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Comparing Two Persian Hajj Travelogues: Ya‘qub Mirzā (1868) and Farhād Mirzā (1875/76)

Thomas Ecker

1 Introduction

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the Qajar dynasty had established themselves as rulers in Iran and over the following decade the country experienced a period of relative political stability and order, especially when compared to the preceding century. However, the new dynasty had to deal with the rise of imperial powers, which proved to be a potential danger to the territorial integrity of their domain. This situation led to the court and educated classes having an increasing interest in information about Europe and countries surrounding Iran, but also a growing need for the Qajar state to gather information about its own territories. Additionally, the establishment of commercial transportation in surrounding areas via steamship and railway incited greater numbers of Iranians travelling abroad. These developments resulted in a sharp increase in the number of Persian travelogues, whose overall number might be somewhere between 300 and 400 for the Qajar period (1797–1925).¹

All these travelogues have a didactic intention and were written to inform their readers about the journey of the author and the places he travelled to. Most have stylistic similarities, suggesting a common genre of Persian travelogues. Travelogues about the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca of course share the same destination and travel purpose and many had similar itineraries. In this chapter, I will argue that a closer investigation reveals key differences that are contingent on the author and the audiences they wanted to address, as well as the social function of the text. For this reason, I will compare two hajj travelogues written by members of the Qajar household and show similarities

¹ Travelogues have a long tradition in Persian literature, but only few are known from the early centuries, like the *Safarnāme* by Nāṣer-e Khosrow written in the eleventh century or the *Tuhfa al-‘Irāqayn* by Khāqāni Shervāni from the twelfth century. For the Safavid Era (1501–1722), a recent study lists 22 travelogues (Kiyanrad 2020). Morikawa (2001) listed 283 travelogues written in the Qajar era. Since then, a considerable number of travelogues have been published from this period.

and differences in the form and content of their narratives, pointing out that they address different audiences. While there is some overlap, the two texts occupied different social functions, which had an impact on each text's production. I will first introduce both authors and their travelogues and present some of the main features of the accounts, considering the main genre markers. I will then compare how both authors narrate their encounters with non-Islamic cultures and modern technology and evaluate the accounts of their sojourn in Mecca in Medina. I will end with a summary of my findings and some notes about how Persian hajj travelogues developed during the nineteenth century.

2 The Travelogue of Ya'qub Mirzā

Ya'qub Mirzā-ye Tabrizi, also known by his pen name *Manşur*, was a minor prince of the Qajar dynasty. He travelled to Mecca as a member of the entourage of Moḥammad Ṭāher Mirzā, the son of the then governor of the Iranian province Azerbaijan, Ṭahmāsp Mirzā Mo'ayyad al-Dowle. Mo'ayyad al-Dowle himself was the son of Moḥammad 'Alī Mirzā Dowlatshāh, the oldest son of the second Qajar Shah Fath 'Alī Shāh (r. 1797–1834) whose descendants formed a branch of the Qajar dynasty. Since the author was a Qajar prince and associated with the family of Mo'ayyad al-Dawla, he may have been a part of this branch of the Qajar Family. Ya'qub Mirzā travelled in the year 1868 from Tabriz in Iran via Erivan to Tiflis in Georgia. From there he went to the Black Sea, which he crossed with a steamer to Istanbul. After a short stay in the city he travelled to Beirut, again with a steamer, and from there by carriage to Damascus. In Syria he joined the official Ottoman hajj caravan travelling to Medina and finally Mecca. After completing the rites of the hajj, in nearby Jedda he boarded a steamer to Suez. Since the Suez Canal was not fully built yet, after five days in quarantine, he boarded a train to Ismailia and travelled to Cairo.² A few days later he took a Nile steamer to Alexandria and from there returned to Istanbul and via Tiflis to Tabriz, arriving there seven months and seven days after his departure.

Ya'qub Mirzā mentions several times in his travelogue that he took notes during his journey, but the extant manuscript was produced seven years after his return to Iran for Moḥammad Ṭāher Mirzā (Tabrizi 2009, 38). At the end of the manuscript, there are notes from several readers which show that the text circulated for many years among acquaintances of the author (*ibid.*, 296–298; 2010,

² This quarantine station was near 'Uyūn Mūsā located in the Gulf of Suez (Tabrizi 2009, 247).

542). It transpires from these notes that they must have known him personally, because one reader mentions wanting to ask the author in person about the meaning of some words and another noted that he wanted the manuscript to be sent back to Ya'qub Mirzā. We also learn that the author died in 1909 and that the text was part of the inheritance given to his son (Tabrizi 2009, 12).³

The main narrative of the journey is divided into chapters that open with the sentence '*goft: ey javān-e man*' (He said: Oh, my boy) and end with '*chun shab bar sar-e dast dar-āmad Maṣṣur lab az goftār foru bast*' (As the night fell on the wrist, Maṣṣur closed his lips and refrained from speaking). The second sentence is written in red colour in the manuscript and marks the chapter's end. Each chapter covers one stage of the journey.

These opening and closing sentences are addressed to a certain young man (*javān*) who tasked the author with writing the travelogue and whom he also met at the end of his journey (ibid., 294). Ya'qub Mirzā writes:

I address *javān* at the beginning of every stage because he was one of my friends in Tabriz. Record everything about the wonders of the travel stages and your experiences in written form, so that we may also be more or less informed about the state of affairs of foreign governments and land and sea.

ibid., 37 [translation of all quotations from the two travelogues under discussion by me, TE]

Furthermore, the author assumes the readership to be a circle of his friends in Tabriz. He apologizes several times directly to them for his shortcomings as an author (ibid., 37, 229) and expresses on many occasions during his journey how he misses them and wishes they would be with him. He also alludes to inside jokes among his friends. For instance, when he was in Istanbul, he visited a theatre and watched women performing a dance. He describes their appearance in such a graphic way that the modern editor felt obliged to censor the word buttocks (*kun*) seven times in this description and replace the word with three dots. This censorship can be found throughout the modern edition. At the end of his description, he expresses the wish that some of his more impudent friends would have been with him, especially one friend called Ja'far Khān Mirzā. Here he was obviously mocking one of his friends, whose identity might well have been known to the readers (ibid., 112–113).

