

## HIJRA AS HISTORY AND METAPHOR: A SURVEY OF QUR'ANIC AND ḤADĪTH SOURCES

A number of recent studies<sup>1</sup> have dealt with the hijra as a central concept underlying a range of past and present trends in Islamic thought and action. These authors commonly interpret the notion of hijra within the prism of socioeconomic and political factors prevalent in various post-prophetic periods without adequate appreciation of primary-texts. While not ignoring entirely the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth, the remarkably complex nature of the concept of hijra as portrayed in the early sources appears to have been seriously underestimated or simply understudied.<sup>2</sup> Even conceding, if only for the sake of argument, Eickelman and Piscatori's argument that "the significance of texts derives not from their inherent centrality but from the contingent political, social and economic circumstances of those interpreting them,"<sup>3</sup> the analyst needs to be well-informed as to what these texts on the subject matter of hijra relate. Without an adequate knowledge of the complexity of the hijra as revealed in the primary texts, any attempt to investigate what Masud terms the "dynamic interaction between text and social, economic and political conditions"<sup>4</sup> *a priori*, will at best be flawed.

The present article attempts to remedy this perceived gap in the literature by a thorough exploration of the multifaceted significance of the hijra as expressed in the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth literature.<sup>5</sup> The discussion is divided into three broad sections: (1) Qur'anic precedents (2) the historical hijra and (3) the metaphorical hijra.

<sup>1</sup> See Dale Eickelman and James Piscatori, "Social Theory in the Study of Muslim Societies," in *Muslim Travellers: Pilgrimage, Migration and the Religious Imagination*, D. Eickelman and J. Piscatori, eds. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 3-28; Muhammad K. Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate: The Doctrine of Hijra in Islamic Law" in *Muslim Travellers*, 29-49; Roger Webster, "Hijra and Dissemination of Wahhabi Doctrine in Saudi Arabia," in *Golden Roads: Migration, Pilgrimage and Travel in Mediaeval and Modern Islam*, Ian Netton, ed. (Surrey, UK: Curzon Press, 1993), 11-27.

<sup>2</sup> In his preface to *Golden Roads*, Ian Netton notes that hijra has "profoundly Prophetic antecedents" and yet not one of the papers included in this collection explores these "antecedents" in a systematic and adequate way.

<sup>3</sup> Eickelman and Piscatori, "Social Theory," in *Muslim Travellers*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> M.K. Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*, 34.

<sup>5</sup> Whenever possible I have opted for ḥadīth from the six canonical collections. In my citations from lesser-known or obscure sources, the presence of an *isnād* can be taken for granted unless noted otherwise. Any errors of translation or interpretation are my own.

## Introduction

During his period of rule as second Caliph, 'Umar b. al-Khattāb is reported<sup>6</sup> to have convened a council of eminent companions for the purpose of deciding upon a uniform system of dating to be applied throughout the Islamic realm. Among the suggestions as to which year should mark the start of the Muslim calendar were the year in which the Prophet received his first revelations and the year of his death. A third proposal put forward by 'Alī b. Abī Tālib was to calculate dates beginning from the year of the Messenger's flight to Madina.

That this suggestion was immediately taken up and implemented is indicative of the tremendous importance attributed to the hijra by the first generation of Muslims. In retrospect, it is incontestable that few turning points in human history can compare with the emigration from Makka to Madina in 622 A.D. Yet the hijra was infinitely more than a remarkable event in the flow of time. As with other decisive incidents in the life of the Prophet, it embraces a variety of concepts which lie at the heart of Islamic spirituality. It is the polymorphic, dynamic nature of these concepts which make the emigration to Madina a landmark of eternal relevance.

### *Conceptual Prefigurations of the Hijra in the Qur'ān*

The Islamic emigration has numerous and diverse precedents in the history of religions. In the Qur'ān, the theme of righteous flight figures highly in the accounts of many Prophets. The variety of these precursors of the hijra ranges from the deliverance of Noah to the exodus of Moses. In each case, there are interesting parallels to be drawn with the flight of the Prophet to Madina. The underlying theme in all such examples is that of valiant resistance to doctrinal and/or moral perversity. Flight in this sense is ennobled, first, by its objective of keeping alive the flame of unitarian faith and upright conduct, then, by the willing acceptance of the sacrifices entailed and, finally, by the sublime confidence in God exhibited by those who undertook it. In brief, Hijra is portrayed in these Qur'anic accounts as a choice of "the Higher" over "the lower" and as a steadfast, heroic refusal to compromise with evil.

In this context, the Qur'anic narrations concerning Abraham (Ibrāhīm) deserve closer analysis. Here, as in many other respects, there are fruitful analogies to be drawn between Muḥammad and the great Patriarch.<sup>7</sup> Both

<sup>6</sup> Omar Ibn Shabbah, *Kitāb Ta'rikh al-Madina*, F. Shaltūt, ed. (Jeddah, 1982), 2: 758-59.

<sup>7</sup> Abraham's establishment of the sanctuary at Makka is mirrored in numerous ḥadīth by the Prophet's *taḥrim* of Madina (See Daoud Casewit, "Fadā'il al-Madina: The Unique Distinctions of the Prophet's City," *Islamic Quarterly*, Vol. 35, no. 1 [1991]: 5-22). While Abraham did not emigrate to Makka himself he settled Hagar (whose name, interestingly, in Arabic, *Hājar*, is based on the same root as hijra) and his son Ishmael there.

delivered the message of monotheism to their idolatrous peoples, both were rejected, persecuted and finally forced to choose voluntary exile rather than infidelity to revealed truth.<sup>8</sup> In surveying the various accounts of Abraham's emigration we are able to isolate a number of fundamental ideas which form a useful introduction to the complex nature of the notion of hijra in Islam.

### ***Consequential Discrimination***

In its deepest sense, the hijra is a physical actualization of metaphysical discernment between the Absolute and the relative and thus an anticipation of death. In forsaking the relative comforts and consolations of his homeland for the truth of the Absolute, Abraham exclaims: "Verily, I am journeying unto my Lord. . ." (*innī dhāhibun ilā rabbī*).<sup>9</sup> Any geographical destination is plainly secondary to a spiritual orientation which might be described as a spatial enactment of the *istirjā'*: "Verily, we belong to God and unto Him are we returning." Hijra is the supreme affirmation of one's intellectual recognition of this truth. It is a consecrated migration; a severing of the fetters of this lower world with a view to what lies beyond it.

### ***Uncompromising Rejection***

In the Qur'anic portrayal<sup>10</sup> of Abraham's argument with, and defiance of, his father we find that affirmation of the truth takes precedence over veneration of one's elders and the conventional beliefs and customs of one's people. Although Abraham remains respectful, even compassionate, towards his father as such, his denunciation of idolatry knows no compromise. In reaction to his son's perceived insubordination, Abraham's father commands, "Dissociate [yourself from] me. . ." (*uhjurnī*: the imperative form of the verb *hājara* from which is derived *hājara*, to emigrate). Abraham's response, "And I will withdraw from [all of] you and all that ye invoke besides Allāh. . .," represents an extension of the purely social connotations of *hijr* to a concept embracing the spiritual plane and hence to the idea of hijra.

### ***Hostile Estrangement***

Abraham's separation from his people is neither mollified by any nostalgic good will nor dulled by indifference. It is a principled severing of

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<sup>8</sup> S. 19:41-50; 37:99. Translations of Qur'anic verses in this article are my own.

<sup>9</sup> S. 37:99. Nearly identical language is used by Abraham's nephew, Lot, upon following his uncle into exile: "Verily, I am an emigré unto my Lord" (*innī muhājirun ilā rabbī*) S. 29:26.

<sup>10</sup> S. 19:41-50.

relations rooted in angry, God-fearing indignation.<sup>11</sup> In a pertinent verse the Patriarch addresses his people, declaring, "We are innocent of all that ye worship besides Allāh; We have rejected you and there has arisen between us enmity and rancor until you believe in Allāh alone."<sup>12</sup> Hijra in this sense is comparable to the drawing of the lines for a battle which allows of no neutrality despite the fact that the foe are his own next of kin.

