

The Poetics of Pilgrimage: Assembling Contemporary Indonesian Pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt, Yemen

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And proclaim the *ḥājj* among people: they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every kind of camel, lean on account of journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.

———The Holy Qurʾān, 22: 27

The last decade has witnessed a steady increase in the number of Indonesians embarking on pilgrimage (*ziyāra*) to visit the tombs of Muslim saints and scholars scattered around the Ḥaḍramawt valley of the former South Yemen. Despite the considerable presence of the Ḥaḍramī diaspora in Indonesia, the idea of a pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt did not really exist among Indonesian Muslims of non-Ḥaḍramī descent until rather recently. Muslims with physical and financial means are obliged to embark on the *ḥājj*, a pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina, at least once in their lifetime. Many pilgrims from the Indonesian Archipelago have traditionally prolonged their stay in the two holy cities to acquire knowledge from eminent scholars in residence (Azra 2004; Laffan 2003; Taglicozzo 2013). In the early twentieth century, Cairo emerged as another destination for pious visitation, primarily for those continuing their education at the prestigious Islamic university of Al-Azhar, founded in the tenth century (Abaza 2003; Laffan 2004; Roff 1970). Unlike these destinations, Ḥaḍramawt had never

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enticed Indonesian Muslims despite the considerable influence of Ḥaḍramī scholars (*‘ulamā*) in Indonesia (Alatas 2011).

Pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt mainly revolves around the tombs of Bā ‘Alawī saints and scholars. The Bā ‘Alawī, a group of Ḥaḍramīs acknowledged as the direct descendants of the Prophet Muḥammad (*sayyid/sāda*), had long migrated to various places around the Indian Ocean, where they disseminated their own Sufi tradition, the *Ṭarīqa ‘Alawīyyā* (Bang 2003; 2014; Ho 2006; Alatas 2010). Central to this *ṭarīqa* is the veneration of the Bā ‘Alawī pious ancestors. For the Bā ‘Alawīs living abroad, travel to Ḥaḍramawt constitutes a diasporic return (Ho 2006). Bā ‘Alawī scholars, however, have also produced textual representations that frame such return journeys as a pilgrimage (*ziyāra*). Such a framing allowed the repositioning of Ḥaḍramawt from being “a pure point of *sayyidly* origin to a diverse one of many families with different histories and other beginnings” (ibid.: 222). The notion of pilgrimage opens up Ḥaḍramawt as a meaningful travel destination to those without blood relation, incorporating them into “a shared horizon of territory and time” (Johnson 2007: 2).

In this article, I explore the communicative processes that led to the recent emergence of Ḥaḍramawt as a pilgrimage destination for Indonesian Muslims of non-Ḥaḍramī descent. In doing so, I move away from previous studies of pilgrimage that are more focused on ritual analysis to an approach that examines the socio-discursive mediations that have enabled the emergence and maintenance of pilgrimage practice. Consequently, I examine the roles of various actors involved in the production and consumption of pilgrimage: teachers who introduce a particular representation of Ḥaḍramawt, travel agents and guides who assemble pilgrimage trips, and pilgrims who consume the assembled package and narrate their experiences upon return. As a pilgrimage destination, Ḥaḍramawt materializes as a communicative context produced through various negotiations between actors and participants in the social interactions that make up the pilgrimage assembly line. Such an approach enables us to begin to understand the various mechanisms of attraction and seduction at work in pilgrimage practice (Eade 1992; Vukonić 1992; McKeivitt 1991; Adler 2002; Coleman and Elsner 2003).

I argue that pilgrimage can be fruitfully analyzed as a *poetic project* that frames travel as a *transformative process*. Such a project is poetic because it hinges on the construction of multiple chronotopes, or diagenetic representation of time-space relation (Bakhtin 1981), which are juxtaposed, compared, contrasted, and assembled into meaningful alignments (Wortham 2003; Lempert and Perrino 2007; Agha 2007; Perrino 2007; Stasch 2011).¹ The poetic

¹ The idea of cross-chronotope alignment can be traced back to Bakhtin (1981), who suggested that the novel links the chronotopic world of the novel, or “the world of the author,” to “the world of the listeners and readers” (Agha 2007: 321). As a text-artifact, the novel semiotically links two moments of experience and two participant roles (author and readers/listeners).

function of language, as Roman Jakobson famously argued, projects “the principle of equivalence” into the speech/textual chain as “the constitutive device of the sequence” (1960: 358). This means that signs that have some kind of correspondence, in their sound or in their meaning, are brought into implied parallelism by the way they are linked through their particular positions in the structure of speech or an actual text (Waugh 1980: 64–66; Hymes 1996: 166; Caton 1990: 255). Such parallelism may, in turn, come to function metapragmatically: saying something about the act being undertaken, guiding interpretation of what is being done, what people are doing, and what roles people are inhabiting, as well as defining the situation in progress (Silverstein 2004; Fleming and Lempert 2014). The actors discussed in this article are involved in producing “mythic” (Stasch 2011) chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, that is, representations of Ḥaḍramawt as a spiritually significant place where Islamic ideals are actualized in real spacetime. Such chronotopes are (1) made to resonate with other mass-mediated chronotopes of an idealized Islamic past that circulate among Indonesian Muslims; and (2) contrasted with chronotopes of the modern world, thereby generating a sense of continuity with the former and a “denial of coevalness” (Fabian 1983) with the latter.

Pilgrimage is a project (Keane 2003) because it is a critical and reflexive attempt to evoke such dialogic resonances and oppositions. It involves harnessing the iterability (Derrida 1982) of different chronotopes and limiting their possible interpretations (Duranti and Brenneis 1986; Tedlock and Mannheim 1995), which produces coherence and particular “forces of persuasion” (Stasch 2011: 9). As a project, pilgrimage strives to stabilize meaning, action, and interpretation through link-making (Coleman 2014; Stasch 2011) without necessarily determining the ways travelers imagine and experience their journey. It also cannot fully erase differences and discontinuities. Consequently, pilgrimage remains subject to frictions (Tsing 2005), constraints, and “intrasocietal heterogeneity” that produce disparity of understanding (Stasch 2014a).

As a poetic project, the notion of pilgrimage induces Indonesian Muslims to travel to Ḥaḍramawt by framing such a journey as a transformative process. Pilgrimage can be described as a process (Turner 1973; 1974; Turner and Turner 1978) because it involves mobility (Coleman and Eade 2004), in this case between Indonesia and Ḥaḍramawt, within the Ḥaḍramawt valley, and within a particular shrine complex (Ho 2006), and because it requires various negotiations between actors in different social settings before, during, and after the actual travel. Such a process can be described as transformative for three reasons. First, because the travel itself is understood as a cross-chronotopic movement through which pilgrims imagine themselves leaving their modern world and entering a spiritually charged place. Secondly, pilgrims’ interactions with actors and sites in Ḥaḍramawt are posited as transforming their own selves. Finally, pilgrimage is a transformative process because it

shifts the status (Goffman 1981) of the returning pilgrims from being consumers of the circulating mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt to being their producers (Coleman and Elsner 2003). Thus travel to Ḥaḍramawt becomes a meaningful, transformative process owing to the poetic project that mediates such journeys. Consequently, there can be a variety of transformative processes, depending on the particularities of the mediating project.

Analyzing pilgrimage as a poetic project directed toward a particular transformative process provides a useful template for understanding the iterative (Cohen 1979; Turner and Turner 1978; Elsner 2000; Di Giovine 2012), affective processes that make up the assemblage of contemporary Indonesian pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt. By examining the various practices of mediations, I move from previous studies of pilgrimage that are based on a given notion of places and sites as contexts of pilgrimage (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Coleman and Eade 2004; Coleman and Elsner 1995) to one that focuses on the processes through which different actors actively construct the context for and meaning of their action amidst various uncertainties (Coleman and Crang 2002; Coleman and Elsner 2003). This article underscores the centrality of practices of mediation, the interlacing of pilgrimage and other social, political, and cultural processes, and the structural similarities between pilgrimage and other forms of tourism (Eickelman and Piscatori 1990; Cohen 1992; Adler 2002). In doing so, it opens up the material and discursive conditions that sustain pilgrimage, together with their diverse entailments, to a comparative perspective.

HADRAMAWT AND INDONESIA: RENEWING OLD CONNECTIONS

The material and discursive processes that make up the assemblage of Indonesian pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt are entangled with a variety of politics and political projects, including those that relate to identity, religious authority, and religious authenticity. As such, the rise of Indonesian pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt cannot be divorced from broader social, political, and economic developments in Indonesia and Yemen over the last three decades. Here I will briefly sketch these developments in both countries, while taking into account convergences between them.

