitations meant that, throughout history, most Muslims did not fulfil this obligation. Exact numbers are hard to gauge before the modern era. Nevertheless, even at the time of our first account (by the widow of Mirza Khalil) in the very late seventeenth century, the hajj was a monumental enterprise. The main hajj caravans departed from Cairo, Damascus and India, but there were also numerous smaller ones from Yemen, southern Persia and elsewhere. Cairo was the collection point for Egypt, North

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<sup>46</sup> Quran 3:96-97.

<sup>47</sup> Qur’an: 6:11.

<sup>48</sup> Quoted in Tim Mackintosh-Smith, “Foreword” to his edited edition, *The Travels of Ibn Battutah* (London: Picador, 2002), x.

<sup>49</sup> Al-Tirmizi, *Sunan*, 39:2. See Sam Gellens, “The Search for Knowledge in Medieval Muslim Societies: A Comparative Approach,” ed. Eickelman and Piscatori, 50–68.

<sup>50</sup> Ian Richard Netton (ed.), *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam* (Richmond:Curzon Press, 1993), part I: ‘Hijra’. Notably, part II is on hajj and part III is on rihla. On a modern migration defined as hijra, see Kemal H. Karpat, “The *hijra* from Russia and the Balkans: The Process of Self-definition in the Late Ottoman State” in *Muslim Travellers*, ed. Eickelman and Piscatori, 131-152.

Africa and some from West Africa, while Damascus took from Syria, Turkey and parts of Persia.<sup>51</sup> Most Muslims from Africa and West Asia would travel overland, though some Africans from the Sudan south and west would cross the Red Sea by boat. Predictably, most South, Southeast and East Asian Muslims also came by boat, usually, on the final leg, on ships from Surat sponsored by an Indian ruler.<sup>52</sup> Some leaving from India might also go overland, meeting pilgrims from Central Asia before joining one of the bigger hajj caravans.<sup>53</sup> An estimate of 200,000 pilgrims has been advanced as the annual total in the eighteenth century. Of these, around 40,000 are thought to have come via Damascus, perhaps thirty or forty thousand from Cairo and around 15,000 from India.<sup>54</sup>

Pilgrimage is always shaped by politics, and the hajj, as indicated already, is no exception. The role of political factors in the hajj experience is apparent in the drop in numbers that occurred after the eighteenth century, as the relative stability afforded by Ottoman suzerainty across much of the Middle East and North Africa gave way to the more tumultuous nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Of course, there were political perils before that time: the widow of Mirza Khalil points to the challenge of travelling from predominantly Shii Safavid lands to Sunni Ottoman territories.

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<sup>51</sup> Qaisari Begum in particular offers a fascinating description of the grand entrances of these various caravans into Mecca in her description of a pilgrimage in the 1930s. See chapter 13.

<sup>52</sup> On pilgrimage ships from India, see A. Jan Qaisar, "From Port to Port: Life on Indian Ships in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries," in Ashin Das Gupta and M.N. Pearson (eds), *India and the Indian Ocean, 1500-1800* (Calcutta, 1987): 331-49.

<sup>53</sup> For this summary of the early modern hajj, I draw on Micheal N. Pearson, *Pilgrimage to Mecca: The Indian Experience 1500-1800* (Princeton, NJ: Markus Wiener Publishers, 1996), ch. 2. He, in turn, draws on a much wider set of literature on Africa, the Middle East and South Asia. On the Southeast Asian hajj, also see Eric Tagliacozzo, *The Longest Journey: Southeast Asians and the Pilgrimage to Mecca* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013). On the Central Asian hajj, see Eileen Kane, *Russian Hajj: Empire and the Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Russel King, "The Pilgrimage to Mecca: Some Geographical and Historical Aspects," *Erdkunde* 26 (1972): 65-6; Pearson, *Pilgrimage*, 53, 57.

The expansion of Wahhabi influence across the Arabian peninsula, typified by an opposition to many elements of customary hajj practice, also acted as a major curb. Hajj caravans were interrupted for several years after the sack of Mecca in 1803, which witnessed the destruction of many historical sites and shrines that were deemed idolatrous--actions that were both political and ideological, for shrines were sources of immense power and wealth.<sup>55</sup> Even when they restarted, the Damascus caravan was reduced to less than 10,000 pilgrims and, later in the nineteenth century, to less than 1000.<sup>56</sup> The hajj caravans and especially boat traffic from India were disrupted again by the First World War and the linked Hashemite uprising in Arabia.<sup>57</sup> Once the Hijaz was seized by Ibn Saud's forces in 1925, the Wahhabis' more puritanical Islam triumphed over Mecca. Zainab Cobbold and Nur Begum, who both traveled in 1933, point to the iconoclasm and subterfuge generated by this regime. Despite objections, they simultaneously highlight its implications for pilgrim safety: the hajj is purported to have become safer under the Saudi regime than it had ever been under the Sharifs of Mecca who had stewarded the holy cities from the tenth century.<sup>58</sup>

With just one exception, all the pilgrimage narratives included in this collection date from the early 1860s to the late 1930s. The most precise data for this period comes from India--departure point for ten out of fourteen of our hajj authors--thanks to the regulating instincts of the British Raj. Using official sources, William R. Roff sets the figure at 5-7,000 Indian pilgrims per

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<sup>55</sup> Pearson, *Pilgrimage*, 45.

<sup>56</sup> King, "Pilgrimage," 65-6.

<sup>57</sup> Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Ranikhet: Permanent Black, 2006), 206.

<sup>58</sup> Michael Wolfe (ed.), *One Thousand Roads to Mecca* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), 408. On the Sharif of Mecca's shortcomings, also see Sikander Begum's chapter in this volume.

year in the mid-nineteenth century, rising to at least 10,000 by the 1880s.<sup>59</sup> Once hajj committees were set up in Bombay and Karachi in 1908 and Calcutta in 1913, surveillance increased, with the effect that the numbers became even more precise: 36,089 pilgrims sailed from three Indian ports in the bumper year of 1927.<sup>60</sup> Meanwhile, in Southeast Asia, pilgrim numbers from the Dutch East Indies were about double, and in British Malaya at least half those from India.<sup>61</sup> While the largest numbers of Indian pilgrims (but not pilgrim-authors) came from Bengal and Punjab, yearly variations were attributed to “failure or success of the agricultural season.”<sup>62</sup> This points to the comparative poverty of the “average Indian pilgrim” that, certainly during the 1930s depression, made the hajj nearly impossible. It is no wonder that total numbers of hajj pilgrims dropped to an all-time low of around 20,000 in 1933.<sup>63</sup> This precarity is rarely on display in the autobiographical accounts in this volume; as specified already, not all of the women here were rich by any means, but few of them were living harvest to harvest.

The available data also points to important gender distinctions: around twenty percent of Indian pilgrims were female in the 1920s.<sup>64</sup> It is commonly held that a woman cannot perform the hajj without an appropriate male companion (or *mahram*). And yet it is clear from historical

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<sup>59</sup> William R. Roff, “Sanitation and Security: The Imperial Powers and the Nineteenth Century Hajj,” *Arabian Studies* VI (1982), 145, 148.

<sup>60</sup> Bose, *Hundred Horizons*, 204. Bose draws his material from the “Haj Pilgrimage Report, 1927,” file no, 448-N, 1926, and “Haj Enquiry Committee Report,” file no. 97-N, 1930, Foreign & Political Department, National Archives of India.

<sup>61</sup> Bose, *Hundred Horizons*, 204. For a more detailed comparison with Malaya, see Mary Byrne McDonnell, ‘Patterns of Muslim Pilgrimage from Malaysia, 1885-1995’ in *Muslim Travellers*, ed. Eickelman and Piscatori, 11. Unfortunately, comparative data has not been identified for Qajar Iran from where two more of our pilgrim authors embarked.

<sup>62</sup> Bose, *Hundred Horizons*, 204.

<sup>63</sup> William Facey and Miranda Taylor, “Introduction” to Evelyn Cobbold, *Pilgrimage to Mecca* (London: Arabian Publishing, 2008), 34.

<sup>64</sup> Bose, *Hundred Horizons*, 204.

sources that sometimes women went on hajj when their menfolk did not. In Ibn Jubayr's *Rihla*, he writes while in Mecca that an officer had been sent to the regions north of Syria each of the previous eight years to escort various *khanums*, or princesses, for their hajj. These were women of note and wealth: one of them travelled with one hundred camels'-worth of belongings and contributed to the improvement of the road and public works en route.<sup>65</sup> A more famous case from the Mughal period relates to the emperor Akbar's court. In 1575, a large group of women set out on a seven-year hajj initiated, organized and led by elder women of the *harem*. Among the party were many "chief ladies" of the court: the emperor's aunt Gulbadan, his wife Salima Sultan Begam, two cousins Gulizar Begam and Haji Begam (whose name suggests she had already undertaken the pilgrimage), another aunt Sultanam and more. Inevitably, they were accompanied by a large number of female attendants, servants and singers too. Akbar himself is said to have walked a short distance from Agra with the hajj caravan, dressed in the pilgrim's garb (or *ihram*), but then gone no further.<sup>66</sup> Other women went on hajj multiple times--including several in this collection.<sup>67</sup>

Clearly, the interpretation and experience of Islamic doctrine on hajj varied widely. Practice and belief were impacted by regional affiliation and sectarian difference. Several travelers included in Part I on "travel as pilgrimage"--including all those from Iran and some from

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<sup>65</sup> R.J.C. Broadhurst (trans.), *The Travels of Ibn Jubayr* (New Delhi: Goodword Books, 2016), 189-90.