### *Iniquitous Expulsion*

The bellicose stance of the emigrant is further justified by another important idea: the fact of his having been forced to flee. It is not merely the voluntary exile of a conscientious objector; it is the flight of a man who has been given an ultimatum, who has been unjustly evicted from his home. In the Meccan sūra *Ibrāhīm*, this notion of banishment is generalized: "And those that disbelieved told their [divinely sent] messengers, 'We will surely expel you from our land unless you return to [the tenets and rites of] our religious community.'"<sup>13</sup>

### *Singleminded Sacrifice*

Abraham obviously had an affection for his father but this was not allowed to stand in the way of his righteous separation from him and all he stood for. The hijra as an offering of one's whole being to God requires constancy unswayed by sentimental considerations or attachments to worldly advantage. The example of the wife of Abraham's nephew, Lot (Lūṭ),<sup>14</sup> demonstrates this need: any looking back is to invite destruction. The sacrifice must be absolute with no second thoughts.

### *Blessed Delivery*

Finally, the hijra in the tale of Abraham is the vehicle of twofold salvation and reward. On the one hand, it was a miraculous escape from

<sup>11</sup> It is worth remembering that the general order for Muslims in Makka to emigrate to Madina was issued at about the same time as the verse allowing Muslims to wage war against their oppressors. See 'Abd al-Malik Ibn Hishām, *Al-Sirat al-Nabawīyya*, M. Hrās, ed. (Cairo, 1971), 1: 79-80; S. 22:39.

<sup>12</sup> S. 60:4. This sūra, which is prefaced by a commendation (to Muslims) to follow Abraham's example, was revealed in Madina and is not only an invitation to emigrate but also a battle cry.

<sup>13</sup> S. 14:13. Similarly, the inhabitants of Sodom say of Lūt and those that shared his beliefs, "Drive them out of your township, verily they are people who strive to be pure!" (S. 7:82) In this context we might also consider the Qur'anic account of the Prophet Shu'ayb: "The leaders of the arrogant among his people said, 'O Shu'ayb, verily we will expel thee and those that believe with thee from our township unless you truly return to [the tenets and rites of] our religious community!" (S. 7:88).

<sup>14</sup> S. 7:82; 29:26. It is worth noting that both these verses and also verse 60:4 referred to previously were revealed in Makka at a time when some Muslims had already emigrated to Abyssinia. These verses would seem to serve as an encouragement to the persecuted to flee to safety rather than to resist.

human persecutors and resettlement in a well-provided land;<sup>15</sup> on the other, it was a rescue from the divine retribution which is visited upon evil communities and at the same time a liberation from the bondage of worldly attractions and thus a means of gaining access to eternal bliss. The supreme trust in providence required by the hijra is never betrayed. The sacrifices and trials of pious emigrés are not in vain: the ultimate triumph is theirs in both this world and the next.

### *Etymological Considerations*

Long before they found expression in the form of geographical displacement of Muslims, a number of the concepts implicit in the Islamic hijra were embodied in Qur'anic verses addressed to the Prophet. In one of the early Meccan sūras the Prophet is enjoined to patiently endure the abusive language of his oppressors and to dissociate himself from them in a "dignified manner" (*wa-hujruhum hajran jamīlan*).<sup>16</sup> Here we find the imperative form of the verb *hājara* with its accompanying verbal noun *hijr* used with the conventional social implications of a deliberate, though not necessarily permanent, abjuration of social interaction and verbal communication with a particular person or party. Such *hijr* is a kind of withdrawal which offers relative protection both from further abuse and from the danger of answering in kind.

In another early Meccan sūra, the same verb is employed with a similar connotation but with wider ramifications: "And [as for] impurity, shun [it]!" (*wa'l-rujza fa-hujur*).<sup>17</sup> In this verse the shunning implied in the verb *hājara* denotes far more than a momentary stance; it defines a permanent attitude, in this case that of avoiding impurity whether this be envisioned on the moral, ritual or doctrinal level.<sup>18</sup>

The above outline of Qur'anic references should be enough to put would-be analysts on their guard against making any simplistic interpretations concerning the Islamic concept of hijra. In light of the diversity—and complex, interpenetrating nature—of the ideals and attitudes which underlie the Qur'anic depiction of Abraham's hijra, it would be surprising if the emigration of the Prophet and his companions were a static, unidi-

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<sup>15</sup> S. 21:71.

<sup>16</sup> S. 73:10.

<sup>17</sup> S. 74:5.

<sup>18</sup> In both of the above examples it will be noted that the verb *hājara* is a transitive verb which requires a specific object, either a person or thing. On the other hand, *hājara* (the third form of the same root) is an intransitive verb implying a movement towards a place of emigration (*mahjar*) which may be merely understood or else stated after the preposition *ilā*, "towards". The verb *hājara* retains the implications of its root meaning of "to solemnly shun or reject" but carries them a step further by translating them into spatial movement and physical separation.

mensional entity. A careful review of select primary sources confirms this supposition beyond expectations.

## The Historical Hijra

### *Al-hijrat al-ūlā, "The First Flight"*

The flight to Abyssinia, which preceded the general emigration to Madīna, is a good place to begin our discussion. For while this earlier hijra across the Red Sea did not include the Prophet and was of a temporary nature, those who undertook it were motivated by many of the same factors as later emigrants (*muhājirūn*: sing: *muhājir*) to Madīna. At that time, the leaders of Makka's idolatrous majority were employing every possible means to make the Prophet and his followers either revert to "the religion of their forefathers" or at least be more respectful of it in their stated convictions. In the face of the venomous zeal<sup>19</sup> of their persecutors and given the obvious futility of organized armed resistance, which had not been divinely sanctioned in any case, the Prophet gave his companions permission to emigrate, encouraging them to seek asylum in the dominions of the Christian king, al-Najāshī, of al-Ḥabasha who was known to be magnanimous and just.<sup>20</sup>

This first emigration is early evidence that Islam commanded neither passive martyrdom nor suicidal resistance. While the early Meccan sūras frequently enjoin the believers and the Prophet himself to endure their oppression with patience and confidence in ultimate triumph,<sup>21</sup> this suffering is not depicted as an end in itself. Those who die at the hands of their persecutors are promised high stations in paradise, yet this kind of

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<sup>19</sup> It should be pointed out that many of those who emigrated to Abyssinia were not in danger of being tortured or physically attacked since they belonged to Meccan clans that would not violently persecute their own members for following the Prophet and were powerful enough to ensure that no other clan did so. Nevertheless, such emigrants had undoubtedly been the victims of severe social ostracism and the psychological trauma of witnessing the suffering of fellow Muslims who lacked similar tribal protection and who are often referred to as "the weak ones," *al-mustaḍ'afīn*. For these high-born Qurayshi Muslims, the hijra was less a flight from direct persecution than a flight from the horror of the oppressive campaign being waged against their co-religionists in Makka at that time. It was also a means of liberating oneself from reliance on the protection of idolatrous clansmen who in many cases took part in the active persecution of weaker Muslims.

<sup>20</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat* 1: 280-86; Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt al-Kubrā* (Beirut, 1985), 1: 203-5. The first source gives the number of *muhājirūn* as 83 men. Among these emigrés was 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and his wife Ruqaiya, the Prophet's daughter, concerning whom the Prophet is reported to have said "Verily, the two of them are the first to have emigrated to Allāh—the Praised, the Exalted—since Lūt." (Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 8: 36; this ḥadīth is without *isnād*.)

<sup>21</sup> S. 23:111; in this Meccan sūra God rebukes those who rejected Muhammad's message and ridiculed his companions of whom He says, "Verily I have rewarded them this day for all that they patiently endured and it is they who are the triumphant."

martyrdom is not viewed as an especially favored means of salvation.<sup>22</sup> Thus, those who recant their faith under torture while maintaining their inward convictions are not to be condemned.<sup>23</sup> The sacrifice expected of Muslims is more realistic: confronted with irresistible *fitna*,<sup>24</sup> they have the right and at times even the duty to distance themselves from it geographically with all that this entails of renouncing worldly ties and goods.

