

# Hajj and 'Umrah Rituals in Religious Studies: Rodrigues-Harding's Theoretical Framework and Contemporary Media Analysis

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## Abstract:

The Hajj and Umrah rituals are central acts of worship in Islam, containing intertwined spiritual, social, cultural, economic, and political dimensions. In the context of globalization and advanced modernity, these rituals have undergone significant transformation, from traditional spiritual pilgrimage practices to global religious phenomena mediated by digital technology, the travel industry, and transnational market logic. This study aims to analyze the dynamics of this transformation through the religious studies approach developed by Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, which rejects the reductive dichotomy between insider perspectives (faith, religious experience, and theological commitment) and outsider perspectives (critical academic analysis). This study uses an interdisciplinary qualitative approach with a library research design. Primary data sources include the Qur'an, hadith, and the theoretical works of Rodrigues and Harding, while secondary data sources include scientific journal articles, academic books, and contemporary studies on the Hajj, Umrah, and religion in the digital age. Data analysis is conducted through concept reduction, contextual interpretation, and theoretical synthesis by integrating theological, phenomenological, and sociological perspectives. The results of this study indicate that the Rodrigues–Harding approach allows for a more holistic understanding of the Hajj and Umrah as ritual practices that are simultaneously sacred and social. This study also finds that the commodification and mediatization of rituals in the contemporary era creates a paradox between the ideal of spiritual simplicity and the reality of material splendor, but at the same time opens up new spaces for the formation of global Muslim solidarity, including through digital media. The contribution of this study lies in strengthening the interdisciplinary analytical framework in the study of Islamic rituals that bridges faith and science, and offers a critical reflection on the spiritual meaning of the Hajj and Umrah amidst modern socio-cultural changes.

**Keywords:** commodification; Hajj; mediatization; Religious Studies; Rodrigues-Harding; Umrah.

## INTRODUCTION

Hajj and Umrah are two forms of pilgrimage that hold a central position in Islamic tradition, both theologically, ritually, and symbolically. Normatively, Hajj has a very strong foundation in the Qur'an and Sunnah. In Q.S. Ali 'Imran [3]:97 it is emphasized that the obligation of Hajj is the religious responsibility of every Muslim who has the ability (*istita'ah*). This verse not only establishes Hajj as the fifth pillar of Islam, but also emphasizes the ethical and spiritual dimensions of this worship as a form of total submission of human beings to God (*al-istislam*). Meanwhile, Umrah, although not obligatory, has high spiritual value as a purifying pilgrimage, as emphasized in the hadith narrated by Muslim that one Umrah to the next Umrah erases the sins between them. These two rituals thus represent the sacred journey of humans from the profane world to divine consciousness, from material attachment to the experience of transcendence. However, Hajj and Umrah cannot be understood solely as individual worship practices (Bianchi, 2004). From a religious studies perspective, religious rituals are complex phenomena that always operate within specific social, historical, economic, and political contexts. Since the early Islamic period, the Hajj has undergone significant transformations. In the pre-modern era, the Hajj journey was synonymous with a long, perilous journey across the desert, facing the threat of robbery, disease outbreaks, and logistical constraints. This experience shaped the Hajj as an ascetic rite that demanded extraordinary physical and mental sacrifice. The travelogues of classical pilgrims, such as Ibn Jubayr and Ibn Battuta, demonstrate that the Hajj was not merely a form of worship, but also a space for cross-cultural encounters, the exchange of knowledge, and the formation of intellectual and economic networks in the Islamic world (Battuta, 1994).

Entering the modern era, particularly from the 19th and 20th centuries, the practice of Hajj underwent drastic changes along with colonialism, transportation modernization, and the formation of nation-states. Eric Tagliacozzo and Michael Laffan's study shows that during the colonial period, Hajj was viewed not only as a religious practice but also as a political activity closely monitored by the colonial government due to its potential to foster solidarity among Muslims across regions. This transformation continues into the contemporary era, as globalization, digital technology, and global capitalism increasingly transform the face of Hajj and Umrah. Journeys that once took months can now be completed in a matter of hours, while ritual experiences are increasingly mediated by state bureaucracy, mass management technologies, and the religious tourism industry. In an academic context, Hajj and Umrah can be understood as "social texts" open to multidisciplinary reading. The concept of liminality explains ritual as a transitional phase in which individuals experience identity transformation through ritual symbols (Erhard, 2019). During the Hajj, this liminal state is evident in the state of *ihram* and standing still at Arafah, when pilgrims shed their worldly social attributes of economic status, position, and cultural identity and enter a state of symbolic equality before God. Religious rituals serve as symbolic systems that shape moods and motivations, namely, a framework of meaning that connects individual inner experiences with broader cultural structures (Reinhardt, 2020). Thus, the Hajj and Umrah not only shape personal piety but also construct the moral and spiritual orientation of Muslims collectively.