The unification of North Yemen and South Yemen in 1990 resulted in a relatively free political atmosphere in which different Islamic groups sought to secure an ideological niche for themselves amidst intense public contestations over the country's future and its religio-political identity. Despite the unification, many people in most parts of the former South Yemen remained resentful of the northerners. South Yemen's political leaders continued to accuse the north-dominated government of pursuing a systematic economic marginalization of the south. Such grievances led to the 1994 civil war between the northern and the southern armies, which ended in victory for the north and the exile of the leading members of the southern Yemeni—mostly

Ḥaḍramī—leadership. Since then, the Yemeni state has remained suspicious of what it perceives as the secessionist tendency of Ḥaḍramawt, especially due to the region's historical transnational links to the Indian Ocean world.

Prior to the unification, the government of North Yemen was actively supporting Salafī groups in their attempt to destabilize socialist South Yemen (Dresch 2000: 142; Haykel 2002: 28–31). Ideologically and financially indebted to Saudi Arabia, many of these groups presented themselves as the bearers of pristine Islam and launched virulent diatribes against “traditionalist” scholars with Sufi orientations, including the Bā ‘Alawī of Ḥaḍramawt. Following the unification, the Yemeni government began supporting Sufi religious establishments in order to balance out the Salafis. It financed the rebuilding of Sufi shrines and institutions in southern Yemen that had been suppressed under the socialist regime. This led to a re-flowering of Sufism in the Ḥaḍramawt valley. Within this context, a young Bā ‘Alawī scholar, Habib ‘Umar bin Ḥafidh (b. 1962), emerged as a fiery orator who defended the Bā ‘Alawī as the guardians of authentic Islam and revived Sufism and Sufi shrines in Ḥaḍramawt (Knysh 2001).

In Indonesia, throughout the New Order regime (1965–1998), organized political Islam was subjected to state control designed to obstruct it from becoming an opposition to the regime. At the same time, the regime supported the more cultural and spiritual forms of Islam. Such a stance induced a rechanneling of Muslim aspirations to different sectors of society. In the 1970s, Muslim youth and intellectuals began forming active groups among university students, calling fellow students to project Islamic cultural and educational activism (Johns 1987). Outside of the urban context, pilgrimages to saintly graves increased considerably (Fox 2002; Christomy 2008). Annual pilgrimage to the tombs of the *wali songo*—the nine saints of Java believed to be the earliest Muslim missionaries in Java—increased between 1988 and 2005 from less than 500,000 to more than 3,500,000 (Quinn 2008: 64; Slama 2014: 114). The New Order regime created the material infrastructure for the rise of pilgrimage's popularity, including by enlarging and paving roads while refurbishing pilgrimage sites. The rising popularity of pilgrimage compelled the Ministry of Tourism to develop a new brand of tourism: *wisata religi* (religious tourism). The ministry led the restructuring of the pilgrimage economy, instructing site caretakers on how to properly manage the infrastructure and finances and how to devise pilgrimage tour packages (Slama 2014: 116).

By the early 1990s, there emerged a more liberated atmosphere in which Indonesians began to feel more comfortable with public expressions of Islam. Indonesian bookshops were flooded with translations of Islamic texts. Travel bureaus organizing *ḥājj* and pilgrimage rapidly proliferated. Another significant development was the spread of Sufi-oriented movements and study-groups (Howell 2001). One of the study-groups was a daily gathering in Solo, Central Java, headed by the eminent Bā ‘Alawī scholar Habib Anis al-Habsyi (d. 2006).

For more than thirty years, al-Habsyi vigorously taught theological and hagiographical texts written by the Bā ‘Alawī scholars of Ḥaḍramawt. These texts are replete with references to Ḥaḍramawt and its saintly inhabitants. The daily immersion in Bā ‘Alawī religious texts provided the grounds for a special appreciation of Ḥaḍramawt among his students. In 1993, following the unification of Yemen and the Bā ‘Alawī revival in Ḥaḍramawt, al-Habsyi led thirty people, most of them his family and students, on the first Indonesian group pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt. He was able to do so not only because he had been there in the late 1950s, prior to the socialist takeover, but also because he still had a half-brother and cousins living there. Al-Habsyi’s family in Ḥaḍramawt made the necessary preparations for the Indonesians’ arrival.

Once in Yemen, Al-Habsyi’s entourage visited the newly restored Ba ‘Alawī shrines. They also were able to meet living Ba ‘Alawī elders. During one gathering, al-Habsyi requested the elders to appoint someone whom he could invite to Indonesia “to remind Indonesians of the ways of the Bā ‘Alawī ancestors,” and they appointed the aforementioned Habib ‘Umar to the task.

When Habib ‘Umar arrived in Indonesia one month later he was introduced to local scholars and invited to deliver speeches to numerous religious gatherings. Many were enthralled by his eloquence and erudition. After a month in Indonesia he returned to Ḥaḍramawt with forty young Indonesians, of both Ḥaḍramī and non-Ḥaḍramī descent, who were to be educated under his personal care.

These forty students in Yemen became the embryo of Habib ‘Umar’s Dār al-Muṣṭafā academy, founded in 1996. Gradually, more students from Yemen and other Arab countries began to flock to Dār al-Muṣṭafā, followed by Muslim converts from Western countries. More and more Indonesians studied there, and in 1999 Habib ‘Umar’s wife opened an adjoining academy for women, named Dār al-Zahrā’. After spending three to four years in Ḥaḍramawt the students returned to their homeland with a renewed proselytizing zeal. They began establishing *majelis taklim* (Islamic study groups) through which they transmitted what they had learned to the wider public. These students became the primary agents in producing chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt as a spiritually significant place for Indonesian Muslims.

THE EARTHLY ANGELS

Halimah is one among many teachers who succeeded in inducing a desire among Indonesians of non-Ḥaḍramī descent to embark on a pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt. She is an Indonesian of Ḥaḍramī descent, born in West Java in 1979. She studied in several *pesantren* (Islamic boarding schools) in Java before joining her brother in Ḥaḍramawt in 1999, where she enrolled in the newly established Dār al-Zahrā’. After staying in Tarīm for four years, Halimah returned to Indonesia and began teaching in various *majelis taklim*.

Her popularity gradually grew among middle-class Muslim women of Jakarta. Every month, Halimah teaches in forty different *majelis taklīm*s, where she recites and elaborates classical texts on jurisprudence and Bā ‘Alawī Sufism.

I first met Halimah in a *majelis taklīm* organized by the association of the wives of Indonesian medical doctors (Ikatan Istri Dokter Indonesia/IIDI). She was dressed completely in black with a *burqa* covering her face, which was fairly uncommon in Jakarta. Except during particular religious occasions, she sat comfortably among the middle-upper-class women of Jakarta, many of whom did not even cover their hair. I was struck by her confidence. She explained to the women the intricacies of the text she was reading from. Every now and then she would throw in a story or two concerning the saints and scholars of Ḥaḍramawt, acquainting her non-Ḥaḍramī students with her ancestral land.

In 2009, Halimah published her first book, *Bidadari Bumi* (Earthly angels), an anthology of nine stories of pious Bā ‘Alawī women she had encountered during her stay in Ḥaḍramawt. Two thousand copies were sold within ten days of publication. Those who bought it were mostly her own students, although it remained in stock at the biggest bookstore chain in Indonesia for an extended period, a clear sign that sales were going well. Halimah also uses social media to promote her book and impart her messages. To date, she has more than twelve thousand followers on her Facebook fan page, and more than thirteen thousand on Twitter.

In the book’s preface, Halimah explains that she compiled the anthology to reveal the existence of women who personify Islamic ideals of modesty, asceticism, trust-in-God, and other spiritual virtues. She strives to counter the widespread belief that such virtuous personalities exist only in stories from bygone eras. “Yes,” Halimah writes, “they are not women from legendary lands, nor are they angels who dwell in heaven ... they are here. On this earth.... They are the earthly angels” (Alaydrus 2009: viii). Written in modern literary style for the urban educated public, the book presents the nine Bā ‘Alawī women as paragons of piety and virtue who should be emulated by Indonesian women whatever their genealogies. In this she departs from the established Bā ‘Alawī hagiographical tradition’s insistence on the centrality of genealogy (Ho 2006; Knysh 1999).