In the case of the muhājirūn to Abyssinia, one must not underestimate the courage and detachment they evinced. To renounce the personal security afforded by bonds of kinship, especially in that age, was a bold step indeed. To risk forfeiting, possibly forever, titles to property and customary means of livelihood could not have been easy for many of them. Yet, giving up all these they counted as an acceptable price to pay for the freedom to openly profess and practice Islam. It is thus that this hijra was not merely a running away from an intolerable situation; it was a defiant exteriorization of an inward choice of the hereafter over the herebelow, of spiritual companions over profane kinsmen and family, of divine revelation over tribal customs and conventional beliefs.

Notwithstanding the sincerity of conviction which propelled the emigrants to seek refuge across the Red Sea, indefinite residence in Ethiopia was not among their intentions. Illustrative in this respect is the return to Makka of a number of the muhājirūn upon receiving erroneous news of the Prophet's having converted the leaders of the Quraysh.<sup>25</sup> Some of these stayed on in Makka and after some time were encouraged to emigrate to Madīna.<sup>26</sup> Most of them, however, finding themselves subject to even harsher oppression, were obliged to make second emigration back to the Muslim community in Abyssinia. Subsequently, a group of these returned to Arabia when they learned of the Prophet's intended emigration to Madīna while the rest remained in al-Ḥabasha seven or eight years longer until the Prophet wrote to al-Najāshī asking him to arrange for them to be returned to Arabia.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> There are comparatively few Qur'anic examples of passive martyrdom, the most salient being perhaps that of the believers, usually interpreted to be referring to the Christians of Najrān, whose immolation is memorialized in sūra al-Burūj.

<sup>23</sup> S. 16:106.

<sup>24</sup> *Fitna*: major temporal upheaval, such as civil war or religious persecution, or source of spiritually corruptive disequilibrium.

<sup>25</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat* 2: 12-13; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 205-8. Among those who returned to Makka and stayed there until the emigration to Madīna were some of the most eminent companions including 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and his wife, Zubayr b. 'Awwām, and 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Awf.

<sup>26</sup> Abū Salmah b. 'Abd al-Asad al-Makhzūmī was the first of the returned emigrants to Abyssinia to seek refuge in Madīna. He reached Madīna about a year before the oath of 'Aqaba. His wife and son were prevented by her own clan from going with him. (Ibn Hishām, *Sīrat*, 2: 80; Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 239-40.)

<sup>27</sup> These muhājirūn (among whom were 'Alī's brother, Ja'far) rejoined the Prophet while he was engaged in a military campaign against the Jewish strongholds of Khaybar and were allotted a share in the war spoils although they had not taken part in actual fighting. Why the

Being fundamentally a foreign land—linguistically, culturally and spiritually—Christian Abyssinia, though preferable to idolatrous, intolerant Makka, did not possess the requisite traits to ensure the growth, stability and sovereignty of an Islamic community. Therefore, in the flight to *al-Habasha*, all the emphasis is on fleeing “from” and “with” rather than “to.” That is, from persecution, from danger, from evil; and with one’s life, with one’s faith intact, with one’s doctrinal and moral integrity. Comparatively little stress is laid on fleeing “to” except as an inevitable consequence of the need to flee “from” and even the “from” is not embodied in an intention of sworn and irrevocable dissociation from Makka<sup>28</sup> as was later the case with the emigration to Madina. The destination, apart from its positive aspect of safe haven, did not constitute a final objective and therefore commanded no absolute allegiance.<sup>29</sup> It was Madina that was destined to provide the muhājirūn with their unmistakable “to.”

*Al-Hijra al-Nabawiyya, “The Prophet’s Emigration”*

In the emigration to Madina one can perceive the workings of divine inspiration, on the one hand, and the Prophet’s pragmatism and foresight on the other. Although the divine command for the Messenger to set off to Madina was a sudden occurrence, even on this level there seems to have been a gradual unveiling of Allāh’s plan as the following ḥadīth suggests: “I saw myself in a dream emigrating from Makka to a land rich in date palms. I was alarmed that it might be al-Yamāma or Hajar but it turned out to be Yathrib [i. e., Madina].”<sup>30</sup>

The great emigration unfolded in measured stages. As with transplanting seedlings, the Muslims in Makka were not displaced without first taking precautions to improve their chances of survival. The new soil had to be tested and then carefully prepared. The first phase began with the Prophet’s preaching to pagan pilgrims from Yathrib; it culminated when a sufficient number of them embraced Islam and swore an oath of fealty

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Prophet chose to keep these Muslims in Abyssinia so many years after his own establishment in Madina is a tempting field for speculation. It may partly be explained by the fact that, until the signing of the treaty of Ḥudaybiya, the coastal regions of western Arabia may not have been safe for their landing.

<sup>28</sup> Nor could it have been in light of the Prophet’s continued residence in Makka during this period which marks precisely the pivotal difference between the first hijra and that to Madina.

<sup>29</sup> Nevertheless, the emigrants living in Abyssinia had an attachment to its ruler, al-Najāshī, which seems to have been based on more than mere self interest. This is suggested by the great joy they reportedly felt at his victory in a local power struggle; see Ibn Hishām, *Sirat*, 1: 291-92.

<sup>30</sup> Muḥammad al-Bukhārī, *Al-Jāmi’ al-Ṣaḥīḥ* (Istanbul, 1979), 56: 24; al-Yamāmah and Hajar are both place names in the Arabian Peninsula about which there is some disagreement as to their location. See al-Hamawī Yāqūt, *Muḥjam al-Buldān* (Beirut, 1955-57).

(i. e., *Bay'at al-ʿAqaba*) to him which included the pledge to protect him and his followers with their lives. This pledge among other things meant that the Muslims in Makka could at last renounce the protection of pagan guardians. It will be recalled how, after the death of Abū Ṭālib, the Prophet lacked a strong protector and, for example, upon returning from his futile mission to Ṭāʿif, he felt compelled to accept the protection of a high-minded but idolatrous Bedouin notable. The same was true for a number of other companions including Abū Bakr.

The second phase of "preparing the soil" involved the dispatch to Madīna of two learned companions to instruct the new converts in the tenets and practice of Islam and to win over others. To extend the analogy of transplanting even further, one might compare the Muslims of Madīna (*al-anṣār*, "The Allies in Victory," often rendered: "The Helpers") to sturdy plants cultivated to act as supports for the relatively weak seedlings that were to come. It should be pointed out, however, that even among the native inhabitants of Madīna we can find attitudes which reflect those of the muhājirūn. There is a Ḥadīth to this effect: "And there were emigrants from among the anṣār since Madīna [too] was an abode of polytheism."<sup>31</sup> The story of Saʿd b. Muʿādh's conversion<sup>32</sup> is a case in point: He had been an idol-worshipping tribal leader in Madīna who, after some initial resistance, embraced Islam and then promptly swore that he would speak to neither the men nor the women of his clan until they followed his example—which they all did before nightfall. His oath is reminiscent of the act of dissociation termed *hijr* noted above.

The actual movement of people from Makka to Madīna was similarly a gradual process. To avoid alerting their Qurayshī antagonists, the emigrants were obliged to make the journey individually or in small bands on a staggered timetable. Even so, not all those who wished to seek refuge in Madīna were immediately successful in doing so since their idolatrous kinsmen in some cases went to great lengths to hold them back. Between the arrival of the beginning and end of this initial tide of muhājirūn of mostly Meccan origin, which included the Prophet, there elapsed a period of about two months.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Abū ʿAbd al-Rahmān al-Nasāʿī, *Sunan al-Nasāʿī*, 7: 144; numbering of volumes and pages is based on *Fahāris Sunan al-Nasāʿī*, Abū Yahya al-Qawiyūnī, ed. (Beirut, 1988). There is an interesting case of a native of Madīna, Ziyād b. Labīd, an early convert to Islam from the Khazraj tribe, who took up residence in Makka and later "emigrated" back to Madīna thus qualifying him to title of both muhājir and anṣārī (See Ibn Saʿd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 598.).