<sup>66</sup> Annette S. Beveridge, "Introduction" to Gul-Badan Begam, *The History of Humâyûn (Humâyûn-nâmâ)*, third reprint (first published 1902) (Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1996), 69-76. Also see Lal, *Domesticity and Power in the Early Mughal World*, 66-7.

<sup>67</sup> Some examples include Begam Sarbuland Jang (who, according to the sources here, went on hajj in 1909 and 1934), Begum Hasrat Mohani (who went on four consecutive annual trips in the 1930s) and Herawati Diah (née Diah) (who undertook the 'umrah, or minor pilgrimage, four times after her 1976 hajj). On the latter's experience, see Herawati Diah, *An Endless Journey: Reflections of an Indonesian Journalist*, trans. Heather Waugh (Jakarta: Equinox Publishing, 2005).

India--identified as Shia. For Shias, *ziyarat* to the shrines was a particularly important aspect of religious practice alongside the obligatory hajj pilgrimage.<sup>68</sup> To visit the *'atabat*, namely, the shrine cities of Karbala, Najaf and Kazimayn--as described here by Mehrmah Khanom, Hajiyeh Khanom Alaviya Kermani and Sakineh Soltan Khanom Esfahani Kuchak--could thus have a value and a meaning for Shias comparable to a sojourn in Mecca and Medina in inspiring travel. Many nineteenth-century Iranian travelers followed the model of the Qajar ruler Nasir al-Din Shah, a prolific traveler who visited the shrines in Iraq and wrote a narrative about his pilgrimage. These sites were also sometimes meaningful for travelers with other sectarian affiliations: Begum Hasrat Mohani, a Sunni, describes them with great reverence. Historians have noted, similarly, how a visit to a local shrine or spiritual master--like Princess Jahanara meeting Mulla Shah--was one of the main reasons for travel before the modern era (much as it continues to be for many pious pilgrims in India, Pakistan and elsewhere).<sup>69</sup> It may be that, for many women especially, visiting a Sufi shrine for a more personal and intimate experience of the divine had greater resonance than the hajj's prescribed process. Certainly, many female authors here, like their male counterparts, describe the emotional experience of visiting the Prophet's tomb in Medina with greater fervor than they did their hajj pilgrimage. Likewise, the founder of the reformist Tablighi Jamaat, Muhammad Ilyas, suggested that *tabligh*, or proselytization--necessarily requiring travel in most contexts--could be "as important as, if not more important than" the hajj itself.<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Carl W. Ernst, *Following Muhammad : Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World* ([New South Wales]: Accessible Publishing Systems, 2010), 172.

<sup>69</sup> Kumkum Chatterjee, "Discovering India: Travel, History and Identity in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-century India" in *Invoking the Past: The Uses of History in South Asia*, ed. Daud Ali (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1999), 192-227; and Ernst, *Following Muhammad*, 175-77.

<sup>70</sup> Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori, "Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies" in their *Muslim Travellers*, 8.



Rihla, like hajj, points to the contingency of Islamic doctrine. The celebrated medieval Muslim travelers Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta may have titled their travel narratives *Rihla* as indication of their inspiration to seek knowledge.<sup>71</sup> But, after their era, the emphasis on “travel for knowledge” receded until the nineteenth century when it appeared again—particularly in conjunction with the advent of colonialism in the Indian subcontinent. A British colonial regime that envisaged travel as good for a “superstitious” and “backwards” Indian polity made travel writing a mandatory component of colonial education. Inculcated from childhood into an idea of “travel for pleasure and enlightenment,” Indian Muslims began to popularize an old phrase: *safar vasila-yi zafar*, or, “travel is the means to victory or success.”<sup>72</sup> Illustrative of this trend within this collection is Sultan Jahan Begam who included this very phrase in the introduction to her 1909 pilgrimage narrative. Skipping over any notion of travel as “hell” (*safar surat-i saqar*), she evoked as her inspiration Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta, whose writings had recently been republished in an Urdu translation.<sup>73</sup>

The high noon of European imperialism saw many other transformations, too, when it came to travel. Technological innovations enabled a “specific phase” of globalization summed up by James L. Gelvin and Nile Green as “an age of steam and print.”<sup>74</sup> Signified by their descriptor is the prime role of these technologies in facilitating “intensified and accelerated interactions” in

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<sup>71</sup> For a development of this point, see Methal R. Mohammed-Marzouk, “Knowledge, Culture, and Positionality: Analysis of Three Medieval Muslim Travel Accounts,” *Cross-Cultural Communication* 8:6 (2010), 1-10. For a full study of travel and travel writing in the medieval period, see Touati, *Islam & Travel in the Middle Ages*.

<sup>72</sup> Majchrowicz, “Travel, Travel Writing and the ‘Means to Victory’ in Modern South Asia.” 6, 8-9.

<sup>73</sup> Sultan Jahan Begam, *Rauzat al-riyahin* (Bhopal: Sultania Press, 1909), 4, 6-7.

<sup>74</sup> James L. Gelvin and Nile Green (eds), *Global Muslims in the Age of Steam and Print* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2014). On how these technologies impacted experiences of the hajj in particular, see Nile Green, “The Hajj as Its Own Undoing: Infrastructure and Integration on the Muslim Journey to Mecca,” *Past and Present* 226:1 (February 2015): 193-226.

Islamic regions between 1850 and 1930--in other words, the period in which over half of the travelers featured in this collection lived and wrote. Faster and cheaper continental and intercontinental travel became possible with the adaptation of Watt's steam engine to propel ships and trains. Though the first steamship made the passage from Britain to India in 1825, it was not until around 1880 that further modifications--in the form of the screw propeller, iron plating and the compound engine--made larger, more efficient steamships possible.<sup>75</sup> This transportation miracle inspired reflection by many of the authors here, who traversed the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea, the Suez Canal, the Mediterranean and the Pacific Ocean with P&O and other carriers. Hajiyeh Khanom Alaviya Kermani was perhaps most verbose on the vitality of ocean travel and trade, but many others documented the workings, set-up and activities aboard ship.<sup>76</sup> The specific experience of travelling by steamship during the First and Second World Wars was even captured by Huda Shaarawi, Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah and Shams Pahlavi.<sup>77</sup> Hailing from the agricultural and landlocked region of Punjab, Nur Begam was most astonished by the steamship's power and how it seemed to float on the sea "like a ball of cotton."

The railways followed a similar course to the steamship. The first "practical railroad" was built in 1825 too, but it took until the early twentieth century before the rail network had truly global scale--with around one million kilometers (or 620,000 miles) of track by the First World

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<sup>75</sup> Gelvin and Green, *Global Muslims*, 6.

<sup>76</sup> For examples, see the writings of Emily Ruete, Atiya Fyzee, Nazli Begum of Janjira, Safia Jabir Ali, Rahil Begum Shervaniya, Begum Hasrat Mohani, Iqbalunnisa Hussain, Nur Begum, Zainab Cobbold, Qaisari Begum, Mahmooda Rizvia and Herawati Diah. Not all of the passages on sea travel are included in the extracts here, but the further reading to each chapter should act as a signpost.

<sup>77</sup> Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah's description of wartime sea travel is available as supplementary material to this collection at: <https://accessingmuslimlives.org/travel/shaista2/>

War. Around 4000 km (2485 miles) of this track were in Egypt and another 6000 km (3700 miles) in the rest of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>78</sup> India, however, provides the most staggering statistics. Appreciating rail's potential for moving troops and goods quickly, the British in India invested in Asia's first rail network with a maiden commercial journey undertaken in 1853. By 1890, British India had 25,495 km of track that doubled by 1920-21, making it the world's fourth largest network.<sup>79</sup> Curiously, only some of the Indian travelers here, like Qaisari Begum, recorded their journeys by rail or road to Bombay and other ports when narrating intercontinental travel, perhaps due to the regularity of this experience for many. A trip on the luxurious Orient Express, on the other hand, connecting Paris and Istanbul from 1883, warranted suitable amazement from Nazli Begum of Janjira and Maimoona Sultan.<sup>80</sup> Equally wondrous was the Tube in London to Atiya Fyzee and Safia Jabir Ali and the Subway in New York to Selma Ekrem and Herawati Diah. For other women in this collection, railway journeys across Britain, Europe, the Middle East and the United States were more an occasion to reflect on the people met and the places observed.

By the 1930s, other transportation technologies--specifically, the automobile and the airplane--were enabling another new phase in global travel and globalization. Though "production" automobiles had been around since the late nineteenth century, their development peaked in the early 1930s with more efficient boiler and engine designs.<sup>81</sup> The impact these cars had on the hajj is documented by Zainab Cobbold, Fatima Begum and Qaisari Begum. Suddenly,

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<sup>78</sup> Gelvin and Green, *Global Muslims*, 6-7.