While Engseong Ho and Alexander Knysh have both identified genealogy as a central motif of the Bā ‘Alawī literary tradition, this begs the question of whether such a focus presupposes a historical constancy and downplays the emphatic variability of this particular tradition. For example, Wilson Jacob’s 2013 study of the Bā ‘Alawī expansion in nineteenth-century Malabar shows how traditions of the Prophet’s life were emphatically deployed by Bā ‘Alawī scholars, who used it as a means to discipline, regulate, and cultivate subjects, resulting in the materialization of gender as a discursive object. Similarly, the case of Halimah points to a shift that is taking place in the emphasis of

Bā ‘Alawī ethical discourse toward one concerned less with the notion of exclusive genealogy than with the attainable cultivation of virtues more palatable to the contemporary Indonesian Muslim middle class and their celebration of specific expressions of self-improvement (Hoesterey 2008; 2016; Rudnyckj 2009; Jones 2010).

The stories Halimah imparts are about simple everyday occurrences. One tells of an old lady who fell down as she disembarked a bus and bled excessively, only to “thank God for His persistent bounties” (Alaydrus 2009: 63). Another story sketches the life of a saintly lady who throughout her life had only two veils, a pair of sandals, a comb, a mirror, a copy of the Qur’ān, a string of prayer beads, and a praying mat (ibid.: 35). Each page is filled with graphic descriptions of the frugality of life in Ḥaḍramawt and the women’s forbearance in living their lives. Halimah does not dwell on biographical details of the women; she is more interested in actualizing Sufi ideals in real spacetime. However, rather than describing deceased individuals, as most hagiographical texts do, Halimah prefers to talk about living women that her readers might actually meet and emulate. In other words, the anthology is a poetic project, which presents Ḥaḍramawt as a foreign and mythic chronotope that stands in marked contrast to the chronotopes of its readers. It is a chronotope made to resonate with the Prophetic past, which will make Ḥaḍramawt a place worthy of visit.

Throughout the book, Halimah contrasts the verdant landscape of Indonesia with the barren yet spiritually nourishing valleys of Ḥaḍramawt. For example, she writes:

In this town,	neither a drop of morning dew
nor a burble of creek	or the warble of birds on the branches
But in this town,	there is the tinkle of prayer beads
softer than	the drift of the river (ibid.: 16–17).

For Halimah, the desert and plateaus that surround the Ḥaḍramawt valley have for centuries safeguarded the spiritual life of its inhabitants, nourished by long-established practices of religious devotion. She explained to me,

While the *zāhir* (manifest aspect) of Ḥaḍramawt is desert, streets full of dirt, and rocky plateaus, the *bāḥin* (unseen dimension) is what one can sense during one’s visit: the everyday practices, children reading the Qur’ān in the mosques, students reading Islamic law, the presence of ascetics with high spiritual stations. Pilgrims to Ḥaḍramawt witness practices long gone in Indonesia. In Ḥaḍramawt we are able to visualize the time of the Prophet, how he lived, how he preached and formed a community. This is impossible to do in Saudi Arabia, where the places have been utterly transformed by modernization.

She thus presents Ḥaḍramawt as one of the last spiritual sanctuaries that remain, to a certain extent, untouched by the rapidly modernizing world. Her explanation points to an explicit denial of coevalness between the modernizing world

of Indonesia (or Saudi Arabia) and the purportedly static Ḥaḍramawt. For Halimah, Ḥaḍramawt and its inhabitants are seen as physical survivals of the long-gone Prophetic past, thereby framing it as a pilgrimage destination for every Muslim and not just those with kinship ties there. Experiencing Ḥaḍramawt as the last vestige of a spiritually idealized past is represented as a transformative process.

While most of Halimah's discussion revolves around living people and practices, she does not neglect the dead. But at the same time, she is careful not to talk excessively about them since most of her students and readers are not familiar with the dead saints of Ḥaḍramawt. For example, she writes: "Looking at Zanbal and Furayt from behind the bus window became a steady pastime I could not do without. They are situated in the middle of the town. Not a park, not administrative offices—those two places are graves. Thousands of saints are known to be buried there" (ibid.: 60). Here, Halimah smoothly enters into a succinct description of the graves of Tarīm (Ho 2006) before returning to her discussion of the living. I would suggest that her focus on the living as opposed to the dead is a crucial strategy that facilitates the emergence of Ḥaḍramawt as a pilgrimage destination for Indonesians of non-Ḥaḍramī descent, those without genealogical or spiritual ties with those buried in the graves of Tarīm. Living saintly individuals and scholars are presented as the links through which Indonesians of non-Ḥaḍramī descent can form connection to the Bā 'Alawī ancestors. They are links that can facilitate alignments between the world of the readers and world of mythic religiosity.

In 2005, Halimah was approached by a travel bureau to become a guide for a pilgrimage tour of the Ḥaḍramawt. She agreed to do so, and even helped to distribute the bureau's brochures to her students. To date, she has led five groups. During our conversation she denied that she acted as an advertising agent for the travel bureau. Rather, she sees her role as "stimulating interest for people to love a place filled with the pious." She told her students that to go to Ḥaḍramawt means to embark on a transformative spiritual journey: "Visiting Ḥaḍramawt is fruitful for those who intend to focus their gaze on the *bāṭin*. It is a journey of mainly visiting tombs and shrines. Those who only see the *zāhir* will see only dirt and tombstones. But those who can see beyond the materialities can sense that these places are connected to their spirits. It is also a journey of visiting living scholars, who would give advice and teach *awrād* (formulaic litanies). They visit Ḥaḍramawt seeking a heart-to-heart connection." Successful pilgrims to Ḥaḍramawt are those able to visualize the time of the Prophet during their visit. They can turn the physical landscapes and practices into indices of a particular past, recognizing that the *bāṭin* is inherent in the *zāhir*.

The distinction between the *bāṭin* and the *zāhir* is central to Islam. Ontologically, Islam presupposes that everything that exists has manifest (*zāhir*) and hidden (*bāṭin*) aspects. While the former pertains to their corporeal existence,

the latter relates to their spiritual realities that are hidden from plain view. Such a perspective generates an epistemological distinction between surface meanings that are accessible to all individuals and inner meanings that can only be uncovered by those who have cultivated their inner gaze (*baṣīra*). In Sufism, the transformative role of a master is precisely to help his or her disciples cultivate their *baṣīra* and enable them to access the esoteric dimensions of existence. Halimah sees her role as a travel guide as to cultivate the *baṣīra* of her entourage and help them to experience pilgrimage as a transformative process, a duty that is consistent with the traditional capacity of a Sufi master.

While Halimah's meta-commentary privileges the *bāṭin* over the *ẓāhir*, one should not lose sight of the visual significance the foreign Ḥaḍramī landscape has for many Indonesian Muslims. That is, physical landscapes also index religious authenticity, more so in the case of Indonesia, where producers of popular culture consciously assemble visual imageries of the Arabian Desert for Islamic television programs. Popular documentary series, like the highly-rated "Footsteps of the prophets" (*Jejak Rasul*), trace the sacred history of Islam while reproducing imageries of the Arabian Desert as the cradle of religious authenticity, sincerity, and piety. Desert scenes, complete with images of camel caravans, are consistently reproduced as television stage sets for Islamic musical performances. The plurality of images and related discursive and semiotic representations help to assemble intensified chronotopic interlinkages, suggesting that even the *ẓāhir* images of barren desert can index piety and authenticity in ways that do not necessarily privilege the *bāṭin*. Implicit in Halimah's account is therefore the mutually constituting relationship between the *ẓāhir* and the *bāṭin*. The barren landscape of Ḥaḍramawt is presented as "developable means" through which "certain kinds of ethical and moral capacities are attained" (Mahmood 2005: 148).

In one of the stories, Halimah introduces Hubabah ʿUmayrah, one of the "earthly angels" she met in Ḥaḍramawt. The story begins with how they became acquainted, then continues with a long hagiographic description of ʿUmayrah together with a discussion of her daily life and the Islamic virtues she personifies. The story ends a few years later when Halimah returns to meet the pious woman with a group of Indonesian pilgrims. Whenever Halimah leads a group of pilgrims she always takes them to see the earthly angels she discusses in her book and asks them to bless the pilgrims (Alaydrus 2009: 110). The story thus moves from her encounter with something angelic—a living individual whose life resonates with rarely actualized Islamic ideals—to the description of Ḥaḍramawt as a mythic chronotope, and finally to the possibility of establishing alignment between that mythic chronotope and the contrastive chronotopes of her readers through the act of pilgrimage. Such an alignment is portrayed as effecting spiritual transformation of the pilgrims, which makes pilgrimage a transformative process.