<sup>32</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sirat*, 2: 58-60.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 3: 239-40.

### *The Hijra As Proof Of Faith*

With the emigration of the Messenger, which requires no detailed re-telling here,<sup>34</sup> and his subsequent installation in Madīna, the concept of hijra underwent a major change. From being a praiseworthy alternative to enduring persecution, the emigration became a touchstone of faith, a proof of the sincerity of one's conversion to Islam. It was the physical corollary of the double testimony of faith. Hence, the Qur'anic expression *muhājirūn il'ā Ilāhi wa-rasūlihi* ("emigrating unto Allāh and His Messenger").<sup>35</sup>

In light of the Prophet's own example and his presence there, Madīna came to be viewed as the embodiment of the spiritual aspirations of every true believer. In addition to its aspect of refuge, Madīna was now the point of entry into a community based on shared faith. Both ideas are reflected in the encouragement the Prophet is reported to have offered to those who could emigrate: "Verily Allāh, the Omnipotent, the Omnipresent, has brought forth for you brethren [in faith] and an abode in which you will be secure."<sup>36</sup> The Prophet's establishing legal bonds of brotherhood between each early emigré and one of the anṣār was a demonstration of the far-reaching nature of this integration into a new social order founded upon divine revelation and prophetic guidance.<sup>37</sup>

Given the spiritual advantages which residence in Madīna offered, the emigration came to be regarded as a dividing line between faith and hypocrisy. This is clearly the message of the Qur'anic verse in which believers are exhorted not to establish close relations with those who claim to be Muslims "until they emigrate in Allāh's cause."<sup>38</sup> The sincere Muslim of that period had every reason to emigrate (unless, of course, the Prophet had ordered or permitted otherwise) and little excuse for electing not to do so. According to the Qur'ān, those who fail to flee when given

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<sup>34</sup> See Martin Lings, *Mohammed: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (London: Allen and Unwin/Islamic Texts Society, 1983), 118-24; for the finest English narration of this event.

<sup>35</sup> S. 4:100.

<sup>36</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sirat*, 2: 80; this ḥadīth is cited in this source without a proper isnād, a common practice in *sira* literature.

<sup>37</sup> An indication of this realignment of values is the stress laid on the honorary names *muhājirūn* and *ansār* rather than on tribal affiliation in both the Qur'ān and Ḥadīth. While pride in lineage and kinship ties continued to play an undisputedly important role in the lives of the Arabs, on the level of ideals the concept of honor as being identified with one's place in the early history of Islam rather than with one's tribal roots was still very powerful. A relevant reflection of this is found in an account of 'Abdullah b. 'Umar's chiding someone for referring to a Meccan Muslim in terms of his tribal lineage saying, "Quraysh! Quraysh! We are the Emigrants!"; Ibn Shabbah, *S. Ta'rikh*, 2: 488.

<sup>38</sup> S. 4:89. See also S. 8:82.

the opportunity cannot then justify their eventual infidelity to Islam by claiming to have been oppressed:

Verily those whom the angels cause to die in [a state of] wronging their own souls [are addressed by angels] saying: "In what [difficulty] were you?" And they respond, "We were made weak on earth." [To which the angels] say, "Was not Allāh's earth vast so that you might have emigrated therein?" Hell is the resting place of these and what an evil destination it is!<sup>39</sup>

Likewise, there are a number of ḥadīths which stress the virtual obligation of resettling in Madīna for Muslims at that time; among them the following which seems to focus on the hijra as an expression of creedal solidarity: "Do not live among the polytheists and do not gather with them, for whoever gathers with them is like unto them."<sup>40</sup> Another Ḥadīth underlines the temporal disadvantages of living apart from the *umma*: "Whoever resides among the polytheists is no longer protected by any covenant of protection [*dhimma*]."<sup>41</sup> This latter ḥadīth is made even more explicit by a Qur'anic verse which states that those who believe in Islam but have not yet emigrated are not covered by any guarantee of protection until they do so.<sup>42</sup>

### *Questions of Intention*

The above observations should not lead to the conclusion that the hijra was simply a change of residence. The mere fact of removing oneself geographically to Madīna, especially in the case of later emigrants, was not in itself definitive proof of the purity or loftiness of one's motives. The moral and spiritual intent of the true emigration is expressed in the following much-cited ḥadīth:

Actions are [to be judged by God] according to the intention [behind them] and a man will have [reward for] what he formulates an intention for. So whoever's emigration was for [the sake of] Allāh and His Messenger, his emigration will be [counted] for [the sake of] Allāh and His Messenger; and whoever's emigration was for [the sake of] some worldly gain or for marrying a woman, then his emi-

<sup>39</sup> S. 4:97.

<sup>40</sup> Abū 'Isā al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī* (Madīna, 1964), no. 1655; see also Muḥammad al-Albānī, ed., *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, [selection from the ḥadīth compilation of Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī] (Beirut, 1986), no. 4045 and 6149.

<sup>41</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*; Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6073. Note: in subsequent references to al-Albānī the reader may assume that he has classified the ḥadīth in question as *ṣaḥīḥ*, as in this case, unless noted otherwise.

<sup>42</sup> S. 8:72.

gration will be [counted as being] for [the sake of] that for which he emigrated.<sup>43</sup>

As in the case of most solemn formulations of intention, that of hijra for later emigrants was frequently embodied in a sworn oath (*bay'ah*) given to the Prophet.<sup>44</sup> The binding nature of this oath is revealed in the following incident: An Arab Bedouin came to Madīna and swore an oath of fealty to the Prophet which included the pledge of emigration. The next day he had come down with a severe fever common to visitors to the oasis and he asked the Prophet to release him from his pledge so that he could return to the desert to get well, but the Prophet refused. This happened three successive times and in the end, when the febrile nomad disobeyed and left the city, the Prophet commented on Madīna's power to purify itself of unworthy elements.<sup>45</sup>

The importance of the geographical aspect of the hijra to Madīna also reveals itself in the negative implications of reverting to one's former place of residence. Just as the root verb *hājara* carries the idea of a definitive and sworn relinquishing of social ties, so the verb *hājara* meant an irrevocable rejection, shunning of pre-Islamic ignorance (*jāhiliyya*) and all that represented it. Thus, even when the muhājir no longer had to fear persecution in his native land, to return there to live without imperative cause was regarded as a movement in the direction of apostasy. In the case of Arab Bedouin emigrants, unauthorized return to the desert and resumption of the un-Islamic ways of the nomadic tribes<sup>47</sup> was viewed in very grave terms. In two separate ḥadīth, such backsliding (*al-ta'arrub ba'd al-hijra*, or, *al-ruju' ilā al-'arūbiyya ba'd al-hijra*) is classified as a major sin (*kabīra*) alongside *shirk* (doctrinal or ritual association of other beings or things with Allāh).<sup>48</sup>

The injunction against resettling in Makka for the muhājirūn originally from there was particularly explicit even after it became part of the Muslim realm and despite the fact that it was the most sacred shrine of Islam. Several ḥadīths<sup>49</sup> restrict such an emigrant to a maximum residence of three days in Makka after the performance of greater or lesser

<sup>43</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 83:23; Abū 'l-Ḥusayn Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, M. Fu'ad, ed. (Cairo, 1963), 6: 48.

<sup>44</sup> Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad* (Cairo, n. d.), 3: 429-30.

<sup>45</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 30: 10; Al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, no. 4012.

<sup>46</sup> It bears pointing out that in Islam this type of strict dissociation with another Muslim (called *hajr*) is normally limited to a period of three days.

<sup>47</sup> The connection between hijrab and the settling of nomadic bedouin is a central theme in Webster's study of the early Wahhabi movement in Saudi Arabia: Roger Webster, "Hijra and dissemination of Wahhabi doctrine in Saudi Arabia," in *Golden Roads*, 11-27.