<sup>79</sup> Judith Brown, *Global South Asians: Introducing the Modern Diaspora* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15.

<sup>80</sup> Nazli Begum of Janjira, *Sair-i-Yurop* (Lahore: Union Steam Press, n.d.), entry for 29 August 1908; and Maimoona Sultan, Shah Bano Begum, *A Trip to Europe*, trans. Mrs. G. Baksh (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1914), 103.

<sup>81</sup> See Erik Eckermann, *World History of the Automobile* (Warrendale, PA: SAE International, 2001).

a journey that had taken many months or even years could be reduced to weeks. Along with being one of the first to make the pilgrimage by car, Zainab Cobbold was also the first of the authors here to record air travel--when she “engaged” a seat on a small “air liner” to hasten her return from Marseilles to Croydon Aerodrome in 1933.<sup>82</sup> Commercial air travel to and from Asia had been available from the 1920s, but its exclusivity and cost meant it was still only accessible to *some* of the latest travelers in this collection, including Shareefah Hamid Ali, Nyonya Aulia-Salim, Mehr al-Nisa and Zaibunissa Hamidullah going to the United States and Suharti Suwanto *en route* to the Soviet Union. Those who toured the USA from the 1930s to the 1950s reflected the flourishing automobile culture in North America at that time by responding most enthusiastically to the opportunity to travel by car: Herawati Diah and Zaibunissa Hamidullah cruised coast to coast.<sup>83</sup>

Alongside these technological innovations, the imperial system opened up particular opportunities for Muslims to experience global travel and migration. A British colonial passport, for instance, could facilitate certain (though certainly not all) journeys around the empire.<sup>84</sup> Scholarly work on imperial shipping and transportation has pointed to the pivotal role played by “native” seafarers, or lascars, of whom the majority were Muslim due to their willingness to “cross the black waters.”<sup>85</sup> Most hailed from British India, while others were Chinese, Malay,

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<sup>82</sup> Evelyn Cobbold, *A Pilgrimage to Mecca*, 262-3.

<sup>83</sup> See Herawati Diah’s entry dated 13 June 1938 in *Doenia Kita* 2:2 (Dec. 1938), 25; and the many chapters on cars and car culture in Zaib-un-Nissa Hamidullah’s *Sixty Days in America*, including VII: “Let Us Buy a Car”, XIII: “Talking of Cars” and XIV: “Travelling by Road.”

<sup>84</sup> On the emergence and operation of the passport regime in the British Empire, see Radhika Mongia, ‘Race, Nationality, Mobility: A History of the Passport’, *Public Culture* 11:3 (Fall, 1999): 527–56; and Radhika Singha, “The Great War and a ‘Proper’ Passport for the Colony: Border-Crossing in British India, c.1882–1922,” *The Indian Economic & Social History Review* 50:3 (2013): 289-315.

<sup>85</sup> The reference here is to caste prohibitions within Hinduism against crossing the seas around India.

Sinhalese, Arab and East African. These maritime laborers were employed from the seventeenth century, but their numbers reached a height in 1914 when as many as 52,000 lascars were employed on British shipping vessels alone.<sup>86</sup> European armies offered another employment opportunity abroad due to colonial recruitment practices in, for example, French Algeria, British India and the Dutch East Indies. Censored letters, as preserved in war files, offer a unique insight into the experiences of 1.45 million Indian soldiers on the Western Front and in East Africa, Egypt and Mesopotamia during the First World War alone.<sup>87</sup> Less prestigious was the indenture system that expanded after slavery's demise within the British Empire in 1833. Of around 1.5 million "coolies" carried from the Indian subcontinent to Mauritius, British Guiana, Natal, Trinidad and elsewhere, 10-20 percent were Muslim.<sup>88</sup> Other imperial routes to Muslim mobility included domestic and civil service, commerce, diplomacy, contract labor and education.<sup>89</sup>

Of these opportunities, the first two of being a lascar or joining a colonial army were not, on the whole, open to Muslim (or any) women. Yet playing a role in war was not impossible: Noor Inayat Khan operated as a secret agent in France during the First World War.<sup>90</sup> Large numbers of

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<sup>86</sup> Gopalan Balachandran, *Globalising Labour: Indian Seafarers and World Shipping, c. 1870-1945* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 36. Also see Michael H. Fisher, 'Working across the Seas Indian Maritime Labourers in India, Britain, and in Between, 1600-1857', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 51 (2006): 21-45.

<sup>87</sup> D. Omissi, *Indian Voices of the Great War: Soldiers' Letters, 1914-18* (MacMillan, 1999); David Omissi, 'Europe through Indian Eyes: Indian Soldiers Encounter England and France, 1914-1918', *English Historical Review* 122 (2007), 371-396.

<sup>88</sup> Brown, *Global South Asians*, 30-31.

<sup>89</sup> For an overview from the Indian context, see *ibid.*, 34-39.

<sup>90</sup> For a brief summary of her life, see Elizabeth Dearnley, "Musician, Author, Princess, Spy: Noor Inayat Khan" [<https://london.ac.uk/news-and-opinion/leading-women/musician-author-princess-spy-noor-inayat-khan>, accessed 19 Jul. 2019]. Ghulam Fatima Shaikh, from the colonial Indian province of Sindh, also narrated later how she accompanied her husband Shaikh Shamsuddin, a medical doctor, to Turkey to assist 'the sick and the wounded' during the First World War under the auspices of the Hilal-i Ahmar, or Red Crescent, organization. *Footprints in Time: Reminiscences of a Sindhi Matriarch*, trans. Rasheeda Husain (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2011), 30-1.

poorer Muslim women travelled for other employment. From the eighteenth century onwards, there are written and visual records of female servants and nursemaids, or ayahs, who travelled to Europe with their colonial masters. Between 1792 and 1856, the second largest group of bonded servants leaving Britain for India (at 30 per cent of the total) were those with identifiably Muslim names--and, of those, half were women.<sup>91</sup> When dismissed, some of these female servants married in Britain or returned to India with outgoing British families; but enough were unable to secure a husband or livelihood to justify the set-up of various ayahs' homes for the destitute in London from 1825.<sup>92</sup> Indenture, on the other hand, was primarily male to start, but saw growing numbers of women recruited by the Government of India from the 1850s as part of its policy of "settling" Indian labor.<sup>93</sup> Different locations had a different gender balance at different times, but a statutory fix of "a minimum of 40 women to every 100 men per shipment" in 1868 meant the proportion of women remained fairly high (at just under 30% of the total) until the system was disbanded in 1917.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004), 222-23.

<sup>92</sup> On ayahs in Britain, see Olivia Robinson, 'Travelling Ayahs of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries: Global Networks and Mobilization of Agency', *History Workshop Journal*, Vol. 86 (Autumn 2018): 44-66; and Satyasikha Chakraborty, "'Nurses on our Ocean Highways": The Precarious Metropolitan Lives of Colonial South Asian Ayahs,' *Journal of Women's History* 32 (2020): 37-64.

<sup>93</sup> Samita Sen, "Wrecking Homes, Making Families: Women's Recruitment and Indentured Labour Migration from India" in *Routledge Handbook of the South Asian Diaspora*, ed. Joya Chatterji and David Washbrook (London: Routledge, 2013), 96-109. For the story of a Muslim female labourer in Mauritius, see Satyendra Peerthum, "Daughter of Indentured Labour," *Mauritius Times* (November 7, 2016) [<http://www.mauritiustimes.com/mt/satyendra-peerthum-15/>].

<sup>94</sup> Brown, *Global South Asians*, 31. On "coolie" women in different locations, see Gaiutra Bahadur, *Coolie Woman: The Odyssey of Indenture* (London: Hurst, 2013) (on Guiana); Jo Beall, 'Women under indenture in colonial Natal, 1860-1911' in C. Clarke, C. Peach and S. Vertovec (eds), *South Asians Overseas: Migration and Ethnicity* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 2; Brij V. Lal, *Chalo Jahaji on a Journey Through Indenture in Fiji* (Acton: Australian National University, 2000), ch. 6: 'Kunti's Cry'; Marina Carter, *Lakshmi's Legacy: The Testimonies of Indian Women in 19<sup>th</sup> Century Mauritius* (Stanley, Rose Hill):

The more elite women represented in this collection were thus far from the only Muslim women travelling before the mid-twentieth century. Nevertheless, their own family histories do exemplify some of the broader trends of global Muslim mobility in the colonial era. For example, Emily Ruete's lineage as the daughter of a Circassian slave married to the Sultan of Zanzibar points to the role of slavery and marriage in moving Muslim women around the Middle East, Africa and beyond. Another four authors in this collection, sisters Atiya Fyzee and Nazli Begum of Janjira, cousin Safia Jabir Ali and niece Shareefah Hamid Ali, belonged to a prominent merchant family from Bombay—the renowned Tyabji clan—that had business interests throughout Europe, the Middle East and Asia by the late nineteenth century. Hence, Atiya and Nazli were actually born in Istanbul where their father was a respected merchant known at the Sultan's court.<sup>95</sup> At the time of her travels, Safia resided in Burma where her husband Jabir and his brother Sálim traded in hardware and invested in mining.<sup>96</sup> Jabir and Shareefah's father, Abbas, were also part of the large cohort of colonial subjects who studied in the imperial metropole to gain necessary qualifications or prestige.<sup>97</sup> Shareefah's mother, Amina, in contrast, travelled as part of a princely entourage from Baroda when she visited Britain in 1893-94.<sup>98</sup> Many other authors had parents who travelled for formal education or administrative service too.