Halimah is intricately involved in a poetic project that makes her students want to visit Ḥaḍramawt. She produces a foreign and mythic chronotope of Ḥaḍramawt that resonates with circulating chronotopes of sacred or Prophetic histories as well as mass-mediated representations of the Arabian Desert as a locus of piety, sincerity, and authenticity. In doing so, she frames travel to Ḥaḍramawt as a pilgrimage, a process that can bring about spiritual transformation. As a travel guide, Halimah helps to materialize the textual chronotope as living textures.

FROM *MULĀZAMA* TO PILGRIMAGE

Muhsin is a native Jakartan, an *orang Betawi*, as he proudly referred to himself, born in 1966. I met him in his *zāwiya*, a mosque-like building reserved for holding religious classes and other devotional activities, situated in a cramped, poor urban neighborhood of East Jakarta. Those who come to listen to Muhsin belong to a lower social stratum than Halimah's students belong to. As a boy, he went to the government school in the mornings and studied Islamic sciences with his grandfather in the afternoons. After graduating from primary school he decided to leave government school to focus more on religious learning. A cousin introduced him to the eminent Bā 'Alawī scholar of Jakarta, Habib Abdurrahman Assegaf (d. 2007), and Muhsin decided to enroll in his madrasa in 1981. In 1990, he married the adopted daughter of another senior Bā 'Alawī scholar, Habib Abdullah Shami, and from then on lived with him, serving while studying with the scholar until the latter's death in 2000.

From a young age, Muhsin was well-connected with the Bā 'Alawī scholarly community. This engagement exposed him to various mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, as he explained using both Indonesian and Arabic. I italicize all Arabic phrases (with the English translation in parentheses) in order to highlight the constant switching between Indonesian (all of which is translated into English) and Arabic:

Habib Abdullah [Shami] used to tell me many things about Ḥaḍramawt. When I told him that I really wanted to go to Ḥaḍramawt, he replied, "*Ḥaḍramawt quddamak!*" (Ḥaḍramawt is in front of you). I read a lot of books with him, including the *kalām* (discourses) of the Bā 'Alawī *aslāf al-ṣāliḥ* (pious predecessors) and their correspondences. From these texts I learnt a lot about Ḥaḍramawt. I felt an intense longing to go. But Habib Abdullah told me, "Do not worry Muhsin, one day you will visit Ḥaḍramawt and you will drink from *bīr 'aṭīyya* (the name of a well in Mashhad, Ḥaḍramawt founded by the eighteenth-century Bā 'Alawī saint 'Alī b. Ḥasan al-'Aṭṭās). Habib Abdullah used to say that pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt *yaḥsul madad yasīm wa khayr 'amīm* (results in precious alleviation and general good). He also said that pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt *tuqallib al-nuḥas ila dhahb* (turns copper into gold). When one embarks on a pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt, one will feel the result after one's return. Since the 1990s, I had felt a strong longing to visit Ḥaḍramawt. Especially Tarīm.... Tarīm is amazing ... *shawāri' Tarīm shaykh man lā lahu shaykh* (the streets of Tarīm are teacher to those without a teacher)."

His discourse, switching between Indonesian and Arabic, is replete with intertextual references to Bā ‘Alawī hagiographical texts, demonstrating his grasp of the Bā ‘Alawī textual tradition. He even quotes verbatim from these texts when he describes Ḥaḍramawt. By keeping the company of a living Bā ‘Alawī scholar for a protracted period—a practice known in Islamic scholarly tradition as *mulāzama*—Muhsin, who is not himself a Ḥaḍramī, became incorporated into the Bā ‘Alawī intellectual community. *Mulāzama* comes from the word *lāzama*, meaning “he kept, confined himself, clave, clung, or held fast, to him,” and refers to “the continuous physical propinquity of a follower to a powerful man” (Chamberlain 1994: 118). In the absence of sanguine ties to the saintly individuals buried in Ḥaḍramawt, Muhsin had to forge an alternative means of connection to the Bā ‘Alawī ancestors, one that he maintains through his mastery of the texts that make up Bā ‘Alawī tradition.

Muhsin had been intimately acquainted with Ḥaḍramawt long before he visited there. But the Ḥaḍramawt he knew was not the present-day one, but rather an assemblage of mythic and timeless chronotopes, a poetic product derived from hagiographical texts. Such a chronotopic assemblage mediates his travel experience as a transformative process. Again, Arabic phrases are italicized with their English translations in parentheses:

Shortly before Habib Abdullah passed away in 2000, his son who was living in Abu Dhabi asked us to visit him. But then Habib Abdullah died. We already had tickets to Abu Dhabi. So I asked the son whether he could change my ticket so that I could go to Ḥaḍramawt. He paid for my trip. I left Jakarta in late 2000 and lived in the *rubāt* (boarding school) of Tarīm. Every week I visited the graves of Zanbal. Five months in Ḥaḍramawt was like *sanawāt kathīra* (many years). I read and finished several books with Habīb Ḥasan al-Shāṭirī. I also received an *ijāza* (license to teach) from his brother. Habīb Ḥasan *yanzuru ilayya* (looked at me). It was an indescribable experience. Before I settled in the *rubāt*, I went on a pilgrimage to different places around the *wādī* (valley). I went to Mashhad where I drank from *bīr ‘aṭiyya*. That was when I noticed that everything that my teacher had predicted really did come true. I was well acquainted with the places since I had heard about them over and over again. Every Friday I went to Zanbal. There, I recited *Yā sīn* (a chapter of the Qur’an) four times, at the graves of al-Faqīh, al-Saqqāf, al-‘Aydārūs, and al-Ḥaddād. Between the graves of al-‘Aydārūs and al-Ḥaddād is *rawḍah min riḡāḍ al-jannah* (a garden from the gardens of paradise). I did not feel Ḥaḍramawt to be a foreign place, because I knew Ḥaḍramawt. It was just as I had been told.

Muhsin’s journey was a cross-chronotopic movement whereby he personally entered the mythic world he knew well. Residing in the *rubāt*, reading texts with scholars, receiving *ijāza*, acquiring a substantial amount of knowledge in a short period of time, and being seen by the scholars—all of these are standard tropes in Bā ‘Alawī hagiographical texts (Bang 2003). When he visited Zanbal, he knew exactly what to recite at different pilgrimage stations (Ho 2006: 200–7). In narrating his experience, Muhsin attempts to align the chronotopic account of his journey with other mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, generating dialogical resonances between them. This requires him to omit

occurrences that might upset the emerging dialogical resonances. While his narration strives to establish alignment with past chronotopes, it does not erase the difference of being a non-Bā ‘Alawī. That is, despite his insistence that Ḥaḍramawt is not a foreign place, Muhsin’s narration nevertheless reinscribes present-day Ḥaḍramawt as a quixotic place that stands in opposition to modern Indonesia. After all, he himself had to learn about Ḥaḍramawt before he went there, to develop some degree of familiarity with it.

Muhsin’s journey aligns mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt to the space-time of his travel, allowing them to express themselves symbolically and “to become part of a practice” (Lefebvre 1991: 216–17). Henri Lefebvre has pointed out the three important aspects of spatiality: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived. He argues that the production of space cannot be reduced to either language or discourse. A space, for Lefebvre, is not a mere text but a *texture* made up of networks and webs that are expressible through discourse, but it only becomes explicable through embodied actions. Space is not only read, but more importantly, acted. It is determined by what may take place there, and consequently what may not take place there. It is acted through gestural and ritualized movements, perceived through spoken words, and conceived through the dissemination of the written word and of knowledge (ibid.: 224). To employ Lefebvre’s terminology: Muhsin’s *mulāzama* enabled him to perceive older mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, which in turn allowed him to align them to his own travel experience, generating living textures that resonate with, but nevertheless remain different from, the older chronotopes.

Muhsin’s journey is also a transformative process in that it enabled him to become a producer rather than just a consumer of mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt. Observe how he aligns older mythic chronotopes with his own personal experience: “Every Friday afternoon, I would go and sit at the Bā ‘Alawī mosque. There is a special pillar there. It is said that when they were building the mosque, the workers stopped for the day. When they returned the next day they found a pillar miraculously erected. Al-‘Aydarūs used to sit by that pillar. Al-Ḥaddād used to pray in that mosque all night long asking God for the *ḥāl* [Arabic: spiritual state] of al-‘Aydarūs.” Here, Muhsin aligns his own experience of praying at the Bā ‘Alawī mosque with the deeds of al-‘Aydarūs and al-Ḥaddād, thereby generating dialogic resonances. His recollection alludes to a personal spiritual transformation produced in him through the process of repeating the actions of the Bā ‘Alawī ancestors, even though he is not a Bā ‘Alawī. Such a spiritual transformation corresponds to his transformation from being a consumer to being a producer of mythic chronotopes. Another example illustrates this point:

Pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt is only possible through *da‘wa min al-salāf* (the invitation of the Bā ‘Alawī pious predecessors). If one knows them and maintains connection with them by praying for them and making *tawassul* (seeking their help as intercessors or

as means of approaching God and requesting His favors), one will reach Ḥaḍramawt. I was almost prevented from entering Ḥaḍramawt. At that time Bin Laden had just bombed an American ship in Aden. I was stuck in Sanaa. The choice left for me was to go either to Syria or Egypt. But Habib Ḥasan al-Shaṭīrī phoned me from Ḥaḍramawt and told me to wait for two days. Then I was able to continue my journey.