<sup>48</sup> Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Ṭabarānī, *Atwa'at* in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4606, "Ḥassan"; Al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 145, "Ḥassan."

pilgrimage. When one of the muhājirūn was struck down by a fatal illness in Makka (after its conquest by Muslim forces), the Prophet expressed his regret and made the following prayer: "O Allāh, fulfill the emigration of my companions and do not make them go back [on their intention]."<sup>50</sup> In a similar anecdote, another emigrant upon falling ill in Makka begged the Prophet to pray for his recovery so that he would not die "in the land from which [he] had emigrated."<sup>51</sup> The irreversible nature of the self-exiling intention of the hijra is exemplified by the Prophet himself who was adamant about returning to Madīna, often referred to as *Dār al-Hijra*, after the pacification of his hometown, Makka, despite the hopes of his kinsmen that he would choose to stay with them there.

In addition to the stress laid on the intention of hijra as a decisive separation "from" a particular locality, there is also significant emphasis on the intention of hijra as a definitive attachment "to" one's *mahjar* or "place of emigration." This is reflected in the relative blameworthiness of leaving Madīna of one's own volition to take up residence elsewhere without just cause. Madīna, as destination of the great hijra, was the embodiment of a spiritual goal and to abandon it for worldly reasons might imply an abandoning of those original aspirations and intentions. In addition to suggesting infidelity to religious ideals, the desire to leave Madīna also indicated indifference to or ingratitude for the spiritual benefits guaranteed by the Prophet to the faithful who live and die in his peerless city.<sup>52</sup>

Another aspect of the hijra as a total consecration of oneself to God and His Messenger lies in the relative precondition of freedom. The emigration of a slave, for example, posed particular problems since from a certain point of view a slave's life was not technically his or hers to consecrate in this way. On one occasion a man came to the Prophet and swore an oath of allegiance including hijra. The Prophet had not realized the man was a runaway slave and when his owner came to claim him the Prophet felt obliged to give him two slaves in exchange. The anecdote concludes by commenting that from that time on the Prophet always verified that the intending emigrant was not a slave.<sup>53</sup> A similar principle was applied in the case of married women emigrating against their husbands' wishes: their liberation from the bonds of marriage had to be purchased by returning their dowries to their husbands.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>49</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 58: 46; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 957.

<sup>50</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 58: 49.

<sup>51</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Al-Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 145.

<sup>52</sup> See Daoud Casewit, "Fadā'il al-Madīnah," *Islamic Quarterly*, 35, no. 1 (1991): 5-22 for a more detailed treatment of the virtues of Madīna and the conditional blameworthiness of leaving it.

<sup>53</sup> al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 1644.

<sup>54</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, *Kitāb al-Shurūt*, 15. According to Mālik b. Anas, *al-Muwatta'* (Beirut: Dār Ihyā' al-Ulūm, 1988), no. 1155; the female emigré is considered divorced from her unbelieving husband if he fails to enter Islam and join her within a prescribed period.

Finally, as regards intention, the hijra as outcome of iniquitous expulsion and as expression of hostile estrangement had its actively belligerent aspect. The total emigration did not stop at passive resistance or righteous self-defense: it included heroic striving against the enemies of Islam. Not surprisingly, the Qurʾān frequently links the notion of *hijra* and *jihād*.<sup>55</sup> Both are regarded as proofs of the sincerity of one's faith as both required a spirit of detachment based on a consequential discernment between the Absolute and the relative as discussed above. In this light, let us consider the Qurʾānic verse, "Verily those who have adopted the faith and those who have emigrated and striven [in holy war] in God's cause, they are those who hope for God's mercy."<sup>56</sup> Another pertinent verse is the following:

Those who have emigrated and have been driven from their homes and have suffered harm in My cause and [those who] have engaged in battle and have been slain, verily, I will cause them to enter into gardens beneath which rivers flow as a reward from the presence of God. . . .<sup>57</sup>

### *The Privileges and Spirit Merit of the Emigrants*

As is indicated by the foregoing verse, the hijra, in view of the courage and commitment involved in its undertaking, was regarded as the door to great spiritual merit. Hence, the Prophet's exclamation: "Be ye strongly urged to undertake the hijra for it is beyond compare!"<sup>58</sup>

This merit translated itself into an elevated status for the muhājir already in this world. Among the privileges of emigrés was preferential treatment by the Prophet in the allotment of land, particularly that seized in war from the Jewish tribes of Madīna.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, in view of their poverty, the emigrants are singled out in more than one Qurʾānic verse as being lawful and recommended recipients of obligatory alms.<sup>60</sup> On another plane, for the muhājirūn along with the anṣār was reserved the prerogative of praying in the front row in the Prophet's mosque.<sup>61</sup> Seniority in hijra was one of the criteria for deciding who should lead a group in prayer and who should have precedence in burial.<sup>62</sup> It was also

<sup>55</sup> Masud, "The obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*, 32, makes this same observation. See also Webster, "Hijra and Dissemination," in *Golden Roads*, 11.

<sup>56</sup> S. 2:218.

<sup>57</sup> S. 3:195. Other relevant verses include 8:72,74,75; 9:20; 16:110.

<sup>58</sup> al-Nasāʾī, *Sunan*, 7: 145; al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabīr*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no.4228.

<sup>59</sup> Muḥammad b. ʿUmar al-Wāqidi, *Kitāb al-Maghāzī*, Marsden Jones, ed. (London: ʿAlam al-Kutub, 1966), 1: 378-79.

<sup>60</sup> S. 8:59; 22:24.

<sup>61</sup> Abū ʿAbd Allāh al-Ḥākim, *al-Mustadrik ʿalā al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* (Aleppo/Beirut, n.d.), 3: 303. (Hyderabad reprint).

<sup>62</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 4:26, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmiʿ*, no. 8011.

a factor in determining the level of state pensions established during the caliphate of 'Umar.<sup>63</sup>

Naturally, the reward for emigrating was not limited to earthly advantages as the Qur'an reminds us: "[As for] those who have emigrated for [the sake of] Allāh after having been persecuted, we will surely provide them with excellent lodgings in this world; and truly the reward of the hereafter will be greater if they but knew!"<sup>64</sup> No doubt, it was this reward that the Prophet had in mind when he commented on the lucrative nature of the deal struck by a wealthy Muslim merchant of Byzantine origin, called Ṣuhayb b. Sinān, who traded all his riches for the freedom to emigrate from Makka to Madīna.<sup>65</sup> It is to Ṣuhayb that the following Qur'anic verse is said to refer: "And among mankind is he who purchases himself seeking the pleasure of God. And God is full of benevolence towards [His] devotees."<sup>66</sup>

This benevolence is especially directed towards the final ends of those who emigrate in good faith. In a ḥadīth, the initial muhājirūn are depicted at the gates of paradise where the guardian angels ask them if their deeds had been weighed to which they respond, "O Lord, and wherefore should our deeds be assessed when we removed ourselves [from our homes in Makka] and [willingly] left behind family and possessions and offspring?" At which point Allāh fashions splendid wings of gold and mother of pearl for each one of them with which they soar into paradise.<sup>67</sup> Even greater assurances of celestial compensation are promised in the Qur'an to muhājirūn who meet their death away from home.<sup>68</sup>

Among the virtues of the emigration to Madīna elaborated in the ḥadīth is its absolving power. The hijra was tantamount to a rebirth, spiritually speaking, since it offered the possibility of cutting oneself free of one's baggage of past sin: "Verily, [embracing] Islam effaces [all sin] which preceded it and the hijra effaces [all sin] which preceded it."<sup>69</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 282.

<sup>64</sup> S. 16: 41

<sup>65</sup> Ibn Hishām, *Sirat*, 2: 87; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 227-28. Ṣuhayb had apparently come to Makka as a poor man but had amassed a great fortune there. He embraced Islam but was prevented from leaving Makka by a group of the Quraysh who were loathe to let him take such wealth with him. When he offered to trade his gold and silver for the liberty to depart for Madīna, they accepted. When the Prophet heard of this, he commented, "[How] Ṣuhayb has profited!" (*rabiḥa Ṣuhayb, rabiḥa Ṣuhayb!*). Ṣuhayb was one of the last, along with 'Ali, of the original wave of emigrants from Makka to reach Madīna.