3 Today it is in possession of the Parliamentary Library of the Islamic Republic of Iran (item number 9908), and it was published in 2009 in a modern edition by Rasūl Ja'fariyān, who also included the text in his 2010 compilation of 50 Persian hajj travelogues.

True to his assignment, the main intent of the narrative is educational. For every stage of the journey Ya'qub Mirzā describes the destination and the condition of the road. These descriptions encompass usually only a few sentences and characterize each stop in a general way, without providing too much detail. He tries to give his readers a clear account, focusing on the size of a city, village, or stopover, its inhabitants, and his general impressions. He shows interest in technological innovations and is especially impressed by Istanbul, depicting the Ottoman capital as an exceptionally large and densely populated city. In the Ottoman capital he describes his visits to touristic sights like the Hagia Sophia and to bathhouses, theatres, and other leisure activities. Enthusiastically, he notes in his journal that he could write day and night about Istanbul for the lifetime of the prophet Noah and it would still not be enough (*ibid.*, 118). While travelling in the Caucasus on his way back to Iran, Ya'qub Mirzā mentions that his perceptions have changed. He explains that on his outward journey he wrote much about the beauty of Tiflis, but now the city seems to him only like a village compared to Istanbul (*ibid.*, 284).

The travelogue also contains twenty hand-drawn illustrations to further visualize his descriptions. These range from some dots and lines, for example when illustrating the marching order of the Hajj caravan (*ibid.*, 165), to detailed, but still very simple and amateurish sketches of a steam powered crane (*ibid.*, 97) or the layout of the Ka'ba and its immediate surroundings in Mecca (*ibid.*, 229). He occasionally tries to provide direct advice to future travellers. While residing in the quarantine station next to Suez, he purchased a transit ticket from the station to Suez, only to find out that he was swindled, because no ticket was required. In his travelogue he gives an angry description of this experience, so that his friends would not make the same mistake (*ibid.*, 249–250).

As specified in his assignment, the narration of his personal experiences is another important part of Ya'qub Mirzā's travelogue. These go beyond mentioning the important events of the day. He also records many personal encounters, elements of his daily routine like making and drinking tea or smoking, and his everyday troubles during the journey. An example of the latter is a description of his first camel ride when travelling with the Damascus caravan. Because he had faced difficulties sitting in the camel litter, he attempted to ride on the back of the camel. He mounted it and tried to support himself by holding onto the camel's neck, but as it began to move, its neck moved as well, causing Ya'qub Mirzā to fall to the ground. As this happened several times, he had to go back into the camel litter. If only his friends would have been there, to see him and laugh at him, he writes (*ibid.*, 155–156).

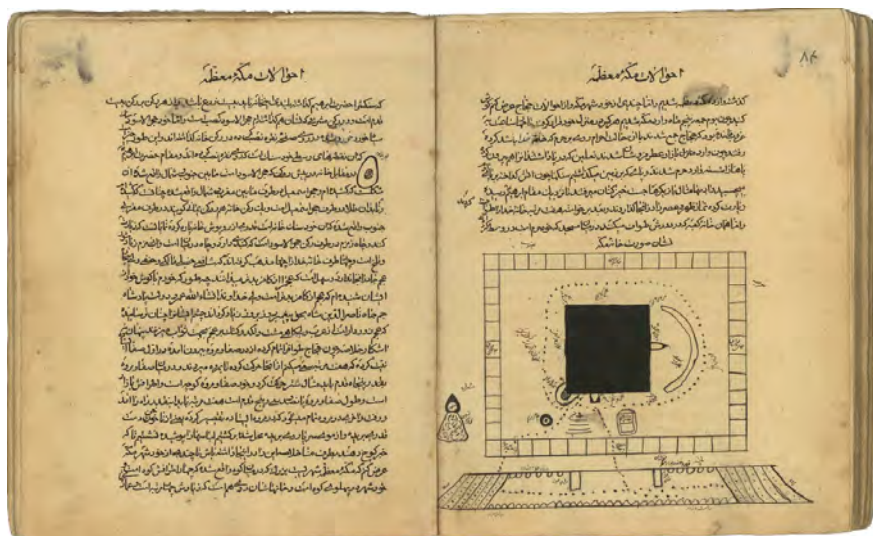


FIGURE 5.1 A drawing of the Ka'ba in Ya'qub Mirzā's travelogue
PHOTOGRAPH OF MANUSCRIPT BY THE AUTHOR

In some passages Ya'qub Mirzā offers a colourful description of his travel experiences. While travelling from Damascus to Medina, he describes his impressions of the moving hajj caravan.

In the desert were so many lanterns that the desert became like the sky with shining stars. And in addition to the lanterns from every side was the sound of singing like talking nightingales, everyone singing a melody. Some of them were like garden's nightingales and some of them like crows on the winter's snow. And the voices belonged to the singers, inviting to the pilgrimage and emotionally stirred dervishes on the one hand and to the boastful Arabs, hurrying their camels, and Iranian travelers reciting poems like the sound of nightingales in the rose garden on the other hand. Everyone was talking in their own lovely voice that made the soul fly out of a man's body.

TABRIZI 2009, 176

Ya'qub Mirzā continues his description of this part of his journey by stating that he listened to them for hours, thinking about his friends, until he fell asleep.

A recurring theme in the travelogue of Ya'qub Mirzā is his erotic interest in young men. While crossing the Caucasus on his journey to Mecca, he saw several youths he considered attractive. He narrates these encounters from his

inner emotional perspective and relates how he was suddenly struck and emotionally 'altered' by their appearance: they were moon-faced and walked like partridges. Part of the narrative intrigue is his potential to be seduced by Christianity, as most of these young boys turn out to be Christians (*ibid.*, 57). Later during his journey, he visited places with young male prostitutes in Istanbul he describes in detail his visit to a bathhouse where he made inquiries about sexual services, including what was charged for them (*ibid.*, 116–117). While residing in Beirut, he describes the inhabitants of the city as proponents of 'boys' play', or *bachche-bāzi*.⁴ He paints a picture of readily available and sexually attractive young boys. Near the place where he was accommodated, there was a school with fifteen young boys, whom he describes as attractive. Every day two or three were brought to his hotel, but because of the religious nature of his journey and the fasting month of Ramadan he declined their services. Describing his emotional distress, he compared himself to a cat who could not reach the meat with its mouth (*ibid.*, 134). While staying in Damascus he uses several pages to report about his friendship with a young boy in a barber shop, also alluding to a sexual encounter (*ibid.*, 146–150).