As Muhsin says, he arrived in Yemen following the October 2000 suicide attack on the USS *Cole*. His assertion, “Pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt is only possible through the invitation of the Bā ‘Alawī pious predecessors,” resonates with the widespread adage that *hajj* is only possible through the invitation of Abraham, which in all likelihood is based on the Qur’ānic verse that opens this article. Note also his explanation of how Habib Ḥasan—one of the most senior Bā ‘Alawī scholars/saints of Ḥaḍramawt—helped to facilitate his smooth entry into Ḥaḍramawt. Habib Ḥasan is thus presented as an intercessor, a synecdoche of the Bā ‘Alawī ancestors whose invitation is necessary to ensure a smooth entry into the valley. What we see here is an alignment between the immediate co(n)text—which was experienced as a constraint—and older mythic chronotopes, which produced a new resonating chronotope without necessarily erasing the discontinuity produced by such constraints.

Today, Muhsin is a successful teacher. What he once heard about Ḥaḍramawt from his teacher he now teaches to his many students. Again, his pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt was a transformative process that allowed this former consumer of mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt to become a first-hand producer. Through the proliferation of study-groups led by people like Muhsin and Halimah, mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt spread to wider publics, inducing more people to visit the valley for pilgrimage. In both their cases, we see how the relationship between the teachers and their students involves a hierarchy “that is reinforced or even created through the [pilgrimage] narrative” (Coleman and Elsner 2003: 5). As someone without blood connection to Ḥaḍramawt, Muhsin certainly feels more confident after his visitation to the land of his teachers. His students and friends now recognize him as a non-*sayyid* authority of the Bā ‘Alawī tradition. His study-groups, in turn, facilitate the durability and circulation of his own pilgrimage narrative. While Halimah is able to speak to wide audiences due to her ability to tap into the publishing industry and the social media, Muhsin’s sphere of activity is more limited. Nonetheless, both are involved in a similar poetic project that prepares their students to become the target group for the burgeoning pilgrimage travel industry.

ASSEMBLING PILGRIMAGE

If Halimah and Muhsin are two among the many involved in generating new desires for pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt among Indonesian of non-Ḥaḍramī descent, Salim makes it possible. This is a challenge, because Ḥaḍramawt is not the most amenable of places, and lacks much of the infrastructures associated with modern pilgrimage or tourism. An Islamic scholar by training, Salim

was born in 1961 in Bondowoso, East Java, to a Bā‘Alawī scholarly family. He studied in East Java and Jakarta before continuing his education in Mecca in 1981. In 1987 he returned to Indonesia and established a travel bureau selling *hajj* packages.

In 1997, Salim was invited to take a familiarization trip to Yemen courtesy of the Yemenia Airlines, which had just opened a direct route between Jakarta and Sanaa. Following that trip, he began visiting Ḥaḍramawt regularly:

I began to see a business potential in organizing tours to Saudi Arabia and Ḥaḍramawt. In 1997, I led the first tour group consisting of thirty people. We spent a week there. It was a great success. Then I organized a tour for those going to Ḥaḍramawt to study. It was a period when Dār al-Mustafā was becoming a popular destination for Indonesian students. In those days, I could organize three to four trips annually. There were no competitors. My travel bureau was the only one and we made sure to offer the best services: meals, accommodations, transportation. Then other bureaus began to organize similar trips.

Salim’s decision to arrange these pilgrimage trips to Ḥaḍramawt intersected with two industries that boomed in 1990s Indonesia, involving pilgrimages to Mecca and labor migration to the Middle East. Both generated unprecedented movements of people between Indonesia and Arabia. Following President Suharto’s *hajj* in 1991, Indonesian pilgrims to Mecca reached record numbers, around two hundred thousand annually during the *hajj* season. Indonesians accounted for nearly 20 percent of all overseas pilgrims (Bianchi 2004:176). *‘Umrā* (minor pilgrimage to Mecca that can be undertaken any time of the year) also gained popularity among middle- and upper-class Indonesian Muslims. Consequently, several Arabian airline companies, including Emirates and Yemenia Airlines, moved to seize this lucrative market and offered flights between Jakarta and Jeddah via their respective capitals at much lower rates than the routes of Saudia and Garuda Indonesia Airlines. These developments presented Salim the opportunity to assemble a pilgrimage package to Ḥaḍramawt. His venture attested to “the possibility of shifts between secular and sacred forms of travel” (Coleman and Elsner 2003: 3).

Salim advertised the travel package by distributing brochures in the *majelis taklim* of his fellow Bā‘Alawī scholars. Most of his clients came from his own personal network:

Salim: Who goes to Ḥaḍramawt? Earlier, only Indonesians of Ḥaḍramī descent went. They felt that Ḥaḍramawt is the land of their ancestors. Some of them still have relatives there. So they went to visit the graves of their ancestors and meet their living relatives. Now, indigenous Indonesians (*pribumi*) make up the majority of the pilgrims. Some are government functionaries, students of *majelis taklim*, and scholars who are students of Bā‘Alawī scholars. They go to Ḥaḍramawt because their teachers are mostly Bā‘Alawī, and so in a way they have *isnād* (a chain of knowledge transmission) connecting them to the scholars of Ḥaḍramawt. They want to visit the graves of the Bā‘Alawī saints who they have read about in books. Some of them know the Bā‘Alawī ancestors even better than the Bā‘Alawī. They know the history.

Alatas: How did you come to this conclusion?

Salim: I know because I mix with them. They know cities in Ḥaḍramawt without having ever been there. They read a lot and listen to their teachers. This is what propels them to go.

Alatas: How about those who do not know Arabic?

Salim: Well, take those state functionaries, for instance. Many of them have good relationships with Bā 'Alawī scholars in Indonesia. This is what sparks their desire to visit the land of the Bā 'Alawī ancestors. And the other pilgrims, well, they are students in *majelis taklim* headed by teachers who are themselves students of the Bā 'Alawī. Their teachers guided them while motivating them to visit Ḥaḍramawt. These teachers tell their students about the saints of Ḥaḍramawt, and so they want to go.

Salim then showed me the popular Islamic magazine *Mafahim*, in which his travel bureau advertises the pilgrimage package to Ḥaḍramawt. The advertisement shows day-by-day itineraries complete with the names of the graves and the saints buried therein. Take, for instance, days three and five:

Day 3: Seiy'un: Visit to the grave of al-Muhājir (the emigrant), followed by the graves of Tarīm (*al-Faqīh al-Muqaddam*, al-Habib 'Abd Allāh al-Ḥaddād, etc.). Visit the house of Habib 'Umar b. Hafīd and Dār al-Muṣṭafā academy.

Day 5: Seiy'un—Tarīm: Breakfast followed by a visit to Habib 'Abdallāh bin Shihāb. In the afternoon, visit 'Ināt (the grave of *fakhr al-wujūd* [the pride of existence] Syaikh Abū Bakr bin Sālim) (*Mafahim* 4, 2007).

This advertisement targets a specific audience. The individual names, places, and graves it lists would certainly confound those not familiar with the Bā 'Alawī history and Sufi tradition. Several saints are mentioned only by their honorific title rather than their actual name, pointing to the role of teachers like Halimah and Muhsin in introducing Ḥaḍramawt and Bā 'Alawī history to the wider public. The advertisements resonate with the chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt that circulate in the *majelis taklim*. Note also that Salim's itinerary includes visiting living scholars, facilitating further connection between Indonesian pilgrims of non-Ḥaḍramī descent with living Bā 'Alawī scholars of Ḥaḍramawt.

Salim charges between \$2,000 to \$2,500 for a sixteen-day trip to Mecca and Ḥaḍramawt, quite expensive for average Indonesians. He told me that those who do have the means to go are generally happy with the experience and they visit again:

Many of those who went were content. They wanted to return. Maybe they felt unique enjoyment, satisfaction, and comfort. Some did return to Ḥaḍramawt for second and third pilgrimages. You know Haji Edi [a famous restaurateur from East Java]? He has been to Ḥaḍramawt many times. People are satisfied when they visit the graves of the saints.... Although Ḥaḍramawt is not yet developed, the people who visit are still happy. Pilgrimage is really different from regular tourism. The saints who are buried there are the main attraction. The Prophet himself taught us to make pilgrimage and to create bonds with the saints.