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Editions de l' Océan Indien, 1994); and Arunima Datta, *Fleeting Agencies: A Social History of Indian Coolie Women in British Malaya* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020).

<sup>95</sup> On this connection, see Lambert-Hurley and Sharma, *Atiya's Journeys*, 18-20.

<sup>96</sup> On these business interests, see Sálim Ali, *Fall of the Sparrow* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1985), chapter 3: Burma 1914-17 and chapter 5: Memories of Burma.

<sup>97</sup> For numbers of Indian students in Britain, see Shompa Lahiri, *Indians in Britain: Anglo-Indian Encounters, Race and Identity, 1880-1930* (London: Frank Cass, 2000), 5.

<sup>98</sup> On her travels, see Lambert-Hurley, *Elusive Lives*, 163.

Unfortunately, the majority of historic travelers--often illiterate and sometimes living in precarious circumstances--did not leave written accounts from which we may gauge their experiences. This collection is thus a rare source from which to extrapolate the specifics of Muslim women's travel before the contemporary era. Not only can we gain access into female authors' own experiences and perspectives, but we also frequently encounter, through them, poorer women travelers who did not leave a record of their own. Undoubtedly, there is often a gulf of class or understanding between these workaday travelers and their privileged interlocutors. But the materials collected here still offer a unique opportunity to read between the lines of literary accounts and access a clearer picture of what this travel might look like. With female spaces largely inaccessible to men, this book sources offer particularly unusual insight. Rahil Begum Shervaniya, for instance, writes at length (if with teeth-gnashing derision) about the daily practices of women aboard her pilgrimage ship. We find her regularly sitting with women, transcribing (and then ridiculing) their banter.<sup>99</sup> Begum Hasrat Mohani, similarly, laments her experiences in the women's carriage of a train.<sup>100</sup> Nur Begum, on the other hand, shows us how crowds of women responded to taking a group shower while in quarantine, while Suharti Suwanto records how everyday women lived in Russia.

We have seen already that a primary assumption about Muslim women's travel may relate to the requirement for a close male relative, or *mahram*. Many authors here did, of course, travel with fathers, husbands, brothers or sons. Qaisari Begum evoked this requirement explicitly--and yet demonstrated the flexibility of the idea. She first suggested that, should a

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<sup>99</sup> See, as example, a translated extract provided as supplementary material to this collection here: <https://accessingmuslimlives.org/travel/rahil/>.

<sup>100</sup> See Daniel Majchrowicz, "Begum Hasrat Mohani's Journey to Iraq," forthcoming.



nephew accompany her to Bombay, that would effectively meet the condition. Yet she was plagued by doubt. During this time, she had a vision of herself travelling with a powerful but unknown figure. It was only when she reached Bombay that she understood what this dream had meant: “In this trip, and indeed in every trip, a woman is required to have a *mahram* with her. In Bombay, Abid Ali *sahib* shared with me the good news that [my spiritual advisor] *Hazrat Pir Jamaa’at Ali Shah sahib* would be traveling on the same ship as me. My heart was elated, and I suddenly remembered my dream from that night... My heart was brimming with gratitude that [God] resolved the issue of a male companion himself.<sup>101</sup> Unable to organize a blood relative as a travel companion, Qaisari Begum still managed to legitimize her journey. Another example from this volume is Hajiyeh Khanom Alaviya Kermani who evoked rulings by Shi’ite jurists to justify traveling in the protection of close friends, rather than with an immediate male relative.

Others report traveling entirely alone: Safia Jabir Ali from Bombay to meet her husband in post-First World War Britain, Sediqeh Dowlatabadi from Tehran in 1923 to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, Selma Ekrem from “Stamboul” to New York in 1924 on the promise of work, Muhammadi Begam with her infant child from Bonn to Oxford in the mid-1930s, and Herawati Diah *en route* to study at Barnard College in New York in 1937. The latter noted the benefits of welfare organizations, like Travelers Aid, in assisting women who traveled independently across the US.<sup>102</sup> Other authors may have accompanied male relatives abroad, but, finding the latter engaged with work or study, spent their days sightseeing alone or pursuing their own work or

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<sup>101</sup> See chapter 13.

<sup>102</sup> Herawati Diah, “Amerikaansche Brieven II,” *Doenia Kita* 1.3 (January 1938): 18.

interests.<sup>103</sup> A few that claimed to travel “all alone”—from the wife of Mirza Khalil in the late seventeenth century to Lady Zainab Cobbold in the 1930s—were, in reality, supported by slaves and servants. Nur Begam, also travelling on hajj in the 1930s, was unique in claiming to travel alone until the final pages of her account when she finally recognized her husband’s presence, as though he hardly mattered at all.

A second assumption may relate to the detrimental effect of veiling practices, or *purdah*, on Muslim women’s experience of travel. Bengali author and educationalist, Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, writes in her chapter here about a joyous trip to Kurseong in the eastern Himalaya in 1904, but she later sought to advertise the perils of *purdah* when it came to travel. She did so in a series entitled “Avarodhbasini” (“The Secluded Ones”) for a Bengali periodical, the *Monthly Mohammadi*, in 1929. Most brutal was “report fourteen” in which Rokeya recorded how a distant aunt of her husband stumbled over her *burqa* while changing trains at a railway junction and fell onto the track: “The Begum’s body was smashed—her *burqa* torn. A whole station-full of men witnessed this horrible accident—yet none of them was permitted to assist her. Finally, her mangled body was taken to a luggage shed. Her maid wailed piteously. After eleven hours of unspeakable agony she died. What a gruesome way to die!”<sup>104</sup> Thankfully, none of the authors included in this collection faced this kind of tragedy, but many from colonial India especially used their written accounts to reflect on the additional challenge of travelling in *purdah*. Notable

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<sup>103</sup> Examples to consider here are Safia Jabir Ali, Muhammadi Begum, Mahr al-Nisa and Nyonya Aulia Salim.

<sup>104</sup> Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, *Sultana’s Dream and Selections from the Secluded Ones*, ed. and trans. Roushan Jahan (New York: the Feminist Press, 1988), 27. Another well-known feminist author from India, Rashid Jehan, wrote at least two “travel stories” that highlighted the difficulties of wearing a *burqa* while travelling. See Priyamvada Gopal, *Literary Radicalism in India: Gender, Nation and the Transition to Independence* (London: Routledge, 2005), 39–60.

examples are Sughra Humayun Mirza and Fatima Begum who both used their travelogues to express their objection to the severity of Indian practice (though, it must be noted, not the practice altogether). The latter noted the difficult circumstances for less privileged female travelers on the sea journey from Bombay to Jeddah: “below decks” it was an “absolute prison” thanks to the “purdah upon purdah” which meant there was “no room even to take a breath.”<sup>105</sup>

Another circumstance that proved problematic for veiled voyagers was medical quarantine. Throughout the nineteenth century, the hajj pilgrimage was plagued by cholera in particular--though also malaria, smallpox, dengue fever and dysentery--with the worst epidemic turning global in 1893 (an experience once again familiar as another pandemic, COVID-19, compelled Saudi authorities to heavily discourage the hajj in 2020 and limit it to those already vaccinated in 2021). The colonial response was to set up quarantine stations on the sea and land routes to Mecca, with the most important being that on the island of Kamran off the Yemeni coast. During a mandatory ten to fifteen day stay, pilgrims experienced “cleansing” at disinfection stations and isolation if sick in an attempt to control the spread of communicable diseases.<sup>106</sup> Male pilgrims were often highly critical of quarantine in their hajj narratives, describing it as a “curse on their life”--not least because they were charged with maintaining women’s honor in impossible circumstances.<sup>107</sup> Quarantining women was deemed serious enough by authorities to

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<sup>105</sup> See chapter twelve.

<sup>106</sup> There is an extensive literature on hajj and the regulation of disease. As example, see Eric Tagliacozzo, “Hajj in the Time of Cholera: Pilgrim Ships and Contagion from Southeast Asia to the Red Sea” in Gelvin and Green (eds), *Global Muslims*, 103-120; Saurabh Mishra, *Pilgrimage, Pestilence, and Politics: The Haj from the Indian Subcontinent, 1860-1920* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2011); Elena I Campbell, “The ‘Pilgrim Question’: Regulating the Hajj in Late Imperial Russia,” *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 56:3-4 (2014): 239-68; and Roff, “Sanitation and Security.”