Ya'qub Mirzā's travel account is a personal narrative written for his friend group. The traditional elements of a travel report are present, such as descriptions of the places visited during the journey and the roads between them. These descriptions are complemented with many personal experiences, subjective impressions, and descriptions of the author's mental state during the journey. The main aim of Ya'qub Mirzā seems to have been to write an interesting and entertaining account for his friends about his pilgrimage to Mecca.

3 The Travelogue of Farhād Mirzā

Farhād Mirzā Mo'tamad al-Dowle was the fifteenth son of the former crown prince 'Abbās Mirzā and uncle of the ruling regent, Nāṣer al-Din Shāh (r. 1848–1896). For a long time Farhād Mirzā was a powerful figure in the Qajar administration and was appointed as governor to important provinces. He is known to have been in the possession of a large library and was a productive writer. In addition to his travelogue, he wrote religious treatises, poetry, and a loose translation of an English geographical work.⁵

4 Literal translation: 'boy play'. A term indicating the use of beardless young men for entertainment purposes, including prostitution.

5 For more information about Farhād Mirzā, see his article in the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (Eslami 1999).

Farhād Mirzā undertook the pilgrimage in the years 1875 and 1876 after his dismissal at the court of Nāṣer al-Din Shāh in Tehran. During the first trip of Nāṣer al-Din Shāh to Europe in 1873, Farhād Mirzā had been appointed acting regent in Tehran. After the Shah's return to Iran, he prominently participated in a palace revolt against his Prime Minister Moshir al-Dowle Sepahsālār, who advocated to reform the Qajar administration and to introduce modern technology in Iran. Moshir al-Dowle was one of the driving forces behind the Reuters Concession in 1872, which entailed, among many other things, the construction of a railroad. At first the Prime Minister was dismissed and Farhād Mirzā sent back to his former post as governor of Kurdistan, but after several months he was replaced and called back to Tehran. There he was left without an assignment until he obtained permission to leave Tehran for the pilgrimage to Mecca. After his return he was once again assigned to a high post and appointed governor of Fars.⁶

His travelogue begins with his departure from Tehran to Anzali at the Caspian Sea. He boarded a steamer to Baku and travelled on to Tiflis by carriage. There he took the Transcaucasian Railway to Poti. By steamer he went to Batumi and travelled onward to Istanbul. After a short sojourn he again boarded a steamer to Alexandria and visited Cairo for a few days before proceeding to Suez. Because the steamer with which he was supposed to travel to Jedda was in a bad condition, he chose to disembark in Yanbū', and he visited Medina before travelling to Mecca. Having completed the rites of the hajj, he embarked on a ship from nearby Jedda, which, after a stopover at a quarantine station, took him through the Suez Canal to Port Said.⁷ A steamer brought him to Istanbul via several ports in the eastern Mediterranean. From there he travelled through the Caucasus back to Baku, Anzali, and arrived at Tehran seven months and 19 days after his departure. Farhād Mirzā was the head of a large travelling party starting with roughly twenty people, including his wife. During the course of the journey, more people temporarily joined his group.⁸ Since he acted as a representative of the Qajar court, he was involved in several matters of foreign policy. Regarding his meeting with the viceroy of the Caucasus, for instance, he remarks that the latter complained to Farhād Mirzā about unlawful activity in the border region between Iran and Russia. Farhād Mirzā promised to report this to Nāṣer al-Din Shāh (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 288–289).

6 About the palace revolt, see Bakhash 1978, 112–119.

7 The quarantine station was in al-Wajh, a city which is located halfway between Yanbu and the Sinai Peninsula.

8 In one case he was not even aware of their presence (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 20, 131).

Farhād Mirzā dictated his travelogue to his scribe during his journey and a lithography was printed several months after his return to Tehran in January/February 1877 and again in November/December 1877 in Shiraz (ibid., 355, 359).⁹ Even though he does not mention that he was specifically assigned to write the travelogue, already during his journey he expected it to be printed.¹⁰ Additionally, Farhād Mirzā wrote several letters and telegrams on the way and when he arrived at Tehran he was interviewed by the Shah and submitted several additional reports to the council of ministers (ibid., 85, 331–333). His travelogue was meant as the official account for the broader public. According to its introduction the report was printed on the order of Nāṣer al-Din Shāh with the intent to reach a wide audience (ibid., 13).

The title *Hidāyat al-sabīl wa-kifāyat al-dalīl* ('Complete guide of the way') implied the educational intent of the text. Farhād Mirzā wrote an extensive survey of the route he travelled, and alongside his numerous descriptions of cities, buildings, and villages, he mentions and describes bridges, mountains, rivers, landscapes, and many other points of interest. He is especially attentive to geographical information, as he notes the distance between each travel stage and the itinerary of each day. In some cases, he recorded the degrees of longitude and latitude of a city, and he took great care to offer the correct pronunciation of travel stations, be they big cities or small villages. He carried scientific instruments with him and measured temperatures. In Tiflis he asked for a translation of a Russian geographical work about the origin of the river Kur, which he then summarizes in his travelogue (ibid., 59–60). In addition to his own observations, he adds information from other works, such as his own translation of an English geographical work (ibid., 121, 237). He also continuously refers to *Tuhfa al-'Irāqayn* ('Gift of the two Iraqs'), a long poem depicting a pilgrimage to Mecca written by Khāqāni Shervāni in the twelfth century, and sometimes he compares Khāqāni's descriptions with his own impressions (ibid., 104). The travelogue also contains religious information, most notable is the entry of his last day in Medina, which includes a long treatise about the obligatory and desirable rites of the hajj and *ʿumra* (ibid., 160–187). After the main narrative of the journey a detailed map and description of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina are added, which he and his scribe produced while in the city (ibid., 334–338).¹¹

9 Two modern editions of the text were published (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a; 1987b), and the report was included in the third volume of the compilation of hajj travelogues published by Ja'fariyān (Ja'fariyān 2010).

10 In a letter to the Sublime Porte, Farhād Mirzā mentions that he will record his letters to them in his travel diary, which will be printed (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 268).