For Salim, the objective of pilgrimage is to connect with dead saints, which in turn generates a transformative experience. His role as a travel agent is to facilitate this transformative process by assembling it into a convenient package accessible to those with the requisite financial means.

In fashioning the trip as pilgrimage, Salim had to make sure that those working with him were on the same page, and so he recruited Indonesian students in Ḥaḍramawt as tour guides:

In 1997, when I first organized trips to Ḥaḍramawt, I used a local Yemeni travel agency to arrange our visit. They came up with a coherent itinerary that included visiting historical places and natural sites. But then, I asked them to include more graves. They were shocked. “What is it with you people?” the Yemeni travel agent remarked, “We have prepared a complete itinerary, and yet you only want to go from one grave to another.” They even prepared a dance show, but I declined, since our purpose was pilgrimage. Generally, Yemeni travel agencies were confounded by Indonesian groups that only liked to visit graves. After that, I began using a Ḥaḍramī travel agency more familiar with the idea of pilgrimage. Now we employ Indonesian students who know the history of the Bā ‘Alawī to guide the pilgrims.

Observe how Salim consciously partakes in the poetic project by carefully selecting the programs and destinations that resonate with the mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt produced by teachers like Halimah and Muhsin. Programs like watching traditional dance might disrupt the emerging poetic pattern. Salim’s role is not only to facilitate travel, but more importantly, to select the proper destinations and programs and structure the itinerary in a form that corresponds to the mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt so as to frame the travel experience as cross-chronotopic movement. It was precisely the notion of pilgrimage as both a poetic project and a transformative process that the Yemeni travel agency could not grasp.

Salim therefore strives to minimize incongruity between texts and textures. Crucial to this is to identify his travel package as a trip to Ḥaḍramawt as opposed to Yemen. Most people I conversed with during my fieldwork described their travel as a pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt, not to Yemen, and that is how agents like Salim market their travel package. Furthermore, he makes sure that the itinerary does not include northern Yemen, especially the developing capital city Sanaa. According to Salim, most Yemenis could not appreciate pilgrimage. While the Yemeni government certainly benefits from the increase in Indonesian pilgrims, it has tried to ensure that they visit Sanaa by discontinuing direct connecting flights between Jakarta and Sanaa-Seiyun, Ḥaḍramawt. Salim describes this as “the politics of tourism,” which forces pilgrims to experience the capital city. But he devised a tactic to dodge the state’s imposition by chartering a bus that takes the pilgrims directly from Sanaa airport to Ḥaḍramawt upon their arrival. Such an itinerary is demanding since pilgrims must directly embark on a seven-hour bus trip after a nine-hour flight from Jakarta.

The role of the travel bureau is to assemble the trip as a convenient travel package while nevertheless reinscribing Ḥaḍramawt as a foreign and static but accessible chronotope. This is done by selecting destinations and programs that resonate with the circulating mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt while denying coevalness between Ḥaḍramawt and Indonesia. A carefully structured itinerary helps to materialize such discursive representations into living textures, and structures the journey as a transformative process.

CONSUMING PILGRIMAGE

Abdul Manan (b. 1928) is a Banjari—someone who comes from Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan—who has lived in Solo, Central Java since his youth. In the morning he works in the Batik trade, and in the evening he teaches Qur'anic recitation to neighborhood children. Manan also frequently attends the *majelis taklim* of Habib Anis al-Habsyi (d. 2006), the eminent Bā 'Alawī scholar who organized the first Indonesian group pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt:

Starting when I was young, my father always brought me to attend the gatherings of the *ḥabā'ib* (honorary title of the Bā 'Alawī scholars). I learnt the litanies from them. My father taught me to love and respect the *ḥabā'ib* since they are the descendants of the Prophet. To love them is to love the Prophet. But most of my friends only attend the devotional gatherings. I felt that if I really loved them, I should learn from them. So when Habib Anis started his *majelis taklim*, I began to frequent it. Over the years we finished reading many texts, including *ṣīrah* (Prophetic biography), *fiqh* (Islamic law), *ḥādīth* (Prophetic tradition), and the discourses of the *ḥabā'ib*. From Habib Anis I learnt about the *ḥabā'ib*, their history, their tradition, their litanies, and their eminence. I also learnt about Ḥaḍramawt. I always wanted to go to Ḥaḍramawt, to visit the graves of the *ḥabā'ib* whose litanies I recite daily. Ḥaḍramawt is the land of my teachers and my teachers' teachers. From them I have learnt about my religion. But unfortunately I lack the financial means to do so. I am only a petty trader trying to make ends meet.

Manan has a younger brother, Malik, who works for the national oil company, Pertamina. One day Malik told Manan that they were both going to visit Mecca and Medina for pilgrimage. The overjoyed Manan asked Malik whether it was also possible to visit Ḥaḍramawt on their way. Malik contacted a travel bureau that organizes a combined pilgrimage trip to the Hejaz and Ḥaḍramawt, and a few months later they found themselves in the streets of Tarīm. Manan was in tears as he recounted his journey:

I could not believe that I was finally getting to see Ḥaḍramawt. All the times I have prayed to Allāh to enable me to visit that blessed land. I love the *ḥabā'ib*. Every day I listen to my teachers talk about them. And I always pray for them and ask them to intercede with God on my behalf. My teachers told me that if we are spiritually close to them we will be able to be physically close to them. What they have been saying is true. I thank God for that! Before I left for Ḥaḍramawt, I went to see Habib Anis. I cried when I told him that I was going to Ḥaḍramawt. I told him that I was going to visit the grave of his grandfather, Habib 'Alī. Habib Anis was very happy. He prayed for me. He told me which graves I should visit. I felt that my trip would renew my connection to them.

For one week Manan and Malik traveled around the valley with an Indonesian guide, visiting graves and living scholars. For Manan, the pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt meant strengthening his connection to the living and dead Bā ‘Alawī scholars and saints: “I am not a descendant of the Prophet, but I love them. I am not a knowledgeable person, nor am I a pious Muslim, but I love the saints and scholars. I want to be close to them. I do not have the blood of the Prophet. But I want to be connected to them. That’s why I learn from them, I pray for them, I recite their litanies, I read their texts, and I visit their graves. I want to be close to them.”

As someone with no blood connection, Manan—like Muhsin discussed earlier—tries to forge intellectual and spiritual connections to the Prophet through his scholarly descendants. One key difference between Manan and Muhsin is that the former did not engage in *mulāzama*. Rather, Manan maintained his connection to the Bā ‘Alawī scholars through what is known in Islamic knowledge culture as *taraddud*, meaning to “frequent” someone. As the historian Michael Chamberlain notes, “Where *mulāzama* implied constant propinquity, *taraddud* meant regular contact” (1994: 118–19). Manan’s daily activities prevented him from establishing continuous physical propinquity, and for that reason he chose *taraddud* as his preferred means of connectivity with the living Bā ‘Alawī scholars. As Chamberlain (ibid.: 119) wrote in his study of Islamic knowledge practice in medieval Damascus, both *mulāzama* and *taraddud* are situated in a continuum of practices that includes pilgrimage.

Manan’s trip was an alignment of his own embodied self with the mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt that he was exposed to in the *majelis taklim* of Habib Anis. He was able to recognize the places, graves, and histories of the saints he visited:

I have heard about the places that I visited. From Habib Anis I learnt about Tarīm and Zambal. I learnt about Seiyun, the city of Habib ‘Alī. I went to Hurayḍā to visit the grave of Habib ‘Umar al-‘Aṭṭās. *Alḥamdulillāh* (Praise be to God). I was able to visit the graves of the saints I send prayers to on a daily basis. I walked through the garden of paradise. I sat and prayed in the cell where al-‘Aydārūs used to pray. I also met their descendants. I had the chance to see the relics of the saints. I kissed the sandal of Habib ‘Alī. I drank from the cup of Habib ‘Abū Bakr. I did all the things that Habib Anis had taught me. *Alḥamdulillāh. Alḥamdulillāh. I am very lucky.*

Note the historical density of Manan’s recollection. Prior practices of the Bā ‘Alawī that have been discursively preserved in chronotopic forms are experienced as textures, imbuing Manan’s journey with historical depth beyond the immediate context. The landscape, the people, and the materials he encountered made present the longer spatiotemporal dimension. Such a density renders Manan’s journey and his recollection of the trip as a reflexive meditation on a particular structure of chronotopic interlinkages that generate dialogical resonances with an idealized past.