<sup>107</sup> Majchrowicz, “Travel, Travel Writing and the ‘Means to Victory’ in Modern South Asia,” 21-23.

warrant a special regulation in 1897 detailing how to search female passengers who, otherwise, may be hidden from officers by protective male relatives.<sup>108</sup> From women's own accounts, we get a sense of their specific grievances. The long list compiled by Rahil Begum Shervaniya included: the mandatory bath was required even when one was ill, the female attendants were "ill-bred and rude," pilgrims had to strip bare in front of a crowd, the towels provided were not of sufficient size to cover one's "private areas," women were manhandled into the shower, and there were no purdah arrangements in the quarantine accommodation. As she summarized: "Such a calamity can only be compared to Judgment Day."<sup>109</sup> It is no wonder that more elite travelers like Nawab Sultan Jahan Begam invested so much correspondence in convincing the British Government to exempt them and their female companions entirely.<sup>110</sup>

Other authors were more accepting of the special arrangements of purdah travel, identifying veiling as a means to remain comfortable and safe while moving around freely. Qaisari Begum, for instance, recorded how, on her 1936 hajj, a service existed at Nampally station in Hyderabad by which *pardah-nashin* travelers could be transported from the women's waiting room to the women-only train car in a curtained "station rickshaw." A problem only arose when she attempted to board the train in her *burqa*--at which point her way was blocked physically by two irate European women obviously not keen on sharing their accommodation with a veiled Indian woman. Later in her journey, on the road to Medina, the men in her party stopped at a

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<sup>108</sup> Tagliacozzo, "Hajj in the Time of Cholera," 114.

<sup>109</sup> See the chapter on Rahil Begum Shervaniya's. A fuller translation of her experience--worthy reading for its frank and ironic tone--is available as supplementary material to this collection here: <https://accessingmuslimlives.org/travel/rahil/>.

<sup>110</sup> This correspondence is preserved in Sultan Jahan Begam, *The Story of a Pilgrimage to Hijaz* (Calcutta: Thacker, Spink & Co, 1909).

caravanserai to get some rest, while the women were left to sleep in the car, presumably to maintain purdah. Clearly, this arrangement was quite natural to Qaisari Begum, for her only observation was that it was good to be able to “stretch out” in the men’s absence.<sup>111</sup> Donning a burqa, charshaf, chador, yashmak or simple headscarf to maintain modesty while out-and-about was so usual for many of these female authors that they did not deem it necessary even to mention as a feature of their travel experience--unless they were consciously performing their piety for a conservative audience back home.<sup>112</sup> For others, travel was an opportunity to think about purdah and how best to practice it, as seen in the above quote from Fatima Begum. Veiling could offer female travelers anonymity and an opportunity to avoid unwanted gazes and interactions. Segregation also allowed them to interact with other women freely without the presence of husbands or other menfolk.

Of course, not all the women in this collection practiced veiling or seclusion in the same way, whether at home or abroad. A good number, particularly towards the end of our timescale, did not veil at all. Others took a kind of vacation from purdah by which, as soon as they boarded a steamship, customary practices ceased. A useful example here is Nazli Begam of Janjira who, as the wife of Indian princely ruler, observed “strict seclusion” at home so as not to make herself a “target of censure,” but moved in mixed company in London and Paris.<sup>113</sup> Begam Inam Habibullah, too, experimented with living outside purdah while in Britain in the early 1920s, only to decide that she would not return to it upon her own return to India. For those experiencing

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<sup>111</sup> This extract is available as supplementary material to this collection here: <https://accessingmuslimlives.org/travel/life/>.

<sup>112</sup> Atiya Fyzee offers the best example of the latter in her entry for 10 November 1906.

<sup>113</sup> Nazli, *Sair-i-Yurop*, 57-8.

life outside seclusion for the first time while abroad, the sensation could be exhilarating--or very frightening. Despite the wide span of time and distance, and the different audiences addressed, it is worth contrasting here the testimonies of Zeyneb Hanoum arriving in Europe from the Ottoman Empire in 1906 with that of Nyonya Aulia-Salim visiting the US from Indonesia in the 1950s. While the first reveled (perhaps for the benefit of a European readership) in being able to look through a window with "neither lattice-work nor iron bars," the latter found it difficult to walk the streets alone after a highly-cloistered childhood. As she put it so poignantly, "Previously confined by custom, now from fear. It is a cruelty like no other!"<sup>114</sup>

Another common question for travelers then, as now, was what to wear abroad in terms of everyday dress. Many male travelers fulfilled the expectation to wear "cuff and collar" while touring, working or studying in Europe or North America no matter their place of origin, but women's habits were more complex. Most of the Turkish, Arab and later Iranian authors here, as well as the Indonesian student Herawati Diah, reported wearing "European costume" (or its American equivalent)--or appeared in images in the same. South Asian women, on the other hand, typically continued to wear the same type of clothes that they did at home: most often a highly-decorative sari draped over a full- or half-sleeved blouse. This may have reflected personal comfort, but also a nationalist discourse in which women functioned as emblems of cultural identity.<sup>115</sup> Clearly, their usual attire was not always practical in colder climes and had to be augmented with woolens, gloves, cloaks and "good walking shoes."<sup>116</sup> It also attracted a good

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<sup>114</sup> See chapters 18 and 45.

<sup>115</sup> Useful for gaining this comparative perspective is Sanjay Seth's "Nationalism, Modernity and the 'Woman Question' in India and China," *Journal of Asian Studies* 72:2 (May 2013): 273-97.

<sup>116</sup> Lambert-Hurley and Sharma, *Atiya's Journeys*, 151. Also see Muhammadi Begam's entry for 3 Jan. 1935.

deal of attention to which some women responded with glee, while others recoiled.<sup>117</sup> That dress was a contentious issue signifying broader cultural capitulation can be seen in the vicious rebukes issued to those *desi* women who adopted “Western” styles—“like the crow that fancies itself a swan,” as Muhammadi Begum put it.<sup>118</sup> A notable exception was nurse Mehr al-Nisa who, in order to continue her work in an Ohio hospital in the early 1950s, adapted to skirts and blouses according to the axiom: “When in Rome...”<sup>119</sup>

For Muslim women with families, their children’s comfort and wellbeing proved another travel challenge. The concerns may be practical, often in ways familiar to any parent today: how to carry luggage while holding a child’s hand or carrying a baby, how to bathe children regularly in accommodation without facilities, how to breastfeed or relieve oneself on a train when traveling with an infant, or how to reach a mountain-top shrine when little legs could not manage.<sup>120</sup> They could also be cultural and religious. With three boys at boarding school in England, Begum Inam Habibullah worried that her sons would lose their first language and culture: would they still be able to speak Urdu? Would they remember to say their prayers? Would their religious beliefs remain intact? For those women who spent extended periods abroad, there was also the question of how to maintain a home in foreign climes. Taking into account their elite status, it is perhaps not surprising that some authors struggled without the domestic servants—including cleaners, cooks, ayahs, gardeners and washers—to which they may have been accustomed at home. Others upturned racial hierarchies by employing local help—like

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<sup>117</sup> These responses are discussed in more detail in the final section.

<sup>118</sup> See chapter 30.

<sup>119</sup> See chapter 32.

<sup>120</sup> For examples, see chapters 30 and 42.

Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah with her Swedish nurse and English nanny to care for her three children while she studied for a PhD in London in the late 1930s.<sup>121</sup> Finding familiar food and ingredients for a meal redolent of “home” was also a recurrent theme.<sup>122</sup>

In closing this section, we observe that evoking “the Muslim woman” in our current political climate too often conjures images of black veils and shrouded faces: the hijab becomes a symbol of clipped horizons and curtailed movement. Against this, historical evidence highlights the contingency of how Muslim women *actually* participated in cultures of travel before the “jet age.” Islam itself may facilitate travel for pilgrimage, education and migration, but how that doctrine is interpreted remains highly variable and inflected by social positioning, location, nationality, and individual circumstance. Just as Muslim women travelers had to negotiate cultural expectations and local patriarchies, so they shared experiences along the way with other women, their co-religionists and many others — including us. For contemporary readers, some observations made by these authors will expose the distance of time and place: how cultures of travel were impacted by changing technologies, political systems, economic realities and social mores. Others may feel oddly familiar. Who has not felt the shock of alien environs, the fun (and disgust) of trying new foods, the longing to see distant family and friends, the comforts of home, or the frustration of not being able to understand a foreign tongue? The chapters will remind some readers of the travel and migration experiences of their own mothers and grandmothers. Keeping in mind the specific historical contexts in which our authors traveled and wrote is thus

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<sup>121</sup> Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, *From Purdah to Parliament* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1998), 81.

<sup>122</sup> This point is developed in Siobhan Lambert-Hurley, “‘Human or not, everyone has their own habits and tastes’: Food, Identity and Difference in Muslim South Asia,” *Global Food History*, forthcoming.



key to appreciating this material and, with it, Islam’s diversity—but it should not shroud our common humanity.