11 With his inquiries about geographical information with scientific methods and the produ-

A large part of the travelogue is dedicated to his contacts with important political officials. In these sections his travelogue resembles reports written by diplomatic envoys. He relates in detail how he was treated by foreign officials, giving their names and his impressions of them. The importance Farhād Mirzā attributed to this aspect of his journey becomes clear during his stay in Ganja, a city in the Caucasus, where he was only received by the chief of police outside the city and escorted by him to his accommodation. After one hour the deputy of the city governor came to inquire about his well-being and asked if he wanted to meet the governor. Farhād Mirzā adamantly refused to see him, explaining that his rank was equivalent to the governor of Baku. He pointed out the differences in his reception, as he was received on his arrival at Baku at the harbour by the governor and nobles of the city in official costume. The governor accompanied him in the carriage to his accommodation, where a military band was playing for him. They sat together in his room for one hour with the head of the Cossacks and other military officers. He was visited daily by the governor, who later bade farewell to him at the outskirts of the city. Farhād Mirzā made it clear that his reception in Ganja had been inappropriate (*ibid.*, 39–40). This unsatisfactory welcome remained an issue during the rest of his journey through Russian territory. While residing in Tiflis Farhād Mirzā met the deputy of the viceroy of the Caucasus. He explained to him that he would like to return to Iran via Tiflis, but only if he could avoid the city of Ganja. Afterwards Farhād Mirzā was assured by Fath'Ali Ākhundzāde, who acted as translator for the Russians during the conversation, that the deputy was aware of his complaints about the governor of Ganja and Ākhundzāde agreed with Farhād Mirzā's attitude (*ibid.*, 57). During his return journey he took a detour to avoid passing through the city.

The detailed accounts of interactions with foreign state representatives, especially the ceremonial details attached to them, were meant to express the power relations between the Qajar state and its foreign counterparts. By narrating his official meetings, Farhād Mirzā ranked himself in the hierarchies of international diplomacy and showed the legitimacy the Qajar court enjoyed abroad.¹² According to Farhād Mirzā, his status was seen by the Ottomans as equivalent to a prince of a European royal house. During his first visit to Istanbul, he was received by the Ottoman Sultan on his last day in the city. The crown prince of Württemberg had visited the city two months earlier and had

cing of exact maps of holy sites, Farhād Mirzā was taking part in a contemporary 'culture of exploration', which was conveyed to Persian literary circles by translations of European geographical works and travelogues (Sohrabi 2012, 84).

12 For two other examples, see Sohrabi 2012, 40–44, 61–65.

also only been received on the day of his departure, which made Farhād Mirzā decide that he himself had been treated accordingly (*ibid.*, 82, 112).

In his travelogue Farhād Mirzā reflects on his own political adversities and presents his version of events to a wider court audience. He attributes his dismissal not directly to his actions during his time as regent. Instead, he presents it as a conspiracy and a misunderstanding. According to Farhād Mirzā, after he was once again appointed as the governor of Kurdistan, he wrote a letter on another matter, which was intercepted by a hostile person. The letter was altered in a way that gave the impression that Farhād Mirzā supported attacks against the Shaykhīs in Tabriz, a heterodox sect of Shi'i scholars with a strong presence in the city. The Shah then ordered his dismissal as governor for inciting violence between two Muslim sects. He even composed a long poem clarifying the matter, which he intended to read at the grave of Mary in Jerusalem, but in the end, he did not visit the city (*ibid.*, 90–97).¹³ Instead, at the grave of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina he cited another poem, defending his conduct as acting regent and highlighting his own piety (*ibid.*, 153–155).

The travelogue of Farhād Mirzā was the official account of his journey, and it was printed for a wide audience at the court and beyond. Its aim was to educate readers about the hajj pilgrimage and the travel route to Mecca. It informed audiences about the journey of Farhād Mirzā in his capacity as a high representative of the Qajar state and provided him with the opportunity to present himself as an important public figure in a favourable light, including offering his perspective on current political issues.

4 The Genre of Persian Travel Literature and the Two Hajj Travelogues

In his survey of Persian travelogues, William Hanaway suggests that in the nineteenth century Persian travelogues 'form a discrete genre that can be identified by elements of inner and outer form' (Hanaway 2002, 265). The following elements that Hanaway articulates are present in both travelogues under discussion: they are written in prose, in the first person, and the subject matter is the actual travel experience of the author, relating actions of the author's daily routine, such as getting up and getting dressed. Furthermore,

13 His half-brother Ḥosām al-Saltāne would visit Jerusalem five years later after making the pilgrimage to Mecca. He brought the travelogue of Farhād Mirzā with him and recited the poem under the candlelight of Christian priests at the grave of Mary (Ḥosām al-Saltāne 2010, 234).

the travelogues have a didactic purpose and contain reconstructed dialogues. According to Hanaway the travel journey is presented in a dynamic manner, that is, the narrative of events continues chronologically with little reflection on the significance of the events for the travellers' life or his journey. Most Persian travelogues use an educated, but relatively simple literary style, with some occasional lapses in a more elevated style, and occasionally contained quotations of poetry by classical authors and poetry by the travel authors themselves. Hanaway explains that travelogues 'are all of an appropriate size, neither too short to convey the information intended nor so prolix as to be boring' (*ibid.*).

Ya'qub Mirzā narrates his journey in simple, but sometimes obscene, prose. He presents poetry composed by himself and others in moderate amounts and only occasionally uses Arabic, for example to cite religious proverbs. This differs much from Farhād Mirzā's report. While in general his prose is written in a simple style, as is common in Persian travelogues, he very frequently incorporated poetry, quotations, and proverbs of varying lengths both in Arabic and Persian. In the compilation of Ja'fariyān, the travelogues of Ya'qub Mirzā and Farhād Mirzā amount to 291 and 467 pages respectively, which makes the latter the most extensive Persian travelogue to Mecca.

