## My Weltanschauung<sup>1</sup> through Hajj and some Thoughts on how Islam Promotes Racial Harmony

"We mirror the movement of the heavens, circling the ka'bah seven times. We move in harmony, as if travelling back to the beginning of time. <u>I feel myself becoming one with those around me</u>, with those who have come before, and all who follow"<sup>2</sup>

When the month of Dhu al-Hijjah approaches majority of the Muslims prepare for the festival of 'ld al-Adha, however a minority – approximately 3 million – ready themselves for the fifth pillar of Islam: Hajj. Here, I intend to focus on Hajj and how I am in awe when pondering over its magnificence and grandeur.

When beginning the journey for Hajj, a Hajji (pilgrim) comes into the state of *ihram*. This state of higher spirituality includes the wearing of two simple white sheets of cloth, which diminish social status, class, race and any other boundary. It's when a king looks, acts and is treated no differently than a pauper. H.A.R Gibb in his 'Whither Islam?: A Survey of Modern Movements in the Moslem World' wrote:

'No other society has such a record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and endeavour so many and so varied races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India and Indonesia, perhaps also the small community in Japan, show that Islam still has the power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of the East and West is to be replaced by co-operation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition'.

Allah has emphasised the notion of the ummah, 'This community of yours is one single community and I am your Lord, so serve me' (Qur'an, 21:92), and the Hajj is its practical implementation for the world to witness the sight of unity and equality. For me as a Muslim it gives me a clear Weltanschauung (worldview), which forces me to see the world differently; "I see it as one world, our world. The geography of which encompasses the 'so called' paradigms of 'East' and 'West', and breaks through artificial borders." It was this very idea of equality that had Malcolm X rediscovering himself and leaving the 'Nation of Islam' for mainstream traditional Islam. He wrote to his wife stating,

'There were tens of thousands of pilgrims, from all over the world. They were of all colors, from blue-eyed blonds to black-skinned Africans. But we were all participating in the same ritual, displaying a spirit of unity

<sup>2</sup> Journey to Mecca - Story of Ibn-e-Battuta. Accessed online [22.10.2012]: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JcQUuCBgYPc&feature=relmfu

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> My Worldview – How I see the world around me.

and brotherhood that my experiences in America had led me to believe never could exist between the white and non-white'.<sup>3</sup>

The two sheets of *ihram* also remind the Muslims of their final abode, and Hajj teaches conscience of life and death. Whilst studying for a B.A. in Abrahamic Religions at Heythrop College, I remember one of our lecturers Dr Peter Vardy kept his coffin in his office to constantly remind him and keep him conscious of death – this has been the way of philosophers.

The rituals performed at Hajj, I believe connect the Prophet (PBUH) and Prophet Ibrahim (PBUH) as does the salawat recited in prayer whilst in julus. Whilst teaching at school I ask the children of what happens to Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael in the Tanakh (Old Testament) and they respond by saying that they are sent to a barren land and the story finishes there. However, for the Muslims that is where it all begins in the Qur'an and many of the rituals performed in Hajj are a re-enactment of that. The zam-zam, a blessed spring we now drink from due to the thirst of Ismail (PBUH); men still run in between the green lights whilst performing the sa'i as did Hajar (PBUH) when searching for water. We sacrifice an animal to remember the sacrifice made by Prophets Ibrahim and Ismail (PBUT) and stone the symbolic Satan to remind us of his open enmity. Whilst in Arafah one is forced to look up at the mount of mercy, where the Prophet (PBUH) gave his final sermon – similar to Jesus' 'sermon on the mount' – and envision the Prophet surrounded by his companions and ponder over his message of love for all, unity, equality between men and women, between people of all races. He shunned usury, which seems to be at the kernel of today's problems. He emphasised the rights of the Khaliq (Creator) and the makhluq (creation – all people of all races and colour), as is visible from the following word cloud:4



Hamid Mahmood

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Malcolm X (1965). The Autobiography of Malcolm X. ed. 2007. Penguin: London, UK. p. 454 – also see <a href="http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let\_mecca.htm">http://www.malcolm-x.org/docs/let\_mecca.htm</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> For a summary of the 'Prophet's final sermon on Hajj' see: <a href="http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/muhm-sermon.asp">http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/muhm-sermon.asp</a>