### *Reorienting the Global*

This book is intended to be accessible to undergraduates and general readers while also offering new insights to scholars and specialists. Indeed, an underlying purpose of this project from its conception has been to integrate gendered subjectivities into a deepened understanding of our global past. In recent years, global history as a sub-discipline has come under fire, not just for being “out of step” with a present in which “nationalism is the antidote”—think, Trump, Brexit, Modi, Erdoğan, Le Pen, Bolsonaro—but also for inaugurating what Jeremy Adelman calls “its own segregation.”<sup>123</sup> The first segregation he identifies is language. As he writes with suitable provocation: “It is hard not to conclude that global history is another Anglospheric invention to integrate the Other into a cosmopolitan narrative on our terms, in our tongues.”<sup>124</sup> English has become “Globish,” he observes, taking foreign language learning into further decline. A collection of English translations of the sort one finds in this volume will not stem this tide, of course, but it still makes available to global, international and imperial histories a type of historical source rarely employed in their service. If the average historian with globalizing ambitions for their

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<sup>123</sup> Jeremy Adelman, ‘What is Global History Now?’ on *Aeon* (2 March 2017) [<https://aeon.co/essays/is-global-history-still-possible-or-has-it-had-its-moment>, accessed 10 Jul. 2019]. On global history as a specific field or practice, see Sebastian Conrad, *What is Global History?* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016). The introduction is available here: <http://assets.press.princeton.edu/chapters/s10748.pdf>

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*

scholarship cannot gain access to original sources in, for example, Turkish, Persian or Urdu, this collection at least opens their eyes to what they are missing.

In making this point, we do, of course, recognize the risks inherent to translation. Translation is one of the most prominent tools for intercultural communication--but it is also among the most dangerous. Translators do not simply transfer language and ideas from one language to its equivalent in another, but wield immense power to shape how a text is perceived, to make it anew.<sup>125</sup> In an anthology such as this, the selection of excerpts from a text is another site of negotiation and power since only a fraction of an author's thought makes it onto the page. The politics of translation and selection have had an especially checkered past when it comes to the representation of Muslims in European languages--as colonialists and Orientalists sought to shape perceptions of the religion, often as an intolerant or rigidly legalistic.<sup>126</sup> This book addresses these issues in a number of ways. First, the translations remain faithful to the original in intention and style, but in a language that is as clear and comprehensive as possible for a general reader. Rather than seek misleading equivalences for specific terms, a glossary introduces readers to the concepts used by the translated authors. Every excerpt is also carefully contextualized in the introduction to the text, so that the reader may judge their meaning for themselves. Citations to the original sources, and the provision of some original text on the project website bring further transparency. Collectively, the translations here adopt a wide range of attitude and viewpoints, thus underlining the complexity and diversity of Muslim thought.

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<sup>125</sup> See Susan Bassnett, *Translation Studies* (London: Routledge, 2014, 4th edition) and Lawrence Venuti (ed.), *The Translation Studies Reader* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021, 4th edition).

<sup>126</sup> Manan Ahmed Asif, *The Loss of Hindustan: The Invention of India* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020); Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003).

These considerations, we hope, will evade the inherent risks of translation and selection and bring otherwise inaccessible voices directly into the conversation.

And even if available only in the form of translated or original extracts, what these sources reveal can be game-changing. A second “segregation” identified by Adelman relates to the “do-good storytelling” that he claims underpins the global history project. By emphasizing our “cosmopolitan commonness”—what we share, how we connect—it sets those in motion apart, in his view, from those left behind: those who did not travel, but instead stayed “at home.”<sup>127</sup> In fact, these categories are far from dichotomous. As our sources show, connecting need not mean sharing, being in motion can still herald exclusion. We may consider, as example, the accounts of hajj in the first part of this collection. The pilgrimage to Mecca is often depicted as the quintessential reflection of Muslim solidarity: regardless of nation, regardless of color, all pilgrims, rich and poor, male and female, young and old, don the pure white *ihram* to pray on equal footing before the holy Kaaba.<sup>128</sup> The sheer joy that this encounter can kindle infuses Qaisari Begum’s account: the women from Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Yemen that she encountered may be unique from her description, but they are indistinguishable in their devotion. For Nur Begum, even the reviled quarantine was an occasion for harmony and rapture: those women from “all over” could laugh and play as they bathed together.

For other women travelers, the “commonness” never came. One of the great ironies to emerge from Dale F. Eickelman and James Piscatori’s seminal edited collection on Muslims

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<sup>127</sup> In responding to this charge here, we join other other critics—for example, Richard Drayton and David Motadel in ‘Discussion: the futures of global history’, *Journal of Global History* 13:1 (2018): 1-21.

<sup>128</sup> As example, Sultan Jahan Begum and Ummat al-Ghani Nur al-Nisa alike quoted the Quranic adage that “all believers are brothers” (49:10)—apparently without questioning its gendered formulation.

travelling to other parts of the Muslim world was the “difference” they experienced. Pilgrims may have gone on hajj expecting to be enveloped by the “spiritual unity of the *umma*,” but, more often than not, they found their “consciousness of locality and difference” amplified.<sup>129</sup> Through women’s eyes, our accounts suggest, the sense of difference related most often to other women. Sikandar Begum may have expressed disapproval for most people and places that she encountered in the Hijaz, but it was Arabian women that garnered her greatest wrath. Faced with their physicality, language, cultural practices and religiosity, her identity as an *Indian* Muslim was only confirmed.<sup>130</sup> Not so for Rahil Begum Shervaniya who spurned pilgrims from other parts of India—Bengalis and Biharis especially—even more than her Arab fellow travelers. In sharp contrast to Nur Begum, her quarantine descended into accusations and quarrel. Even those on a conscious quest for Islamic sisterhood—like Begum Sarbuland Jang—could find themselves overwhelmed by cultural and linguistic difference. In the end, she was reduced to performing Muslim unity before an audience of Englishwomen.<sup>131</sup>

Those women that travelled from colonized territories to Europe reacted with equal ambivalence to the connections facilitated by motion. Connection could inspire friendship—as Atiya Fyzee found among her fellow students at Maria Grey Training College in London in 1906-7.<sup>132</sup> The strict binaries between “West” and “non-West,” colonizer and colonized, might thus be blurred, as Leela Gandhi has explored, by “affective communities” forged at the heart and height

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<sup>129</sup> Eickelman and Piscatori, *Muslim Travellers*, xii-xv.

<sup>130</sup> For a development of this point, see Lambert-Hurley, *A Princess’s Pilgrimage*, xli-li

<sup>131</sup> See Majchrowicz, *Travel Writing and the Journey in Modern South Asia*, especially ch. 6.

<sup>132</sup> For a development of this theme, see Lambert-Hurley and Sharma, *Atiya’s Journeys*, 91.

of empire.<sup>133</sup> Nevertheless, existing scholarship focused on Indian *male* students in Britain in the high colonial period has highlighted the racial abuse and ostracism faced by this group perceived to be a political, economic and sexual threat.<sup>134</sup> For women, curiosity seemed more the norm. We may point to the “chubby little children” described so charmingly by Safia Jabir Ali as gifting her flowers at Rosyth tramway station or parading past “merely to look” at London Zoo. In a parallel to the Indian and Colonial Exhibition opened to “rave review” in London in 1886, Safia and her party were turned into a “spectacle of empire”: “as if we were also a part of the Zoo for them!”<sup>135</sup> The small numbers of Indian women in Britain, their perceived lack of threat, and the exoticism exuded by their customary dress seems to have made British society more receptive to their presence.

Of course, British curiosity was not always received with equanimity, as Begum Inam Habibullah indicates: who would not feel uncomfortable being part of the “Indian party” that came under the watchful gaze of an entire restaurant? Her accompanying complaints about British cuisine point in turn to the cultural entrenchment—as opposed to vaunted open-mindedness—that could result from travel.<sup>136</sup> Muhammadi Begum may have enjoyed a wide social circle while living and studying in Oxford in the 1930s, but still she was inspired by her sometimes lonely existence to relinquish any sense of commonality with the proclamation: “It is

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<sup>133</sup> Leela Gandhi, *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-de-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics of Friendship* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006).

<sup>134</sup> See Lahiri, *Indians in Britain*, 72-76; and Wainwright, ‘The Better Class of Indians’, ch. 8: “Assimilation and Ostracism in Education.” For a fictive account, see Sajjad Zaheer, *A Night in London*, tr. Bilal Hashmi (Noida: HarperPerennial, 2011 reprint).

<sup>135</sup> See chapter 40. On this exhibition, see Antoinette Burton, “Making a Spectacle of Empire: Indian Travellers in *Fin-de-Siècle London*,” *History Workshop* 46 (1996):127.

<sup>136</sup> For a development of this point, see Lambert-Hurley, “‘Human or not, everyone has their own habits and tastes’”.

true, after all, the West is the West and the East is the East!”<sup>137</sup> A lengthy stay in early twentieth-century Europe or North America only convinced many female travelers, including Zeyneb Hanoum from Turkey, Sultan Jahan Begum from India and Herawati Diah from Indonesia, that “Western” culture and society could not live up to its billing. “The *mirage* of the West,” as Zeyneb Hanoum called it, pertained most obviously for these women to the “freedom” of women—which they equated with women’s suffrage and professional careers.<sup>138</sup> Woe betide those Muslim countries, like Turkey, where women turned their backs—as Maimoona Sultan and Begum Sarbuland Jang both observed—on Islamic morality in favor of European mores.