Problems arise when this ritual, laden with sacred meaning, becomes increasingly integrated into the logic of global modernity. Robert Bianchi's research in *\*Guests of God: Pilgrimage and Politics in the Islamic World\** shows that the contemporary Hajj cannot be separated from international political, economic, and diplomatic interests. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as the main organizer of the Hajj, plays a central role in managing pilgrim quotas, infrastructure, and regulations for the pilgrimage. On the one hand, this modernisation improves the security and comfort of pilgrims; on the other hand, it gives rise to problems of bureaucratisation, unequal access, and extreme commercialisation. The Hajj and Umrah are now a multibillion-dollar global industry, with diverse service packages often creating hierarchies of spiritual experience based on economic class. Within this framework, a fundamental tension arises between the sacred and the profane. Rituals, intended theologically as symbols of equality and humility, can be reduced to spiritual consumption and social status symbols. This phenomenon challenges the normative-theological perspective that separates worship from its social context (Cannon, 2012). Therefore, an academic approach capable of bridging insider and outsider perspectives in religious studies is needed. Rodrigues and Harding assert that modern religious studies always exists in an epistemological tension between an internal understanding of faith and an external critical analysis (Rodrigues dan Harding, 2009). In the Islamic context, this tension often gives rise to resistance to scientific approaches, as they are feared to diminish the sacred meaning of worship.

An interdisciplinary approach offers a middle ground for understanding the Hajj and Umrah holistically without diminishing their sacred dimension. The phenomenology of religion, as developed by Mircea Eliade, allows for the interpretation of ritual as an actualization of cosmic myths that re-enact the sacred structure of the world (Eliade, 1996). The Tawaf can be interpreted as a symbol of humanity's cosmic orientation around the center of the world (the Kaaba) as the axis mundi, while the Sa'i between Safa and Marwah represents the human existential drama of hope and anxiety, as reflected in the story of Hajar in Islamic tradition. From this perspective, ritual is not merely a historical act, but a sacred experience that is continually renewed across different time and space. At the same time, a sociological and political approach is needed to understand how globalization and modernization are accelerating the transformation of ritual experiences. The digitalization of Hajj and Umrah services, the use of pilgrim management applications, and the representation of rituals on social media have transformed the way pilgrims experience and interpret worship (Hassan, 2018). Sacred experiences are now frequently documented, shared, and performed in digital public spaces, forming what some scholars call performative piety. This phenomenon confirms that modern religiosity is no longer entirely private, but is negotiated in a global public space.

The relevance of this study becomes increasingly important in the context of the contemporary Islamic world. The Hajj and Umrah are not merely religious rituals, but also arenas where issues of power, economics, identity, and technology intertwine. Peter Berger stated that religion in the modern era has not disappeared, but has undergone a transformation in form and function (Berger dan Luckmann, 1990). In this context, the Hajj and Umrah serve as concrete examples of how religion adapts, negotiates, and even commodifies in the modern world, without completely losing its sacred power. This study seeks to make an academic contribution by demonstrating that the Hajj and Umrah rituals can be understood as dynamic, historical, and contextual religious practices. From a theological perspective, they teach the values of submission, equality, and sacrifice. From a phenomenological perspective, they present a sacred experience that unites physical and metaphysical dimensions. From a historical and sociological perspective, they demonstrate how religious practices constantly interact with power structures, the global economy, and modern technology (Hjarvard, 2008). By integrating historical, phenomenological, and political perspectives, as suggested by Bianchi, this study is expected to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the tension between the sacred and the profane in contemporary Hajj and Umrah practices. Through a religious studies approach that is sensitive to the experience of faith while also critical of social dynamics, this research not only enriches Islamic studies but also contributes to the global discourse on how religious rituals persist, change, and are reinterpreted amidst the currents of modernity and globalization (Kementerianian Pariwisata, 2023).

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In the field of contemporary religious studies, Rodrigues and Harding's *Introduction to the Study of Religion* provides an important foundation for understanding religious phenomena multidimensionally. Rodrigues and Harding reject the sharp division between subjective "faith" and objective "science," emphasizing that the study of religion must be reflective, pluralistic, and contextual (Rodrigues dan Harding, 2009). This approach views religion not simply as a closed system of beliefs, but as a living phenomenon meaningful in practice, experience, symbols, and social relations, both within and outside the community of adherents. This approach allows researchers to analyze religious rituals as spaces of encounter between faith experiences, cultural symbols, and contemporary social dynamics. Within the Rodrigues–Harding framework, religious rituals cannot be reduced to mere theological doctrinal values, but must be understood as religious experiences embodied in social, historical, and cultural contexts. This encompasses both the subjective sacred experiences of worshippers and the social structures that frame and give meaning to these practices. This approach is very relevant for the study of the Hajj and Umrah rituals because these two practices contain complex layers of meaning: from the juridical-theological rituals, the sacred existential experiences of the pilgrims, to the social and cultural manifestations produced by millions of Muslims every year (Tantri, 2016).