However, Hanaway's description of the genre of Persian travelogues is problematic, as it fails to consider that many Persian 'travelogues' are in fact a compilation of several texts—the actual travel narrative being only one of them.¹⁴ In the case of Farhād Mirzā, if we also exclude the chapter about the obligatory rites of the hajj, his travel journal makes up around 80% of the text. It is preceded by an introduction in an elevated style to the lithograph, which is customary in manuscripts produced by clerical scribes. His daily journal, which is interrupted several times by digressions, long poems, and quoted letters, is followed by a map of the Mosque of the Prophet Muhammad in Medina, which contains detailed descriptions. Then there is a chapter that provides the latitude and longitude of important cities that are not mentioned in the journal itself. Afterwards, there is an account written in high style by another scribe about events happening after the arrival of Farhād Mirzā in Shiraz. A scribe also added a poem containing 86 verses, eulogizing Farhād Mirzā and his journey as well as a chapter about desirable actions during the hajj in glosses. The last two chapters, which are most likely written by Farhād Mirzā himself, clarify some issues about the exact location of the corners of the Ka'ba and graves of Islamic martyrs in Medina, which are mentioned in the travel journal. Therefore, the

14 For a critical discussion about Persian Travelogues as genre, see Sohrabi 2012, 13–16 and for another example of a composite travelogue see Sohrabi 2012, 53–65.

'travelogue' of Farhād Mirzā is not simply a coherent travel account, but rather a compilation of texts written by different authors. The whole composition is coherent only in the sense that it fulfills common social functions: the education of the reader about the journey to Mecca as well as the pilgrimage itself and a positive presentation of Farhād Mirzā to a courtly audience.¹⁵

In the case of Ya'qub Mirzā, the main travel narrative is only preceded by an introduction, obviously added while producing the extant manuscript for Moḥammad Ṭāher Mirzā. He was required to comply with courtly conventions of manuscript writing, which is why the introduction contains a summary of the travel narrative followed by invocations of Muhammad, Imam Ali, the Shah, the crown prince residing in Tabriz, and the governor of Tabriz, all of which is written in a highly formal style. The introduction also reports that he was assigned to write the book and narrate the start of his journey. This is then followed by the main travel account.

Both texts belong to the same literary tradition of Persian travel writing, but considering the literary style and the composition of the manuscript the travelogue of Farhād Mirzā is a much more elaborate creation. This can be explained by his own literacy, the resources he had available, and the purpose of the text as an official publication by a high-ranking member of the court.

5 Comparing the Main Themes of Hajj Travelogues

Due to similar itineraries and the joint purpose of the hajj pilgrimage, several topics can be found in both hajj travelogues. In the following section I want to compare how these similarities are portrayed in both travelogues.

According to Nile Green, in the second half of the nineteenth century, as a result of its increasing integration into the infrastructure of steam travel 'the hajj was transformed from a ritual movement through a long-familiar Muslim memory space into a journey through a world governed by ideas, peoples and technologies of non-Muslim provenance' (Green 2015, 193). While travelling in the Russian Caucasus, Ya'qub Mirzā identified the area as a country dominated by non-believers who threatened the ritual purity of the pilgrim. He was disturbed that he could not distinguish between Muslim and non-Muslim traders

15 The modern editions differ from each other which parts are included. [Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a is complete, while Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987b is missing the poem, the chapter about hajj rites and almost everything after the travel narrative. Ja'fariyān 2010 only omitted a late chapter about historical events, because it has no connection to the hajj of Farhād Mirzā.]

in the market or between Muslim and non-Muslim bathhouses. He explains that one might have taken a bath and imagine oneself to be clean, but still be ritually unclean. For him, the ritual impurity was unavoidable when travelling to Mecca via the Caucasus, and for this reason he did not recommend this itinerary (Tabrizi 2009, 95). One evening he stayed in an accommodation that served alcohol, and he saw Armenians and Europeans coming in, drinking, shouting, and making music. He could not sleep and explained that 'no-one going to Mecca should take this route. It is good for amusement but not to become a *hājjī*' (Tabrizi 2009, 74–75).

According to Hanaway, the two greatest challenges for Iranian travellers were storms at sea and the conduct of European women: 'This seems to represent the extremes to which Persians could be physically and morally challenged' (Hanaway 2002, 262). When Ya'qub Mirzā travels from Istanbul to Beirut, he offers a vivid description of his experience during a storm. He paints the picture of a crowded ship with frightened passengers who are exposed to the forces of nature. Everyone looks at each other; they all fear drowning and are unable to talk. The sound of vomiting is heard from every direction, while rain, thunderbolts, and cold winds rock the ship. Water flows from the deck back into the sea like a river. When the lights of Beirut come into sight, people are relieved and embrace each other. When he finally sets foot on hard soil, Ya'qub Mirzā feels like his mother has given birth to him anew (Tabrizi 2009, 129–131). Later on Ya'qub Mirzā refers several times to this experience as very frightening, and when he arrives in the Caucasus on his return journey he prostrates a hundred times in prayer to thank God for having survived the sea journeys (ibid., 279).

In both travelogues European or Europeanized women are portrayed in a sexualized and potentially immoral manner. For Farhād Mirzā immoral European women are an expression of an invading European culture, which will eventually lead to the demise of the Islamic religion.¹⁶ During the first evening dinner in the Iranian embassy in Istanbul, Farhād Mirzā was approached by the wife of an Austrian embassy member, who asked him for a dance. He refused. In his travelogue he then proceeds with a polemic about the revealing clothes and immoral conduct of European women. These manners will infect the people of the Ottoman Empire very soon and the Iranians a little bit later, Farhād Mirzā writes. When he sees a Jewish girl dancing, Farhād Mirzā remarks to a member of the Iranian embassy that this kind of dance is forbidden in the

16 On the topic of European women as a danger to Islamic culture in Qajar Iran, see also Tavakoli-Targhi 2002, 342–346.

Jewish religion, but it is explained to him, that this is 'civilization' and that soon every province will be 'civilized'. This, Farhād Mirzā saw as a great danger to the Islamic religion and customs. He writes that soon in all of Asia they—he probably means women—will walk in the streets and in the bazar without a veil. The children will learn how to speak French and learning how to read the Qur'an will be abandoned. If one has the wish to learn it, one will have to go to Mecca and Medina. On the next day he drives to his audience with the Sultan. While in the carriage the Master of Ceremonies of the Ottoman court explains to him that everything which is close to a railway becomes like Europe, and if in Iran a railroad is opened, Iran will over time become like Europe too (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 79–80). Farhād's impression of Egypt is similar. While driving in a carriage, he sees several women wearing European clothes in the streets. He asks his guide who they are: The wives of some consul? His guide answers that these women are the daughters of an Egyptian official, and he tries to justify their conduct by saying that their country is 'free'. This earns him a strong rebuke by Farhād Mirzā who explains to him that in Islam there is no such freedom (*ibid.*, 110–111).