Being female could also prove key to how those in motion might still be left behind—sometimes physically, sometimes metaphorically. We may think here of another hajji, Sakineh Soltan Khanom Esfahani Kuchak. On the road to Mecca in 1900, her party split: half to Damascus, half to Aleppo. Her greatest desire to visit the shrine of a female saint, Hazrat Zainab, in Damascus seemed to have been spurned purposefully by her brother, inspiring an astute observation: “Whatever a man is and whatever a woman is, the poor woman is the man’s slave.”<sup>139</sup> A few years later in a very different part of the world, Maimoona Sultan’s possibilities for experiencing Britain and continental Europe were curtailed by the limits of *purdah*, or women’s seclusion, as practiced in India. She travelled and even wrote about her travels, and yet much of what she observed was second-hand through family or newspapers as she remained behind from public outings in hotels or rented homes. Taj al-Saltanah, in contrast, never fulfilled her desire to travel from Iran to Europe, despite travelling widely within Qajar territories. And yet her mind remained

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<sup>137</sup> See chapter 30.

<sup>138</sup> See chapter 18.

<sup>139</sup> See chapter 5.

open always to the possibilities of exchange and connection, particularly when it came to women's rights. In other words, those in motion could experience commonness, or not, just as much as those left behind—but, either way, the phenomenon was most often gendered.

What these few examples point to, too, is the complex renegotiation of global geographies required by these travel writings. The recurrent Victorian metaphor of the “voyage out”—implying a one-way traffic between imperial “core” and colonial “periphery”—has much to answer for here. Too often in the course of this project we were faced with the assumption that, in undertaking a project on “women travelers,” we must be studying those British women in particular who travelled to “the colonies.” Their experiences have, as we have seen already, been captured in a wealth of academic studies, as well as popular anthologies with such charming titles as *Memsahibs Abroad* and *Unsuitable for Ladies*.<sup>140</sup> The requirement to counter such deeply-entrenched notions is encapsulated by Michael Fisher's title for his monumental study of Indian travelers to Britain before 1857: *Counterflows to Colonialism*.<sup>141</sup> To trace the convoluted paths of Muslim women travelers is to disrupt one of the primary assumptions of Eurocentrism: that people and knowledge and ideas radiate outwards from the West to the rest.<sup>142</sup> We may

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<sup>140</sup> For examples from this vast literature, see fn. 11. The two anthologies mentioned are: Jane Robinson, *Unsuitable for Ladies: An Anthology of Women Travellers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) and *Memsahibs Abroad: Writings by Women Travellers in Nineteenth Century India* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1998). Another is Mary Morris with Larry O'Connor (eds.), *The Virago Book of Women Travellers* (London: Virago Press, 2004). Also pertinent was a special exhibition entitled “Off the Beaten Track: Three Centuries of Women Travellers” at the National Portrait Gallery in London in 2004—only 12 women who travelled to Britain.

<sup>141</sup> Michael H. Fisher, *Counterflows to Colonialism: Indian Travellers and Settlers in Britain 1600-1857* (Delhi: Permanent Black, 2004). Another example focused more explicitly on Muslims is Claire Chambers' *Britain through Muslim Eyes: Literary Representations, 1780-1988* (London: PalgraveMacmillan, 2015).

<sup>142</sup> For a most explicit statement of this Eurocentric assumption, see J.M. Blaut, *Eight Eurocentric Historians* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2000), 7: “The main form of interaction between Europe and

think of Selma Ekrem, as just one example, moving from Turkey to Palestine, back to Turkey, to Greece (twice), and then, ultimately, to the United States.

The pieces here also challenge us to rethink what constitutes “domestic” and “international” travel. Most of them reflect travel to distant regions: Indians in Mecca, Indonesians in the United States, Egyptians in India, Turks in Finland, Iranians in South Africa. A few of the authors here, though, reflect on travel much closer to home—for instance, Princess Jahanara’s summering in the Kashmir Valley, Taj al-Saltanah’s peregrinations within the bounds of Qajar Iran or Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain venturing from Calcutta to Kurseong in the eastern Himalaya. Of particular note are those South Asian travelers, who regularly wrote about their visits to other parts of India.<sup>143</sup> These journeys often took them from a British-run presidency to a semi-independent “princely state,” or vice-versa, and areas with different currencies, languages and cultural practices. Often, authors would include descriptions of neighboring “countries” within India alongside the narrative of their intercontinental journeys. The patent unfamiliarity of, say, Bombay to the Punjabi Nur Begum, too, helps us to remember that present-day national boundaries were often more imaginary than real for earlier travelers. At the same time, a visit to Iraq or Britain from India could mean remaining within the British Empire when understandings of “imperial citizenship” were being formulated by colonisers and colonised alike.<sup>144</sup>

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non-Europe is the outward diffusion of progressive innovations (ideas, things, settlers—in aggregate, civilisation) from Europe to non-Europe.”

<sup>143</sup> Other texts we might have included, as example, are Zehra Fyze’s *Mazamin* (Agra: Mufid-i’Am, 1921) and Sughra Humayun Mirza’s *Sair-i-Bhopal o Bengal* (1914) and *Roznamcha-i-Safar-i-Bhopal* (Hyderabad: al-Nisa monthly, 1924), which narrate travels within the borders of the British Indian empire.

<sup>144</sup> See Sukanya Banerjee, *Becoming Imperial Citizens: Indians in the late-Victorian Empire* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2010).



Also inherent to this material is a challenge to any notion of the global subsumed within a British imperial frame. The somewhat disagreeable term, “British world,” has been seized upon in the last twenty years or so by a whole score of imperial historians eager to recast the broad reach of the British Empire in such a way so as to jump on the global bandwagon.<sup>145</sup> An effect has been the firming up of notions of the British Empire’s exceptionality to the point that it is conceived, in the words of Antoinette Burton, as: “a static, fully accomplished, or (worse yet) teleologically hegemonic phenomenon untouched by the threat of competition or the spectre of native resistance from within.”<sup>146</sup> One imagines that, in her worst case scenario, she envisions Niall Ferguson’s contentions in his bestselling *Empire* (first published in 2003 and reprinted ever since) as captured by its subtitle: *How Britain Made the Modern World*.<sup>147</sup> Those scholars employing a biographical approach to global history—as we do here—tend to fall into similar traps whereby “global lives” are, far more often than not, Britons operating within the British Empire.<sup>148</sup> Early modernists have been more successful at using individuals, albeit mostly male, to tell “connected histories” outside this frame, but there are some notable exceptions among modernists too. Take Seema Alavi, who, in her study of five Indian Muslim men connected to Ottoman territories, puts a “spotlight on the interstices” between empires traversed by “British subjects (rather than Britons).”<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>145</sup> Surveying and critiquing this body of literature is Rachel K. Bright and Andrew R. Dilley, “After the British World,” *The Historical Journal* 60:2 (June 2017): 547-68.

<sup>146</sup> Antoinette Burton, “Getting Outside the Global: Repositioning British Imperialism in World History” in her *Empire in Question: Reading, Writing, and Teaching British Imperialism* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 279. “Native” would be better in quotation marks.

<sup>147</sup> Niall Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (New York: Allen Lane, 2003).

<sup>148</sup> An illustrative example is Miles Ogburn’s *Global Lives: Britain and the World 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

<sup>149</sup> Seema Alavi, *Muslim Cosmopolitanism in the Age of Empire* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2015), 12-13. “Connected histories” is a phrase attributed to Sanjay Subrahmanyam and put into

The implications of the materials here for individual fields of study within global and international history are also highly significant. Clearly, it is not possible to survey *all* scholarly repercussions within a comparatively short introduction, but it is worth flagging up a highlight or two. Let us turn our attention first to human rights historiography. This literature has tended to portray the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted by the United Nations in 1948, as a “Western project” imposed by male leaders on women and “post colonial subjects.” Recent re-readings have sought to reinterpret the UDHR as a document “rooted in conflicting cultural narratives, rather than stemming from a Western hegemonic consensus”—but, even then, the role of women delegates, advisors and consultants from Asia, Africa and Latin America is often underplayed.<sup>150</sup> Chapter 23 features extracts from a travel narrative written by Indian feminist Shareefah Hamid Ali in 1947 while delegate to the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW). Formed as a committee under the Commission of Human Rights, the CSW was charged with ensuring women’s rights were duly considered in the drafting of the UDHR. This frank account underlining an Indian female delegate’s involvement and contributions may not be found in the United Nations Archives in Geneva usually frequented by historians of international

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practice in a book with Muzaffar Alam inspirational to our own study: *Indo-Persian Travels in the Age of Discoveries, 1400-1800*. Also galvanizing to our efforts were: Natalie Zemon Davis’ *Trickster Travels: The Search for Leo Africanus* (London: Faber and Faber, 2007) and Julia A. Clancy-Smith, *Mediterraneans: North Africa and Europe in an Age of Migration, c. 1800-1900* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2011); and Eric Tagliacozzo, *Secret Traders, Porous Borders: Smuggling and States along a Southeast Asian Frontier, 1865-1915* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2009).