<sup>66</sup> S. 2:207; Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 229.

<sup>67</sup> al-Ḥākim, *Mustadrīk*, 3: 399

<sup>68</sup> S. 3:195; 4:100; 22:58.

<sup>69</sup> The Prophet addressed these words to Khālid b. al-Walid and 'Amr Ibn al-'Aṣ who after years of actively fighting Islam came to Madīna as Muslims and emigrants seeking his intercession to secure God's pardon for their former misdeeds: Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1: 78-79; al-Wāqidī, *Maghāzī*, 2: 745; Ibn Hishām, *Sirat*, 3: 174. In the last two sources the ḥadīth is cited without proper isnād.

It is worth highlighting the way in which the "initial emigrants" (*al-muhājirūn al-awwalūn*) are singled out in the Qurʾān and ḥadīth for special reward. These are distinguished, according to one source,<sup>70</sup> from the "latter emigrants," *al-muhājirūn al-ākharūn*, by the fact that the former reached Madīna before the change of *qibla* from Jerusalem to Makka. Because of the greater risks they took and the greater sacrifices they made, the earlier emigrants are viewed as having demonstrated a purer intention. They are therefore accorded more honor and merit than those who sought refuge in Madīna in later years. In a similar vein, another ḥadīth differentiates between poor and rich *muhājirūn*, granting the former entry into paradise "five hundred years" before the latter.<sup>71</sup> Poor emigrants were those that brought no wealth with them to Madīna and may thus be presumed to have evinced a stronger reliance on God than those who had reserves to fall back on.<sup>72</sup>

### **Other Modes of Hijra**

As the theocratic state in Madīna grew in numbers and strength the concept of hijra underwent further modifications, particularly as applied to new Bedouin converts. The desert tribesmen who flocked to Madīna, especially after the signing of the Truce of Ḥudaybiya, were no longer obliged to adhere to such a geographically strict intention of emigration. In some cases, the Prophet authorized them to return to their homelands even after they had made the intention of emigrating.<sup>73</sup>

In other cases, the Prophet offered them a choice between two different types of emigration: *al-hijrat al-hādīr* ("the settling emigration") and *al-hijrat al-bādī* ("the nomadic emigration").<sup>74</sup> The former, also termed *al-hijrat al-iqāma* ("the emigration of residence"),<sup>75</sup> is equivalent to the conventional conception of emigration entailing indefinite settlement in Madīna. The latter type of emigration, also referred to as *al-hijrat al-rajaʿ*<sup>76</sup> ("the emigration of return"), is differentiated from the first in that, after an unspecified but relatively short stay in Madīna, it allows the temporary emigré to go back to his place of origin under oath to serve in Muslim

<sup>70</sup> Ibn Shabbah, *Taʾrikh*, 2: 491.

<sup>71</sup> at-Tirmidhī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 4228.

<sup>72</sup> This is obviously a relative question since both Abū Bakr and ʿUthmān, the first and third Caliphs respectively were among the richest emigrants upon arrival in Madīna.

<sup>73</sup> In one anecdote, a bedouin convert who had at one time been resident in Madīna returned to the desert and a nomadic way of life. Later he met up with a group of companions at the time of pilgrimage who asked him if he had reneged on his vows to which he replied in the negative explaining that the Prophet had given him permission to live among the wandering Arabs. Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 6:27.

<sup>74</sup> al-Nasāʾī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7053.

<sup>75</sup> Ibn Shabbah, *Taʾrikh*, 2: 484-85.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*

military campaigns when summoned and to obey orders and injunctions come what may.<sup>77</sup>

Although the first type of hijra, also referred to as *al-hijrat al-bāna* ("the established emigration"), is stated to be greater in reward than the second, there seems to have been no blame attached to electing the short-term emigration. The Prophet's instructions concerning the offers to be made to unbelievers before engaging them in lawful jihād contain reference to both kinds of hijra. If they accept Islam, they are to be invited to emigrate to Madina (*al-tahawwul min dārihim ilā dār al-muhājirīn*) which bestows on them the rights and duties of emigrants; if they decline to emigrate, they are to be informed that their condition will be like that of nomadic constituents of the Islamic polity (*ka-aṣrāb al-muslimīn*) who are subject to Islamic law and who are only entitled to a share in war booty if they actively engage in jihād alongside the Muslims.<sup>79</sup>

In some cases the Prophet actually discouraged would-be muhājirūn from settling definitively in Madina. It is tempting to speculate about the reasons for this change of policy. It may partly be explained by concerns for the greater good of the community in wishing to spare it the burden of hosting incongruous elements or too large a number of indigent emigrants. No doubt it was realized that unchecked migration to Madina would pose more of a liability than an asset because of not only the limitations of food supply and pasturage but also the fickle nature of Bedouin loyalties. On the positive side, having loyal followers in the desert steppes had its strategic as well as spiritual advantages.

In Rajab of the fifth year after the hijra, the Prophet is reported to have told a deputation of a particular Arab tribe, "You are emigrants wherever you are, so return to your lands!"<sup>80</sup> Likewise the Prophet began to refuse the requests of tribesmen to have him mark out a permanent mosque site for them in a settlement within the oasis of Madina as he had done for groupings of earlier Arab emigrants; instead, on one occasion, he informed them, "My mosque is your mosque, you are my nomadic wasteland and I am your sedentary site, and yours is the obligation to respond if I summon you [to take part in a military campaign]!"<sup>81</sup>

Another reason for inhibiting a prospective emigré might be related to what the Prophet perceived to be spiritually opportune in the case of a particular individual. The emigration entailed hardship and sacrifice that

<sup>77</sup> al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1132.

<sup>78</sup> al-Nasā'ī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7053; al-Ṭabarānī, *Kabir*, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1132; Ibn Shabbah, *Tā'rikh*, 2: 285-86.

<sup>79</sup> Muslim and Ibn Hanbal, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1078.

<sup>80</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1: 291.

<sup>81</sup> Ibn Shabbah, *Tā'rikh*, 1: 78

was not demanded of every Muslim. In an illustrative ḥadīth the Prophet was asked about the hijra by a nomad whereupon he answered, "Woe unto you, verily the emigration is a difficult undertaking. Do you have camels of which you give in alms?" The Bedouin responded in the affirmative and the Prophet advised, "So [carry on] doing this in the vast, distant plains for truly Allāh will not neglect anything in [rewarding you for] your deeds!"<sup>82</sup> The intending muhājir might also be turned away by the Prophet with a view to the accomplishment of a higher or more fundamental duty: On one occasion a man came to the Prophet and said, "I have come to swear allegiance to you [with the intention of making] the hijra and [my fervor is such that] I have left my parents weeping [over my departure]." To which the Prophet replied, "Go back [to your parents] and cause them to be cheerful just as you have caused them to weep!"<sup>83</sup>

### *The End of the Hijra*

With the extension of Muslim control over Makka and the subsequent pacification of the greater part of the Arabian peninsula, there was no longer any urgent need for Muslims to emigrate to Madina. Indeed, numerous ḥadīth proclaim *lā hijra ba'd al-fath*, "There is no hijra after the conquest [of Makka]."<sup>84</sup> The closing of the door of the historical hijra is aptly summed up by one of the Prophet's wives, 'Ā'isha bint Abū Bakr, who is reported to have commented along the lines of the above ḥadīth:

There is no more emigration today. [There was a time when] one of the believers would flee with his faith unto Allāh, the Exalted, and unto the Prophet, may Allāh bless him and grant him peace, out of fear that he would be persecuted. But nowadays, Allāh has plainly caused Islam to dominate and today [a believer can] worship his Lord wherever he wishes. But [there nonetheless remains] holy war and intention [as a means of proving the sincerity of one's faith and earning spiritual merit].<sup>85</sup>

Such ḥadīth would seem to indicate that the hijra to Madina, particularly following the death of the Prophet, had lost its imperative meaning and was no longer a means of asserting one's unconditional attachment to Islam nor of earning special merit. Still, there is justification, even on a

<sup>82</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 24: 35.