Whereas Farhād Mirzā considered the sight of unveiled women in Istanbul and Cairo as a great danger to the Islamic religion, Ya'qub Mirzā's attitude might best be described as voyeuristic. When he reflects on the European women he saw in Istanbul, he describes their clothing as revealing and showing their figure. He explains that this sight made him understand why poets compare the stature of women with a cypress, and he complains that one cannot see Iranian women as they hide themselves in a chador (Tabrizi 2009, 114). Like his description of young boys, his aesthetic perception is informed by metaphors of Persian poetry. However, while Ya'qub Mirzā depicts himself interacting with boys, he does not report anything similar during his encounters with European women, whom he only looked at from afar.

For Farhād Mirzā another aspect of European culture were European dishes, which he contrasted with Islamic culture and food. When he is invited by the Ottoman Prime Minister, he asks him to refrain from serving alcoholic beverages and to not be served any European food. He later explains to the Prime Minister that there are some European dishes he likes, but one should not abandon one's own customs. There are also Europeans who eat food prepared by Muslims, but they do not eat it inside their homes. Therefore, the Muslims should not follow the Europeans by eating salad and soup in their homes every night (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 260). Ya'qub Mirzā makes a similar observation when eating dinner in the Iranian consulate in Cairo. Iranian food is served on a table in the European manner with a knife and fork. He starts to eat with them, but Ya'qub Mirzā does not feel comfortable and says everyone should fol-

low their own cultural customs. Subsequently, he and the other attendants put their forks down and start eating with their hands (Tabrizi 2009, 256–257).

Ya'qub Mirzā is very enthusiastic about modern technology and progress and is aware of the 'backwardness' of Iran in this regard. While residing in Istanbul, he unsuccessfully tried to recruit a firemen trainer (*ibid.*, 114–115). He also wanted to bring a windmill to Iran. On this occasion he says that the conditions in Iran made him sad, because of the examples of engineering he has seen during his journey (*ibid.*, 122).

Farhād Mirzā's attitude is not that different, as he appreciates the usefulness of modern technology, and he obtained the plans for a windmill he had seen in Istanbul (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 317). But he is critical regarding the building of railway in Iran. He states that he is not categorically against the construction of a railway, but he warns of negative consequences and argues for a self-financed modernization. Iran should not try to invite foreign capital but build railways slowly with her own money and not be dependent on foreign sponsors (*ibid.*, 275). Farhād Mirzā's polemics against the railroad in Iran must be seen in relation to discussions about the Reuters Concession at court. He was politically opposed to a group of reformers, headed by Moshir al-Dowle and Malkom Khān, who had argued for foreign concessions and greater centralization of the Qajar state. Farhād Mirzā's position was on the other side, opposing not only administrative reform and the centralization of power in the hands of the Prime Minister, which ultimately aimed to weaken his position as governor, but also technological modernization, especially the building of a railroad. His arguments regarding the adoption of European manners in the Ottoman Empire and the construction of a railroad in Iran are part of a wider political argument he makes in his travelogue.

In both travelogues the daily events during their stays in Mecca and Medina are depicted in the same narrative style as the rest of the text. However, arriving in these cities, the first visit to the Ka'ba, and the hajj rites as well as visits to the tomb of Muhammad and the al-Baqī'-cemetery in Medina are emphasized in their travelogues and described in detail.

While arriving at Medina Farhād Mirzā dismounts at the first sight of the dome of the Prophet's Mosque and prays. After his prayer he recites some verses of a poem. During a subsequent military reception with the governor of Medina, he mentions that one of his associates brought him a Qur'an, which must have fallen out of his pocket when prostrating outside of Medina (*ibid.*, 138–139). A couple days later he visits the grave of the Prophet Muhammad to recite a poem, which he called the 'Maqāme Aḥmadiye' in praise of the Prophet. He explains it was just completed the night before and recites it standing close to the lattice of the grave. The attendant Arabs, who do not know Persian, listen

and say in Arabic: 'He is reading a pilgrimage prayer in Persian,' indicating the pious impression he makes on bystanders. The poem itself is 52 verses long and quoted in full. It deals with stories of the Islamic prophets and Farhād's own spiritual biography. He then links the poem's recitation with his position as acting regent, deviating from his previous strategy to avoid ascribing his dismissal from his participation in the palace coup against Moshīr al-Dowle. Farhād Mirzā does not apologize for his actions, but rather defends his conduct as acting regent by highlighting his own piety and learning (*ibid.*, 153–155). For Farhād Mirzā, the narrative of his pilgrimage and his sojourn in Medina was a way to portray himself as pious to a courtly audience. He does this with great symbolic gestures like performing the hajj rites or reciting a poem at the Prophet's grave in Medina, but also by mentioning passing details, such as the story of when his personal Qur'an falls out of his pocket. This is meant as a positive self-portrayal to legitimize his new role as governor of Fars, to which he was appointed immediately after his return to Tehran.

Yā'qub Mirzā was moved by the religious fervour of his fellow pilgrims. In the night before his arrival at Mecca, he reports his fellow travellers would stay awake, facing Mecca, praying, and reciting the Qur'an. 'From the sound of their recital, the human soul started to shiver in such a way that I cannot describe it,' he writes. About entering the city, he notes:

At this time a state befell the pilgrims, how should I explain it, so that we went barefoot and bareheaded under the sun, exclaiming *labbayka labbayka* (I am at your service). I wished that one of my friends could look at our condition and cry or laugh about the state of the pilgrims.

TABRIZI 2009, 228

After their arrival at Mecca, both authors go straight to the Ka'ba, perform the rituals of the *'umra* (short pilgrimage), and give elaborate, eye-witness accounts of the holy place and the surrounding mosque. Both depict their daily actions while performing the hajj rites. And while Farhād Mirzā sometimes expounds on a ritual in more detail, Yā'qub Mirzā mainly reproduces what his travel guide told him and reports some of his impressions along the way, the goal being in both cases to provide an eye-witness-account of the hajj rituals, to guide the reader through them, and to verify that the hajj was completed successfully and correctly by the author.