<sup>150</sup> Rebecca Adami, “On Subalternity and Representation: Female and Postcolonial Subjects Claiming Universal Human Rights in 1948,” *Journal of Research on Women and Gender* 6 (2015): 56-66. Thanks to MA student, Sammi-Beth Clarke, at the University of Sheffield for conversations linked to her dissertation on “how women from the global south shaped human rights,” that enabled this point to be developed.

organizations, nor has it been republished before now beyond the local women's journal, *Roshni*, in which it first appeared at the time.

By emphasizing circulation--over movement from A to B--our sources also unsettle some of the basic categories of migration studies. Evidently, *travel*, as emphasized in this collection, can represent a different impulse to *migration*. And yet, by broadening our source base in the way detailed in the first full section, we illuminate the overlap and nexus captured by the "new mobilities paradigm" so often positioned within the social sciences.<sup>151</sup> Once in movement, many of our subjects just kept moving. The example of Selma Ekrem has been noted already, but perhaps even more apposite is that of Sayyida Salamah bint Said, later known as Emily Ruete. Nineteen years after migrating from Zanzibar to Germany (during which time she travelled extensively within Europe), she returned "home" twice, only to leave again for a multi-decade stay in the Levant before, finally, returning to Germany.<sup>152</sup> Those who travelled for education may never have intended to stay at their destination, and yet they often lived there for long enough that it started to feel like a home (see Part II). The shift in historiography from large-scale analyses of mass migration based on quantitative data to a focus on lived experiences is also supported by these accounts. Oral interviews may be used in a contemporary context to highlight the plurality of migrants' experiences by gender, age, religion and nationality, among other factors.<sup>153</sup> But, for the longer past, narratives of the type here are crucial--not just for what they

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<sup>151</sup> See, for example, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, "Mobilizing the New Mobilities Paradigm." *Applied Mobilities* 1 (2016): 10–25.

<sup>152</sup> See chapter 36.

<sup>153</sup> For an example, see Nando Sigona, "The Politics of Refugee Voices: Representations, Narratives, and Memories" in Elena Fiddian-Qasmiyeh, Gil Loescher, Katy Long and Nando Sigona, *The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 369-82.

tell about the narrator, but also the narrated. This collection thus reinforces the contributions already and still to be made by arts and humanities scholars to understanding mobilities in terms of “how movement is enacted, felt, perceived, expressed, metered, choreographed, appreciated and desired.”<sup>154</sup>

There are also important implications here for thinking about global or world literature, particularly in terms of Eurocentric approaches to the travel of knowledge and ideas. Consider Franco Moretti’s highly influential model that, drawing on Immanuel Wallerstein’s “world-system” theory, purports there to be a single literary map on which only three literary spaces exist in hierarchy to one another: the core, the periphery and the semi-periphery. When Moretti first expounded this theory, his map was underpinned by a diffusionist model according to which the novel spread from the European “core” to the non-European “periphery.”<sup>155</sup> Later iterations of his argument make a distinction between a pre-eighteenth century world in which “local” literary cultures existed and a later era of European cultural and economic domination in which a “stunning amount of sameness” prevailed.<sup>156</sup> In Francesca Orsini’s critique, this approach to world literature has the effect of “making nine-tenths of the map (and its literature) drop off the map entirely”--or, at best, “appear hopelessly ‘peripheral.’”<sup>157</sup> Orsini’s call to take a “multilingual approach” that keeps “*both local and cosmopolitan perspectives in view*” may be borne out by this book--if we keep in mind that exclusions may not simply be the work of Eurocentric models,

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<sup>154</sup> Peter Merriman and Lynne Pearce, “Mobility and the Humanities,” *Mobilities* 12:4 (2017): 493-508.

<sup>155</sup> Franco Moretti, “More Conjectures,” *New Left Review* 23 (2003):73-81.

<sup>156</sup> Franco Moretti, “Evolution, World Systems, *Weltliteratur*,” *Review: Frank Braudel Center* 28:3 (2005), 227-28 (full page range: 217-228).

<sup>157</sup> Francesca Orsini, “The Multilingual Local in World Literature,” *Comparative Literature* 67:4 (2015): 345-6 [345-374]. Italics in original.

but also gendered imbalances within the linguistic traditions producing the travel writing featured here.

We point in this section to just a few of the possibilities for how this book may *reorient* the global—though with an attentiveness to gender and sexuality not necessarily envisaged by the term’s most famous proponent, Gunder Frank.<sup>158</sup> As to how this collection is *actually* used by scholars, university teachers, students and the general public, we await to see. Certainly, the potentials for the undergraduate classroom are as significant as those highlighted here for global historiography and world literature. In Antoinette Burton’s *A Primer for Teaching World History*, she flags the importance of “centering connectivity,” using women and gender to “make hypervisible” systems of power, and “thinking world history from below.”<sup>159</sup> Clearly, the materials in this collection could, when designing a syllabus for “World History 101,” invigorate all of those quests. Particular chapters could also be embedded into specific History courses on a wide variety of time periods and themes--from Muslim empires and European colonialism to British multiculturalism and US immigration--as part of the transformation required to “decolonize history.” Some critics of this movement have posited that perspectives on race and gender are “not relevant to certain subject matter”--like US Foreign Policy, for instance--or that a “less Eurocentric history” means expunging certain favored topics (the Tudors and the English

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<sup>158</sup> Andre Gunder Frank, *ReOrient: Global Economy in the Asian Age* (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 1998). For his clearest omission of gender as a theme for global history, see “A Plea for World System History,” *Journal of World History* 2:1 (1991): 1-28. A key statement on the importance of “recovering women and gender in world history” was Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton (eds), *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2005) (p. 13 for quotation).

<sup>159</sup> Antoinette Burton, *A Primer for Teaching World History: Ten Design Principles* (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 2012), ch. 2-4.

Civil War are common examples in the United Kingdom) from our curriculum.<sup>160</sup> But we hold that it is only through incorporating the kinds of perspectives inherent to this volume into broader historical study that we can reflect critically on the privileging and marginalization of certain voices, while bringing the past to bear on our contemporary debates about globalization, migration and decolonization.

Chapters from this book have found their way already into the syllabi of courses in Islamic Studies. This field has increasingly turned away from an emphasis on Islam as an “object” or “category” with a prescriptive theological doctrine, and instead towards an engagement with “the historical and human phenomenon that is Islam in its plenitude and complexity of meaning.”<sup>161</sup> Despite this, classes on gender and Islam continue to draw largely on a set of normative texts, supplemented by modern ethnographies and contemporary writing, perhaps in part because so little material is available in English. This book will allow instructors to bring *historical* depth to their syllabus and create the possibility for comparative analysis that is diverse culturally and temporally. One might use these texts to read contemporary Iranian pilgrimage against practices from Qajar or Safavid periods, or compare those experiences to that of Indians. Yet these texts should not only be used to reject essentializing approaches to Islam and to remind ourselves that there are “multiple Islams.” Rather, reading them should help us remain acutely

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<sup>160</sup> There is a huge literature now on “decolonizing history” or “decolonizing the curriculum” in the popular and academic press, but we quote here from: James Muldoon, “Academics: it’s time to get behind decolonising the curriculum,” *The Guardian* (20 Mar. 2019) [<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2019/mar/20/academics-its-time-to-get-behind-decolonising-the-curriculum>] and “Do we need to decolonise history? And, if so, how?” *History Extra* (25 Mar. 2019) [<https://www.historyextra.com/period/modern/decolonise-history-curriculum-education-how-meghan-markle-black-study/>].

<sup>161</sup> Ahmed, *What Is Islam?*, 5.

aware of how class, race, empire, gender, and creed interact are determinate of Islamic history. These elements are crucial, for “countering essentialism demands *engagement* with history” to overcome the consequences to the study of Islam from the “discriminatory and racialized governing practices of European empires [which] collectivized the political struggles and destinies of societies where Muslims lived...”<sup>162</sup>

At the same time, those who teach literature, particularly comparative literature, will find in these pages the opportunity to reflect on the ways that individual literary traditions have approached the expression of a single theme, travel. These chapters, moreover, show how travel literature was a gendered practice in a range of Islamic societies, much as it was in Europe. While travel writing by women from Euro-America is almost always treated separately from that by women from the “Global South,” we hope that this material will offer an opportunity to read across gendered literary traditions for the similarities as much as for their differences. Indian writing on Europe could be fruitfully paired with the vast body of European writing on India, for instance. This collection offers students and scholars alike the opportunity to reflect on just what constitutes “travel writing” in a global context and how our methodologies and assumptions about the genre shape which texts which engage with, and which we do not. These pieces will surely facilitate discussion on the question of just what it means to be “a traveler.” For, while all of the authors included here *are* Muslim women, that is but one potential conceptual lens. They are also, and perhaps primarily, scholars, politicians and reformers.

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<sup>162</sup> Cemil Aydin, *The Idea of the Muslim World: A Global Intellectual History* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 228. Emphasis added.

In closing, we invite you, the reader, if only for a moment, to become their fellow travelers and to join them on their peregrinations and explorations—of themselves, of others, and of the world in which we all live.