Traditional legal and theological studies on the Hajj and Umrah are widely found in Islamic jurisprudence and tafsir literature. The Hajj, as the fifth pillar of Islam, is discussed in detail in both classical and modern sources, including the regulation of the pillars, conditions, and laws of its implementation. Historically, the Hajj has been practiced since the pre-Islamic era and was later refined in the prophetic

tradition. Classical literature such as Zakariyya Kandhlawi's *Hajjat al-Wada wa Umrat al-Nabi* primarily provides historical and ritual formulations for the Hajj and Umrah. Contemporary studies have also increasingly expanded the focus beyond mere ritual and legal interpretation to an understanding of the philosophical, social, and existential values of their implementation. Research such as that published in the *AL-MIZAB Journal* shows that the Hajj has philosophical value that goes beyond mere ritual aspects, encompassing the social, political, and cultural conditions surrounding its implementation. Furthermore, studies position the Hajj as a global social and cultural phenomenon, in which Muslim identity, solidarity, and power dynamics are presented as integral parts of the ritual experience itself. For example, writings about the Hajj from insider and outsider perspectives simultaneously describe how this ritual is understood by Muslim pilgrims internally and interpreted by sociologists of religion and cultural anthropologists from outside the faith community (Abdullah, 2022).

Along with the development of globalization, several studies have begun to examine the economic dimensions and commodification of the Hajj and Umrah. For example, the article "Commodification of Religious Rituals: A Portrait of the Meaning of Hajj and Umrah in Indonesia" discusses how these rituals are not only religious experiences but also tourism commodities involving extensive markets and service industries. This demonstrates that even sacred rituals are not immune to the dynamics of capitalization in the modern era, which also influence pilgrims' perceptions and motivations (Fuad, 2022). Furthermore, economic studies also show that Hajj and Umrah activities have a significant impact on economic sectors such as transportation, hospitality, food services, and other supporting industries. This is crucial in understanding worship rituals as not merely spiritual acts but also socio-economic phenomena integrated into the global system (Daruhadi, 2024). Contemporary media phenomena have become an important area in the study of Hajj and Umrah rituals. Changes in communication methods through digital media have brought new dynamics to how these rituals are understood, disseminated, and represented. For example, research examining representations of the Hajj and Umrah on Instagram found that pilgrims' posts often function as a form of identity expression, a spiritual narrative, as well as a promotional and commercialization tool. Social media is not only a platform for documenting experiences, but also an arena for negotiating meaning between the sacredness of experience and modern consumerist practices (Mawardi et al., 2024). Another study on the role of social media in religious tourism services and marketing shows that platforms like Facebook and WhatsApp play a crucial role in communication between Hajj/Umrah guides and prospective pilgrims, as well as in disseminating information about rituals and other support services. This illustrates how contemporary media is becoming part of the ritual ecology, rather than simply a passive communication channel (Khadijah et al., 2022).

Other literature also discusses the impact of media and digitalization in the context of learning about the Hajj and Umrah through interactive digital media, particularly in the context of religious education for the younger generation. This indicates that modern media influences not only the representation of ritual experiences but also how these rituals are learned and understood by the new generation of Muslims (Bahrudin, 2025). The integration of Rodrigues–Harding's study with contemporary media analysis demonstrates that the Hajj and Umrah rituals must be understood as multidimensional phenomena that not only have a strong theological foundation but also experience shifts in meaning influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and digital media contexts. The religious studies framework allows research to go beyond a purely insider approach, while respecting the pilgrims' faith experiences and considering how these experiences are articulated, produced, and consumed within the modern media ecosystem. Thus, the study of the Hajj and Umrah rituals in contemporary religious studies must encompass symbolic, social, historical, and media analysis to provide a comprehensive understanding of how rituals as sacred experiences are influenced and understood within today's global dynamics.

## METHOD

This research uses an interdisciplinary qualitative approach with an analytical framework based on the religious studies paradigm (Rodrigues dan Harding, 2009). This approach views religion not merely as a system of normative doctrines, but as a complex, living, and contextual human phenomenon. Thus, the Hajj and Umrah are positioned as religious practices containing intertwined theological, symbolic, social, cultural, and historical dimensions. A qualitative approach was chosen because it allows for in-depth, reflective, and interpretive exploration of meanings, symbols, and religious experiences. This research