When Manan returned to Indonesia he went to Habib Anis to report about his pilgrimage:

I told him all about my trip to Ḥaḍramawt. He was very pleased. He prayed that Allāh accepted my pilgrimage. I never cease to thank Allāh for this great blessing. I told my friends about Ḥaḍramawt. I told them that if they have the means, they should go and visit that blessed land. My experience heightened my love for the Prophet's family. I love the *ḥabā'ib*. Allāh has shown me their value. They are special people in God's eyes. I just hope that when I die I will be resurrected with them and their grandfather the Prophet.

Observe how, for Manan, pilgrimage was experienced as a spiritually transformative process. At the same time, it enabled him to become a producer of the mythic chronotope of Ḥaḍramawt. While Halimah and Muhsin can reproduce more durable chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt—through their *majelis taklim* or printed books—Manan can do so only in limited fashion. He only reproduces such mythic chronotopes in his conversations with friends and neighbors, and does not have the ability to present it in more durable forms. It may be, though, that as the number of such pilgrims returning to Indonesia increases, these interpersonal discourses will mutually amplify their impact and they will become as important as mass-mediated chronotopes.

“A BLACK ANT CRAWLING AT NIGHT”

Thus far I have suggested the importance of understanding pilgrimage as a poetic project involving cross-chronotope alignments that generate particular dialogical resonances and oppositions that frame travel to Ḥaḍramawt as a transformative process. Such alignments help to limit possible interpretations opened up by the iterability of chronotopes. As a project, however, the notion of pilgrimage cannot fully erase differences, discontinuities, and variability of equivalences. To illustrate this point, I now turn to my final interlocutor, Zahidah.

Born in 1948 to a Ḥaḍramī father and Tunisian mother, Zahidah chose not to mix with Arabs while growing up. She recalled to me how her father used to tell her about the land of her ancestors, while simultaneously inculcating Indonesian nationalism in her. A few years ago, Zahidah became interested in learning more about her ancestral land. This interest came at a point when her financial condition was improving considerably, and she would visit different countries every summer. In 2001, her brother was planning to go to Ḥaḍramawt to visit his son who was enrolled at the Dār al-Muṣṭafā academy, and Zahidah decided to go along.

When I asked Zahidah whether she was going to Ḥaḍramawt for a pilgrimage, she replied:

Oh no! Not at all, if you ask me personally. I am not against that, but I am a bit afraid of going on a pilgrimage to graves. Remember the *ḥadīth* of the Prophet: “like a black ant crawling at night.” Now that is what I fear. There is a hesitation on my part. So when I go

to the graves—I am not insulting [those who do]—I go to pray for them rather than to request that they intercede with God. I only ask the Prophet to intercede with God on my behalf. I am not among those who ask scholars to intercede on my behalf. I know they are scholars, but I have not been able to do it.

In explaining her position regarding pilgrimage, Zahidah evokes another Prophetic chronotope that differs from the chronotopes of a Prophetic past summoned by the likes of Halimah, Muhsin, and Manan, that of a Prophetic *ḥadīth* regarding idolatry (*shirk*). As such, Zahidah's discourse attests to another possible cross-chronotope alignment, one that resonates with reformist Islamic discourse. Such an alignment underscores opposition between the practice of grave visitation and Prophetic practice. Growing up in Jakarta and being educated in secular educational institutions familiarized Zahidah with modern reformist Islamic discourses that have dominated urban religiosity in twentieth-century Indonesia (Bowen 1993: 39–73; Feener 2007: 24–80).

Throughout her recollection of the trip, Zahidah discussed the inconveniences of visiting Ḥaḍramawt. Her list of complaints included:

- There were a lot of flies in Ḥaḍramawt.
- The dust was overwhelming.
- There are dry plateaus all around.
- Our bags were thrown from the airplane for us to pick up ourselves.
- I had always heard about Ḥurayḍa. My father was from Ḥurayḍa. But it was not that impressive.
 - What was imprinted on me was eating fish in a restaurant by the road during our journey there. It was served with raw onions cut in half.
 - It was extremely hot!
 - When I returned to Indonesia, I was thankful that my grandfather chose to migrate to Indonesia. [switching to English] Good choice!
 - The weather was very hot ... as if it were a gush. Even sitting in front of a cooling fan was more like being pummeled by a gush of scorching air from a carburetor, wih wih...
 - I refused to wear the *niqāb* (face covering). But it was clear how the air of Ḥaḍramawt necessitated women covering their faces because of [she raises her voice] THE INTENSITY OF THE DUST!

As I listened to Zahidah it became clear to me how similar her chronotope of Ḥaḍramawt is to that of Halimah in that both accentuate physical and material inconveniences. Yet, while for Halimah these index Islamic authenticity, and the austerity and forbearance of the Ḥaḍramīs, for Zahidah they index backwardness. Dialogical opposition between Ḥaḍramawt and Indonesia is maintained in both chronotopic alignments, but in Zahidah's account, the dialogical resonance between Ḥaḍramawt and chronotopes of the Prophetic past is largely missing. Thus *niqāb* indexes “the intensity of the dust” rather than the virtue of Ḥaḍramī women.

In contrast to the mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt that involve disassociating the valley from modern and/or Western influences, Zahidah's recollection presents a more complicated picture of contemporary Ḥaḍramawt:

When I went to my grandfather's house, my family who lived there talked about Indonesia. They showed me photographs of my brother and my cousin that they had received from my uncle. "Indonesia is *hili*" (Indonesia is sweet), they said. They kept our photographs there. They also said that we are lucky to be Indonesians. When I think about it, I feel really sorry for them. They are so unfortunate. But then again, although the conditions are so empty, Ḥaḍramawt is full of satellite dishes. They watch Indian movies replete with sex scenes. I guess that is just the way it is ... globalization....

Zahidah noticed the satellite dishes that dominate the urban skylines, an important detail that people like Halimah and Muhsin left out of their accounts. For Halimah, the Ḥaḍramīs are remnants of an Islamically idealized past who should be admired and emulated, but for Zahidah they should be pitied. Zahidah's description further shows how people in Ḥaḍramawt are in touch with the wider trends of globalization. Like the Indonesians, the Ḥaḍramīs aspire to modernity, and for this they should not be emulated.

Yet this does not mean that Halimah's trip was not transformative. During her journey she learned about her saintly ancestors: "What I saw in Ḥaḍramawt were mosques, graves, and plateaus. When I entered the gravesite of al-Muhājir, I thought that this place was so high, desolate, with no one around. Why was he buried there? Ah, and this al-Muhājir, I have heard about him before, from my son-in-law. I do not like reading history books. My son-in-law explained to me that he was our ancestor who first migrated from Basra to Ḥaḍramawt."

While pilgrimage for Muhsin and Manan became a means of aligning themselves with and materializing the preconceived mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, for Zahidah travel to Ḥaḍramawt entailed learning about her roots in situ. As she visited her ancestors' tombs she also learned about their histories. Her journey to Ḥaḍramawt enabled her to talk about her ancestors whose graves she had personally visited.

The most striking contrast between Zahidah's description of Ḥaḍramawt and those offered by Halimah, Muhsin, and Manan has to do with their recollections of visiting the graves of Tarīm:

When I entered Zanbal I was afraid. I kept on reciting *qul huwallāhu aḥad*.² I was told off—they said I was a Muhammadiyah [see below]. But no! I continued to recite *qul huwallāhu aḥad*.... I visited all the tombs. And so when I was in front of al-Ḥaddād's tomb, I contemplated that this man was from this small town, yet his knowledge spread to the whole world. There, I prayed for him, since I thought he was the best. But I did not ask them to intercede with God for me. I prayed for them, I did not do ask them to intercede.... There was an Indonesian student from Habib 'Umar's academy who was guiding us through the graves. He said that at night the tombstones could move. I instantly became more afraid, and I kept reciting *qul huwallāhu aḥad*, *qul huwallāhu*

² *Qul huwallāhu aḥad* is the first verse of the *sūra* al-Iklās, the 112th chapter of the Qur'an that stresses the unicity of God. The *sūra* reads: "Say: 'He, Allāh, is One/ Allāh is He on Whom all depend/ He begets not, nor is He begotten/ And none is like Him.'"

aḥad, qul huwallāhu aḥad. I feared committing *shirk*, because *shirk* works invisibly like an ant that crawls at night.