<sup>83</sup> al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7: 143; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:3, narrates a similar ḥadīth in which an anonymous man wishes to consecrate himself to hijra and jihād seeking celestial reward. The Prophet asks him if either of his parents are alive and is told that both are still living. Then after confirming that the man's aim is reward from God, he orders him, "Go back to your parents and provide them with goodly companionship!"

<sup>84</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 52:194; Sulaymān Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan Abī Dā'ūd* (Cairo: Dār al-Ḥadīth, 1988), no. 2480. Also see al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, nos. 7563 and 3437.

<sup>85</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 58:44.

purely historic level, for viewing things in a less rigid way both as regards hijra to Madīna and hijra as such. The conditions which gave rise to the original emigration to Madīna in the Prophet's lifetime have inevitably manifested themselves in subsequent ages. Thus we find, only a few decades into the Islamic era, in the time of civil strife during which the Caliph 'Uthmān was murdered, a Meccan muhājir feeling obliged to emigrate back to his former homeland, exclaiming, "O God, verily I fled with my religion from Makka to Madīna and [now] I am fleeing with it from Madīna to Makka!"<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the term hijra has been evoked time and again, even in our day, by Muslims to describe their flight from oppression of one sort or another.<sup>87</sup> Such a notion of an indefinite possibility of hijra, geographically and historically speaking, seems to find support in a ḥadīth which declares, "There will be hijra after hijra. . . ."<sup>88</sup>

At the same time, there is a deeper level of hijra which is not indissolubly linked to geographical displacement. This is clearly the implication of the following anecdote. During the caliphate of 'Umar there was a terrible drought and thousands of Bedouin came to Madīna as refugees. When the rains finally came, 'Umar went out among the hordes urging them to return to their respective areas of origin telling them, "Emigrate [truly] and do not make pretense at being of the muhājirūn!" [*hājarū wa lā tahājarū*].<sup>89</sup>

### **Concluding Remarks on the Historical Hijra**

While the hijra of Islam refers first and foremost to the emigration of the Prophet and his closest companions from Makka to Madīna it would be a gross oversimplification, as the above discussion demonstrates, to reduce it to this one event. From the asylum-seeking of Meccan Muslims in Abyssinia to the settling down of Bedouin tribesmen in Madīna, the hijra was a multifarious phenomenon even in the Prophetic age. Indeed, the various modes of emigration of the first generation of Muslims manifest both changing circumstances and the multifaceted concepts of which the hijra is a crystallization. These same concepts as we shall see find expression in other less literal modalities.

<sup>86</sup> Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 3: 1128-30.

<sup>87</sup> Concerning the obligatory nature of hijra and its interpretation by various jurists and political leaders through time see Masud, "The Obligation to Emigrate," in *Muslim Travellers*.

<sup>88</sup> The ḥadīth in question is in praise of Syria, "the blessed land to which Abraham emigrated." Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2482.

<sup>89</sup> Ibn Sa'd, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3: 324. A further indication of the changed status of rural Arabs who settled in Madīna in later years is the following: 'Alisha asked the narrator what they called people of small rural communities who settled among the inhabitants of Madīna without there being any kinship links between them. He answered, "We call them louts and waste scraps (*al-'ulūj wa'l-asqāt*)."<sup>89</sup> to which she responded, "We used to call them *muhājirūn* in the time of the Prophet. . ." in al-Tabarāni, *al-Mu'jam al-Saghīr* (Beirut: Mu'assasah al-Kutub ath-Thiqafiyah, 1986), no. 129.

## The Metaphorical Hijra

Since the hijra embodied such essential Islamic ideals, it is not surprising that some of the Prophet's companions equated it with an essential condition for attaining salvation even after it was no longer an option. At least one ḥadīth appears to corroborate this idea: "None shall enter Paradise except he who has emigrated."<sup>90</sup> Another ḥadīth implies without any qualification that hijra, like jihād, is obligatory upon Muslims.<sup>91</sup> This state of affairs would be a cruel irony if the emigration did not have its equivalents in actions and attitudes that were not the monopoly of only one generation of Muslims.

### *Jihād as Hijra*

One of the companions who had accepted Islam only after the pacification of Makka was informed that only those that had emigrated would gain entrance into Paradise. Obviously distressed, he went and asked the Prophet about this and received the following reassurance: "There is no hijra after the conquest of Makka but [there remains] jihād and [good] intention."<sup>92</sup> In a related ḥadīth, the Prophet spells out the articles of faith (*īmān*) and is then asked what sort of faith is the best to which he responds, "Al-hijra."<sup>93</sup> Then to the question, "And what is al-hijra?" he replies, "That you shun evil." And when he is asked, "And which hijra is best?", the Prophet says, "Al-jihād."<sup>94</sup> Thus, jihād (literally "struggle" or "effort") appears as the active counterpart or continuation of hijra. For-saking evil and error is only half of what is expected; it must be accompanied by sincere efforts in the direction of establishing the good and living according to the truth. This striving is typically associated with holy war.

In equating emigration and holy war, we have an aspect of hijra which is not restricted to a particular time or a particular grouping of Muslims. Holy war, too, involves uprooting oneself from home and family and enduring hardships for the sake of faith. It is in the sense of the continuing possibility of earning the emigrant's reward that the following ḥadīth are to be understood: "Verily, the hijra will not come to an end as long as there is jihād"<sup>94</sup> and similarly, ". . . as long as the infidels are being fought."<sup>95</sup>

The waging of jihād need not be understood exclusively in the sense of outward military confrontation, for there is also a "greater holy war" to

<sup>90</sup> al-Nasā'ī, *Sunan*, 7: 145-47 and Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 3: 401.

<sup>91</sup> Ibn Hanbal, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3342.

<sup>92</sup> Ibn Shabbah, *Ta'rikh*, 2: 482-83.

<sup>93</sup> 'Abd b. Humayd, *Al-Muntakhab min Musnad 'Abd b. Humayd*. Sāmīrā'ī and Sa'īdī, eds. (Beirut: 'Ālam al-Kutub, 1988), no. 301.

<sup>94</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1991.

<sup>95</sup> Ibn Ḥanbal and al-Nasā'ī in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5218.

be fought with the unconverted elements we carry within ourselves. The following ḥadīth lends itself to this interpretation:

The best of the believers in terms of soundness of submission [*islāman*] is he from whose tongue and hand the Muslims are safe, and the best of the believers in terms of faith [*īmānan*] is the best of them in moral conduct, and the best of the muhājirūn is he who has renounced that which Allāh, the Exalted, has forbidden, and the best [fighter of] jihād is he who strives against his [lower] self for the sake of Allāh's essence, be He magnified and glorified.<sup>96</sup>

This conception of sincere effort, jihād, is particularly applicable in cases where a Muslim remains faithful to the pillars of faith in spite of difficult outward circumstances: "[Constancy] in worship in [the midst of] fitna<sup>97</sup> is like the emigration unto me."<sup>98</sup> The scope of this tradition is by no means limited to the companions of the Prophet or even to men who have the privilege of waging a military jihād. A more explicit ḥadīth rules that whoever perseveres in the practice of the pillars of Islam is assured of paradise whether "he emigrated in the cause of Allāh or stayed put in the land in which he was born."<sup>99</sup>

### ***Righteous Intention and Practice as Hijra***

As several of the ḥadīths cited above indicate, hijra has its equivalents not only in the domain of action (i.e., jihād), but also in that of intention (*nīya*). Instead of a geographical direction, this concept of emigration rests on a moral and spiritual orientation, an inward resolution of forsaking definitively that which is forbidden. It is this moral conversion that is implied in the following ḥadīth which concerns the deeper meaning of the emigration: "The [true] Muslim is he from whose word and deed [literally, tongue and hand] the Muslims are safe, and the [true] muhājir is he who shuns [*hajara*] that which Allāh has forbidden."<sup>100</sup> In another ḥadīth the true emigrant is he who "shuns offensive acts [*khaṭāyā*] and sins."<sup>101</sup>

This conception of hijra is closely linked to the idea of repentance (*taṭvba*) which implies formally dissociating oneself with one's past, infidelity, and a penitent acknowledgment of the misguided nature of one's former behavior and belief. *Taṭvba* is analogous to the emigration in the

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<sup>96</sup> al-Tabarāni, *Kabir*, in al-Albāni, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 1129; my rendering of the latter part of this unquestionably profound ḥadīth (i.e., *man jāhada nafsahu fi dhāti 'llāh*) is not the only interpretation but one I feel is justifiable.