Apart from the hajj rites, both authors mention during their sojourn in Mecca and Medina the other rituals they performed, thereby reporting what additional religious rewards were obtained. Farhād Mirzā mentions that he recited the entire Qur'an in the Grand Mosque surrounding the Ka'ba while

being in Mecca and reported that circumambulations around the Ka'ba as well as recitations of suras of the Qur'an were made by proxy for other members of the Qajar household. Farhād Mirzā even presents a register to one of his associates, which contained a list of people to whom he had dedicated spiritual rewards during his stay (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 213–214). Ya'qub Mirzā reports about taking a brotherhood oath with one of his travel companions while visiting the Ka'ba and dedicated circumambulations to his friends and countrymen (Tabrizi 2009, 230–231, 236).

During their stay in Mecca and Medina, their affiliation as Shi'i pilgrims in a majority Sunni pilgrimage is very prominent. Both accounts report about a disagreement between Iranian and non-Iranian pilgrims regarding the exact calendar date. At the time the calendar used in Iran deviated from the one in the Ottoman Empire by one day. This meant that Iranians started their hajj rites one day later than Sunni pilgrims. Ya'qub Mirzā was at first confused and started his hajj with the Sunni majority until he learned from his countrymen about the dispute. He then followed the Iranian pilgrims and mentions positively how much less crowded Mecca was during their departure to Mina (ibid., 231). He also reports about the performance of Shi'i mourning rituals at 'Arafa and Minā without being harassed by the Sunnis, who had already moved on (ibid., 232, 236). During the days of the hajj, Farhād Mirzā argued with the leaders of the hajj caravans over the issue, whom he accused of being wrong-headed. Still, the Iranian pilgrims, which he estimated to be 5000 individuals, followed his lead, and he reports that he convinced the highest judge of Medina (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 201–202).

Anti-Sunni statements are scattered throughout the travelogue of Ya'qub Mirzā. While residing in Istanbul, he listened to a lecture by a Sunni scholar in the Hagia Sophia. When he said, 'God made the earth in honour of five names,' meaning the Prophet Muhammad and the first four Islamic caliphs, Ya'qub Mirzā became angry and left the building (Tabrizi 2009, 109). For Ya'qub Mirzā, Damascus was first and foremost the place where the captives had been brought after the battle of Karbala.¹⁷ During his stay he continuously alludes to this (ibid., 141–142). While in Medina and Mecca, Ya'qub Mirzā reports about the mistreatment of Shi'i pilgrims. Upon arrival in Medina with the hajj caravan, the inhabitants of the city throw stones at the Iranians in the caravan

17 The Battle of Karbala was fought between the followers of Ḥusayn, who is regarded as the third Imām by the Shi'ites, and soldiers loyal to the Umayyad caliph Mu'āwīya. After the Umayyad troops' victory, they stormed the encampment of Ḥusayn and imprisoned the women and children. They took them to the Umayyad capital of Damascus, presented them, and the severed head of Husayn to the victorious caliph.

(ibid., 210). He also reports a bloody encounter between a Shi'i pilgrim and the guards of the al-Baqī'-cemetery, where several Imams are buried (ibid., 213). He explains that in Mecca the Iranians are considered worse than unbelievers. But this is a hundred times better than in Medina, as 'the inhabitants of Medina want to eat the Iranians alive, ripping their flesh off' (ibid., 229–230, 237).

On his way back to Iran, he was approached by a dervish in Nakhjavān, a city close to the border of Iran. He gave him some money in exchange for hearing the names of the Fourteen Infallibles in Shi'i Islam.¹⁸ This suddenly made him realize that he had not heard their names in months, and when reaching the city he finally felt safe (ibid., 293). In his accounts of this and other occasions, he uses obscene language to depict Sunnis, routinely calling them, among other names, *pedarsukhte*, a common term of abuse.¹⁹ Many of these obscenities were censored in the modern edition.

The travelogue of Farhād Mirzā contains no anti-Sunni polemics. Instead, his experiences induced him to criticize the Ottoman Empire in its role as Custodian of the Holy Cities and the hajj. Farhād Mirzā does report about his conflicts with local Arabs. On his way from Yanbu to Medina, he criticizes his military escort as lazy and suspects them of thievery. He reports in detail an almost violent confrontation with Arab tribesmen who tried to collect additional fees from the passing pilgrims. During his stay in Mecca, Farhād Mirzā was robbed. His efforts to gain the support of local authorities were unsuccessful. In Mecca and Medina Farhād Mirzā had the opportunity to visit many places of religious significance and he explains their importance in early Islamic history and describes his impressions when visiting them. He also continuously suggests and openly states that the Arab and Ottoman authorities are unfamiliar with the details of Islamic history and neglect the holy sites in and around the Holy Cities. To give just the most noteworthy example, when he enters the interior of the Ka'ba on his last day in Mecca, he criticizes the Ottoman Sultans directly for neglecting the interior of the Ka'ba and the floors of the mosque (Mo'tamad al-Dowle 1987a, 216–217). After his return to Istanbul, he wrote letters to the Ottoman Sultan and the Sublime Porte, in which he highlighted the

18 In Twelver Shi'a Islam the Prophet Muhammad, his daughter Fāṭima, and the twelve Imāms are considered to be infallible.

19 According to Steingass' Comprehensive Persian-English dictionary it refers to someone whose father is burning in hellfire, whereas 'Alī Akbar Dehkhoda explains in his dictionary it refers to someone whose father was exhumed and burned after his death. According to Dehkhoda this originated in a custom in ancient Egypt to exhume and burn the fathers of defaulting debtors.

responsibility of the Ottoman state to secure the roads, especially in the Hijaz. He complains to the Sultan that he had been robbed in Mecca and asks him for monetary compensation. Farhād Mirzā also makes several concrete suggestions on how to improve the holy sites around Mecca and Medina (*ibid.*, 262–268). Farhād Mirzā did not have to limit himself to some angry remarks in his travelogue, like most other travellers. Instead, he is able to complain to the Ottoman Sultan himself. In his travelogue he did not report about the mistreatment of Iranian pilgrims, who were, after all, his personal responsibility as representative of Qajar Iran. Still, by making his case before the Sultan and reproducing his letters to the Ottoman authorities in his travelogue, Farhād Mirzā was able to present himself in a positive light and make the treatment of Iranian pilgrims a matter of foreign policy between Qajar Iran and the Ottoman Empire.