Here we see how, like other visitors, Zahidah's exposure to the graves of Tarīm evoked alignment with other preconceived chronotopes. However, while Halimah, Muhsin, and Manan aligned their actual visitation with older mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt, Zahidah linked her own experience at the cemetery with other Prophetic chronotopes that circulate in the *majelis taklim* of modern reformist Muslim scholars. Such contrastive chronotopes are usually deployed to warn people about the danger of idolatry (*shirk*). As someone who grew up in Jakarta without strong connections to the Bā 'Alawī scholarly community, Zahidah has been exposed to such teachings. Central to this Islamic ideology is the emphasis on safeguarding the purity of one's belief in God's unicity (*tawḥīd*) from what is perceived as the polluting threat of practices like grave visitation and seeking intercession. For this reason, Zahidah was accused as being a Muhammadiyah, the name of an Indonesian reformist organization founded in 1912 and known for its zeal in introducing modern education and celebrating progress, while purifying Islam from what it deemed "syncretic" practices. While Zahidah herself is not a follower of Muhammadiyah, the term is used in contemporary Indonesia to label those who have adopted a similar stance.

What is crucial to grasp here is the contested nature of pilgrimage as a poetic project due to the iterability of its constitutive chronotopes. Despite various mediations that try to limit interpretation by establishing a specific dialogic constellation, pilgrims and visitors do align their travel experiences to other chronotopes. Attending to this subtle but salient point allows us to develop an approach to pilgrimage that does not cling to the *communitas* paradigm, with its tendency to celebrate communal effervescence, or the *contestation* paradigm, with its insistence on positing pilgrimage sites as religious voids.³ Instead, being at pilgrimage sites often creates a new stimulus that can evoke multiple "chains of associations" that guide the pilgrims "away from reflections about the actual experience of the site" (Picard 2012: 12) and toward other, preconceived chronotopes, thereby generating other alignments that afford varying interpretations (Coleman and Elsner 1995).

³ The *contestation paradigm* was introduced by Eade and Sallnow who argue—against the "communitas" paradigm (Turner 1973; 1974; Turner and Turner 1978)—for the need to see pilgrimage as "an arena of competing religious and secular discourses" (1991: 2). Consequently, pilgrimage sites become "a religious void," or "a vessel into which pilgrims devoutly pour their hopes, prayers and aspirations" (ibid.: 15). The "contestation" paradigm was criticized, in turn, by Coleman and Elsner (1995: 209) for discouraging analyses of how sacred space is orchestrated in pilgrimage sites, which has impacts on pilgrims, though they do not deny that pilgrimage sites accommodate multiple interpretations. Bringing the sites back into the picture, Coleman and Elsner argue that any pilgrimage space consists of not only physical terrain and architecture, but also various imaginative mediations including myths, traditions, and narratives, which are then re-lived by the pilgrims (ibid.: 212).

Zahidah's journey to Ḥaḍramawt was itself a poetic project and a transformative process, albeit one at variance with those of other actors discussed in this article. Her account of her journey reproduces a foreign and backward chronotope of Ḥaḍramawt presented as in dialogical opposition to modern Indonesia. In doing so, she denies coevalness between Ḥaḍramawt and Indonesia. In her view, Ḥaḍramawt is certainly part of her past, but not her future. Ḥaḍramawt should remain irreversible with no ability to affect her present and future. It is not a chronotope worthy of emulation. Such a poetic pattern makes her travel a cross-chronotopic movement toward her past, while it also enhances her appreciation of being a modern Indonesian: "I was not sad when I left Ḥaḍramawt. The heat was unbearable. I remain thankful; thankful that I was born as an Indonesian. When I arrived back in Indonesia, I prostrated myself and kissed the soil, thanking God for life in this country. When my children picked me up, I wept, thanking God. I felt great pity for the women of Ḥaḍramawt, locked in their homes. I think people exaggerate about Ḥaḍramawt. I felt constricted there. I could not breathe."

Zahidah's case stands as an important reminder that pilgrimage is ultimately a poetic project directed toward a particular process. As a project, it will remain subject to the iterability of its constitutive chronotopes and the "intrasocietal heterogeneity" (Stasch 2014a) of the travelers. Consequently, it can generate a variety of transformative processes.

CONCLUSION

In this article I have examined various socio-discursive negotiations that surround the contemporary Indonesian pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt. I have shown how pilgrimage can be fruitfully analyzed as a poetic project, a practice of mediation that frames travel as a particular transformative process. Such a project can be aptly described as poetic because it involves the construction, juxtaposition, alignment, and comparison of multiple chronotopes, thereby establishing dialogical resonances and oppositions. I have observed several infrastructures that have sustained such a poetic project, including the *majelis taklim* (Islamic study groups), the Islamic publishing industry, and the travel industry. Various actors discussed in this article are involved in the production of mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt that resonate with other circulating chronotopes of an idealized Islamic past. They are also concerned to distance their chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt from other chronotopes of the modern world and to establish dialogical oppositions between them.

Such a poetic pattern, involving both dialogical resonances and oppositions, in turn constitutes travel to Ḥaḍramawt as a pilgrimage, understood as a transformative process. The actors I have discussed talk about their travel in terms of cross-chronotopic movement, an act of entering and aligning with a foreign and mythic world continuous with an idealized past, and discontinuous with the modern world. Similar to heritage or roots tourism (Ebron

1999; Basu 2004; 2007), pilgrimage involves a dense figuration of longer histories into immediate present actions (Adler 1989; Sallnow 1987; Stasch 2014b). Such a cross-chronotopic movement entails “mental work” (Picard 2012: 5) and is understood to have significant transformative effects on the pilgrims’ selves. At the same time, it entails a transformation of the pilgrims’ participation status, from being consumers of mythic chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt to being their producers. Such a process sustains the pilgrimage assembly line while creating a new hierarchy constituted by pilgrimage narrative retellings.

Pilgrimage is therefore a project of imagining chronotopes and cross-chronotopic correspondences, and materializing them as living textures. It centers on controlling the iterability of chronotopes and limiting their possible interpretations by establishing specific alignments. Travelers or pilgrims, however, are subject to intra-societal heterogeneity. They bring with them various chronotopes taken from their past exposures that can be deployed to form new, diverging alignments. Experiences at pilgrimage sites can evoke multiple chains of associations that generate contrastive dialogical resonances or oppositions. By employing concepts like chronotopes and poetics as analytic categories, I have incorporated the study of semiotics into my analysis of the ways in which pilgrims and other actors actively shape the world they inhabit, imbue their travel with meanings, create social relations, and institute continuities and discontinuities through their active (and contested) effort to form links.

Perceiving pilgrimage as a project allows us to comprehend it not in terms of static conventions, but rather as iterative discursive formations that dynamically unfold over time and are open to heterogeneous readings, inventions, engagements, and even misunderstandings. Such an approach provides an alternative to both the *communitas* paradigm (Turner 1973; 1974; Turner and Turner 1978) and its assumption that pilgrimage as a liminal experience has the ability to contain and frame discontinuity amongst pilgrims, and the contestation paradigm (Eade and Sallnow 1991) and its insistence on the ability of pilgrimage sites to allow “continuity between ideologies brought to the shrine and those taken away” (Coleman 2014: 286; see also 2002). Instead, my approach here has stressed the centralities of practices of mediation, the interlacing of pilgrimage and other social, political, and cultural processes, and the structural comparability between pilgrimage and other forms of tourism.

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Abstract: This article investigates the socio-discursive processes that have enabled the emergence and maintenance of pilgrimage practice by examining the rising popularity of the Ḥaḍramawt valley of southern Yemen as a pilgrimage destination for Indonesian Muslims. Pilgrimage to Ḥaḍramawt mainly revolves around visiting the tombs of Bā 'Alawī (a group of Ḥaḍramīs who claim direct descent from the Prophet Muḥammad) Sufi saints and scholars scattered around the valley. Moving away from ritual analysis, I examine the roles of various actors involved in the production and consumption of pilgrimage. I analyze pilgrimage as a poetic project that frames travel as a transformative process. As a project, pilgrimage can be described as poetic because it hinges on the construction of multiple chronotopes that are juxtaposed, compared, contrasted, and assembled into meaningful alignments. The actors discussed are involved in producing chronotopes of Ḥaḍramawt as a spiritually idealized place, which are made to resonate with mass-mediated chronotopes of idealized Islam circulating among Indonesian Muslims, and contrasted with chronotopes of the modern world. Framed by such a poetic mediation, pilgrims comprehend their actual travel to Ḥaḍramawt as a cross-chronotopic movement that they believe transforms their own selves. The article observes the various mechanisms of attraction and seduction at work in pilgrimage practice, while demonstrating the structural similarities between pilgrimage and other forms of tourism.