<sup>97</sup> Cf. footnote 24.

<sup>98</sup> Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:208; al-Tirmidhī, *Sunan*, no. 2201.

<sup>99</sup> al-Bukhārī and Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albāni, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 5925.

<sup>100</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 2:4 and Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2481.

<sup>101</sup> Abū 'Abd Allāh Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, in al-Albāni, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6658.

sense that both comprise two complimentary movements: a turning towards [what God has ordained]—hence a consequential discrimination—and a turning away from [what God has prohibited]—hence an uncompromising rejection. Furthermore, it is a door open to all, irrespective of historical circumstances. In the words of the Prophet: “The hijra will not come to an end until repentance comes to an end, and repentance will not come to an end until the sun rises from its place of setting [i.e., until the Day of Resurrection].”<sup>102</sup>

In summary, we have seen that the concepts underlying the hijra are linked to inward attitudes and intentions which remain pertinent even when the outward necessity or possibility of physical emigration is absent. It now remains to discuss the central devotional manifestation of these concepts which, like the original hijra, is expressed in geographical movement: the pilgrimage to Makka (*al-ḥajj*).

### ***Pilgrimage as Hijra***

The ḥajj, like the hijra, is a consecrated migration, an uprooting and severing of ties for the sake of faith. The pilgrim is drawn into a sacred flow in which, momentarily, all is left behind and the only destination is God and His Prophet. In this sense, the already cited Qur’anic expression “*muhājiran ilā ‘Ilāhi wa-rasūlihi*” might be applied to the pilgrim, just as it was applied to the emigrant. From a certain point of view, the first part of this movement—towards God—is represented by the prescribed pilgrimage to Makka while the second part, the movement towards the Prophet, is embodied in the supererogatory visit (*ziyāra*) to the Prophet’s city, Madīna which is discussed in fuller detail below.

The ḥajj may be likened to the hijra in other respects as well. Just as the Prophet saw an extension of hijra in holy war, he recognized ḥajj as a type of jihād.<sup>103</sup> Similarly, hijra is equated with *lawba* the two movements of which are actualized in the sacred journey to the Makka. The opportunity offered by the ḥajj for intense repentance and pious resolution to mend one’s ways is such that those who perform it correctly (*al-ḥajj al-mabrūr*) are assured of paradise as their reward.<sup>104</sup> According to another relevant ḥadīth, he who performs ḥajj with a pure intention returns home as free of sin as when his mother first gave birth to him.<sup>105</sup> Let us recall that the hijra, too, was comparable to a rebirth in this respect.

<sup>102</sup> Abu Dā’ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2479, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 7469.

<sup>103</sup> “What an excellent jihād is the pilgrimage!” (al-Bukhārī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6769). Other ḥadīth would indicate that this equivalence is principally applicable to women and those men too weak to wage holy war (e.g., “The pilgrimage is the holy war for every weak person.” Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, no. 2902.)

<sup>104</sup> al-Tabarānī, *Kabīr*, and Ibn Ḥanbal in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 3170.

<sup>105</sup> al-Bukhārī and al-Nasā’ī, in al-Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6197.

*Ziyāra as Hijra*

Although the allusions to this are not as explicit in the primary sources, the visit to Madina—as an extension of the pilgrimage and in its own right—also reflects features of the hijra. The ziyāra to the Prophet's city, though not strictly obligatory,<sup>106</sup> is rarely omitted by any pilgrim. To do so would be subjectively comparable to neglecting the second testimony of faith, to a deficient reverence for the Prophet one of whose names is *al-Ḥabīb* ("the Beloved"). It is thus that the journey to Madina, like the emigration, is an expression of love for the Prophet. A ḥadīth says: "Not one of you truly believes until I am dearer to him than his father, his son and all mankind."<sup>107</sup>

If today Muslims are no longer able to emigrate or, except in rare cases, even to earn the emigrant's reward through jihād, a visit to Madina permits them to reaffirm and deepen their love for the Prophet and his illustrious companions of whom many thousands are buried in or near the city. Ideally, this "holy tourism" includes visiting their graves, praying where they prayed and meditating on their sacrifices and devotion. And it is this affection for one's spiritual forefathers which in itself, according to a well-known ḥadīth, may be a vehicle of salvation.<sup>108</sup>

The visitor to Madina (*zā'ir*; pl: *zuwwār*) is in a number of ways comparable to the "temporary emigrant" of the Prophetic age. The central feature of the latter's stay in Madina, was meeting the Prophet and swearing an oath of allegiance to him which included an affirmation of his attachment to Islam. Similarly, the high point of the ziyāra, and in fact the act from which it derives its name, is the visit of the Prophet's tomb. This visit takes place in a section of the mosque known as *al-Muwājahha*, which might be translated "the face-to-face audience chamber." It is here that the *zā'ir* conveys his greetings to the Prophet just as if he were alive before him.<sup>109</sup> In addition, most traditional formulas of greeting for this

<sup>106</sup> For an argument (by a medieval Mālikī jurist) in favor of regarding the visit to the Prophet's tomb as a *de facto* obligation on the pilgrim see Taqī al-Dīn al-Subkī, *Shifā' al-Siqām fī Ziyārat Khayr al-Anām*, (Beirut: Dār al-'Afāq al-Jadīdah, 1978).

<sup>107</sup> al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 2: 8.

<sup>108</sup> And through this love they have hopes of being counted among their betters in the sense suggested by the following anecdote: A man stood before the Prophet and said, "Oh Messenger of Allāh, when is the Hour?" at which the people pulled him and made him sit down. Yet he rose again and asked the same question and was again made to sit down. When he did this for the third time, the Prophet retorted, "Woe unto you, what have you prepared [of good works] for [the Hour]?" to which the man replied, "Love for God and His Messenger!" Then the Prophet told him, "Sit, for verily you will be with those you have loved." The narrator of the ḥadīth then related the extreme joy of the companions at this saying of the Prophet adding, "And I hope to be with the Prophet and Abū Bakr and 'Umar by virtue of my love for them even if my works fall short of theirs." (al-Bukhārī, *Jāmi'*, 5:14; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 8:42).

<sup>109</sup> A ḥadīth reads: "No Muslim greets me but that Allāh restores my spirit to me so that I am able to respond to him." (Abū Dā'ūd, *Sunan*, no. 2041).

occasion include affirmations of one's belief in the Prophethood of Muḥammad and in the truth of his message.<sup>110</sup>

For visitors to Madīna, like the "temporary emigrants" in the apostolic age, their stay provides them with the opportunity of strengthening their resolve to live according to Islamic norms and prescriptions. During their stay the visitors immerse themselves in the rhythms and *baraka* of worship in the presence of like-minded fellow-Muslims. It is a chance for spiritual renewal and profound repentance. And just as those Arabs who made "the emigration of return" during the Prophet's own lifetime, these pilgrims carry this new found faith back to their homelands thereby enriching and strengthening the wider community of the faithful.

Hence, we find that even as regards the Prophet's own *mahjar*, Madīna, its function as refuge and magnet for true believers did not end with the conquest of Makka. In addition to its traditional appellation, "*Dār al-Hijra*" (the Abode of Emigration), Madīna is also called "*Dār al-Īmān*" (the Abode of Faith). A significant ḥadīth in this respect is: "By Him in whose hand is my soul, things will revert to how they began; surely all true faith will return to Madīna, just as it began from there, until all true faith will be in Madīna."<sup>111</sup>

Now we have come full circle, for the journey to and sojourn in Madīna is metaphorically to join the same flow of faith which marked the first hijra. The holy city's epithet "*al-Munawwara*" (The Radiant) is surely not unrelated to the eternal significance of the hijra which is in essence a principled movement away from darkness towards light.

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