6 Conclusion

Qajar hajj travelogues were didactic texts with the main purpose of informing their readers and potential future travellers about the travelled route and the actual travel experience of the author. However, during the nineteenth century changes occurred regarding which kinds of didactic information were considered important for the readers of hajj travelogues. In earlier travelogues, like Keykāvus Mirzā and Moḥammad Vali Mirzā, who travelled in 1832 and 1847, there are long chapters with detailed instructions about traveling, especially caravan travel. This is due to the dangers and difficulties of travelling during this time, which required appropriate and serious preparation and planning. This gradually changed in the second half of the nineteenth century when travelling became easier and safer. Because of the progress in the means of commercial transportation more and more pilgrims travelled via Istanbul or Mumbai by steamship and railway. In their travelogues they recorded long descriptions of their impressions of foreign cultures, people, and modern technology encountered along the way, especially in the Caucasus, Istanbul, Egypt, and India. As the examples of Ya‘qub Mirzā and Farhād Mirzā indicate, these impressions were shaped by Iranian cultural and religious values and often showed astonishment and admiration for modern technology.

The dire situation of Iranian pilgrims on the Arabian Peninsula is a common theme throughout the nineteenth century and is present in virtually all Persian hajj travelogues. However, the actual experience in Mecca and Medina and its subsequent portrayal differed considerably depending on the social standing of the author.

There was also the emergence of a discourse about the journey to Mecca at the court of Nāṣer al-Din Shāh. During the 1870s and 1880s, the Qajar court tried to gather accurate information about its dominions and the rest of the world. The court commissioned local geographies and historical works, reports about journeys inside and outside of the country, and even sent a long questionnaire to provincial authorities in Iran (Gustafson 2016, 794–796). The travelogue of Farhād Mirzā complements these efforts and was an attempt to gather and compile a vast amount of information about the itinerary to Mecca and the pilgrimage. The discourse at court about travelling to Mecca went on afterwards and even became important for Iranian foreign policy. In 1879/80 (1296 AH)²⁰ Mirzā ‘Abd al-Ghaffār Najm al-Molk travelled to Mecca via Iraq and wrote a short report, which was printed in the official court gazette and highlighted the mistreatment of Iranian pilgrims in the Iraqi hajj caravan by the Āl Rashīd—the tribal leaders who had established themselves in the centre of the Arabian Peninsula after the decline of the first Wāhhābī state and who had organized the caravan. He recommends a temporary prohibition of the route by the Qajar court (Najm al-Molk Monajjem-bāshi 2010, 831). This argument is also made in the travelogue of Mirzā ‘Abd al-Hoseyn Khān Afshār Orumi, a high-ranking officer in the Qajar army, who joined the Iraqi caravan to return from Mecca via Iraq in 1882/83 (1299 AH) (Orumi 2010, 631–632; 2007, 213). Farāhāni alludes to the text of Najm al-Molk in his travelogue when reporting during his journey in 1885/1886 (1302 AH) that there has been an effective ban of the route for two years. This has led to an improvement in behaviour by the organizers of the hajj caravan, who attempted to give a bribe to allow Iranian pilgrims to travel via this route. Farāhāni recommends ending the ban as guarantees for the safety of Iranian pilgrims will be made (Farāhāni 1990, 247).

Both Farhād Mirzā and Ya‘qub Mirzā address specific audiences, which they themselves identify in their texts. Therefore, I have emphasized in this chapter the relationships between the authors and their intended audiences to understand what kind of information is conveyed and how. Ya‘qub Mirzā mentions an assignment by a friend as the reason for writing his travelogue, and he addresses his group of friends throughout the text. This sets the stage for the travelogue, with which the author intends to give an entertaining but also informative account about the itinerary and his personal experiences and impressions. The style of his travelogue is simple, sometimes even obscene, and assumes a personal acquaintanceship between author and reader. Farhād Mirzā’s text on the

20 The year in brackets is the Islamic calendar year in which the hajj rituals were performed by the author.

other hand is a voluminous lithograph, which was printed to reach a wide audience and intends to educate its readers about the itinerary and the pilgrimage to Mecca. But it also offers a detailed report about the author's interactions with important officials he met along the way to inform his readers about them and to narrate the legitimacy enjoyed by the Qajar court abroad. In addition, Farhād Mirzā also used this opportunity to address a wide audience at court to portray himself in a favourable light and supply his opinions on current issues. His report is a complex and elaborate literary creation to which considerable resources were dedicated.

In both texts the authors take the double capacity as storyteller and main protagonist. In his article about Persian hajj travelogues, Elton Daniel wrote that earlier hajj travelogues 'are like traditional guidebooks for pilgrims, with the narrator relegated to the background' (Daniel 2002, 224). He mentions the travelogue of Farāhāni as an example. Hajj travelogues later became more like 'personal diaries, concentrating on the author's individual experiences and sentiments' (*ibid.*). But with more hajj travelogues being published in recent years, it has become clear that Farāhāni is rather the exception than the rule. Farāhāni was a minor bureaucrat, who travelled to Mecca in 1885 and 1886, and presented a calligraphic manuscript of his report to the Shah in person (Farāhāni 1990, xxviii). He obviously considered his own personal experiences and everyday life during his pilgrimage of no relevance to his intended audience, the Shah. This resulted in an impersonal report, which in this regard is not exemplary for Qajar hajj travelogues. If we take Ya'qub Mirzā and Farhād Mirzā as early examples, there appears to be no clear shift from an impersonal guidebook towards the recording of personal experiences and sentiments by the author. Rather, the latter has been a feature of Persian travelogues throughout the Qajar period. Still, they differ regarding what kinds of experiences and sentiments should be mentioned in the text. While Ya'qub Mirzā reports to his friends about his longings for young moon-faced boys, Farhād Mirzā's situation as a public figure addressing a wide audience demands a more reserved attitude. It only gets personal when Farhād Mirzā wants to highlight his personal piety and the hardships he had to endure during his pilgrimage. Once again it is essential to consider the relationship between the author and the audience he addresses in his report.

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