integrates three main approaches. First, a phenomenological approach is used to understand the spiritual experiences of pilgrims in interacting with the sacred. This approach starts from the assumption that the meaning of worship lies not only in its ritual structure, but also in the subjective experience and religious awareness of worshippers (Creswell, 2016). Within this framework, the Hajj and Umrah rituals are understood as transcendental experiences that shape personal and collective piety. Second, a hermeneutic approach is applied to interpret the meaning of the ritual symbols of the Hajj and Umrah within a theological and historical context. Symbols such as the Kaaba, tawaf, sa'i, and wukuf are treated as meaningful religious "texts" open to interpretation. This approach allows for dialogue between sacred texts, Islamic scholarly traditions, and modern theories of religious studies, so that the meaning of the rituals is not reduced to literalism or ahistorical terms. Third, a sociological approach is used to analyze the social and cultural dimensions of the Hajj and Umrah. The analysis focuses on how these rituals shape the solidarity of the global Muslim community (ummah), create experiences of community, and interact with modern economic realities and social structures. This approach is crucial for understanding the Hajj and Umrah as religious practices inseparable from the dynamics of globalization and modernity (Sugiyono, 2020).

This research is library research (Creswell, 2018). Primary data sources include Rodrigues and Harding's *Introduction to the Study of Religion* as the primary theoretical paradigm reference, the Qur'an, hadith, and classical and contemporary Islamic jurisprudence literature discussing the Hajj and Umrah. Secondary data sources include scientific journal articles, academic books, and previous research studies examining the Hajj and Umrah from historical, phenomenological, sociological, and contemporary political perspectives. Data analysis was conducted through three main stages. First, concept reduction and classification, namely identifying key concepts within Rodrigues and Harding's framework, such as religious experience, symbol, and meaning, then linking them to Islamic concepts such as tawhid, ibadah, and ukhuwah. Second, contextual interpretation, namely interpreting the symbols and practices of the Hajj and Umrah in relation to theories of religious studies and their historical and social contexts. Third, theoretical synthesis, namely integrating all the results of the analysis into a new conceptual model that describes an interdisciplinary and reflective understanding of Islamic rituals (Rodrigues dan Harding, 2009).

This research develops an analytical framework encompassing four dimensions. The theological-Islamic dimension focuses on the normative foundations of the Hajj and Umrah in the Qur'an and Hadith. The phenomenological dimension explores the pilgrims' experiences in interacting with the sacred. The anthropological-sociological dimension interprets the Hajj as a communal practice that fosters global solidarity among Muslims. Meanwhile, the philosophical and hermeneutic dimensions analyze ritual symbols as meaningful texts reflecting humanity's relationship with God. The integration of these four dimensions is expected to yield a complete and comprehensive understanding of the Hajj and Umrah as dynamic and contextual religious practices (Miles et al., 2014).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the Hajj and Umrah rituals cannot be reduced to mere fulfilment of normative obligations in Islam, but must be understood as multidimensional religious phenomena. Referring to the theoretical framework of Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding's *Introduction to the Study of Religion*, both acts of worship are positioned as religious practices imbued with symbolic meaning and existential experiences (Rodrigues & Harding, 2009). This approach emphasizes that religion is not merely a system of doctrine or law, but also a space where humans build relationships with transcendent reality through symbols, rituals, and inner experiences. In the context of the Hajj and Umrah, rituals serve as a medium that connects the individual's spiritual dimension with the social and cultural structures of Muslims globally. Each series of acts of worship represents the dynamics of humanity's relationship with God, while also reflecting the process of forming identity, solidarity, and collective consciousness (Barrett, 2023). Therefore, the analysis of the results of this study is arranged into several main interrelated subsections, namely the phenomenological dimension which highlights sacred experiences, the anthropological and sociological dimensions which emphasize the social function of rituals, the philosophical and psychological dimensions which examine self-transformation, and the theological dimension which reveals the universality of religious messages in the Hajj and Umrah.

## 1. Phenomenology, Tawhid, and the Criticism of Religious Construction

In contemporary religious studies, the approach developed by Rodrigues and Harding occupies a significant position because it firmly rejects the rigid separation between "faith" and "science." For them, the study of religion cannot be limited to descriptive work that records religious rites, doctrines, or institutions, but must be understood as a reflective and critical effort to examine how humans interpret their religious experiences within specific historical, cultural, and social contexts. Religion, therefore, is seen as a living phenomenon that is continuously negotiated in the interaction between personal beliefs and broader social structures. This theoretical framework is pluralistic and comparative, starting from the assumption that no single perspective can fully explain the complexity of religious reality. Every religious tradition, practice, and experience requires an approach that is open to a diversity of methods and perspectives. In this context, the Hajj and Umrah become highly relevant fields of analysis, as these two rituals simultaneously bring together theological, symbolic, social, historical, and existential dimensions. Through the Hajj and Umrah, the relationship between personal faith and the social dynamics of Muslims can be observed concretely, making it a rich example for testing and applying interdisciplinary approaches in religious studies (Halim et al., 2024).

Theologically, the Hajj and Umrah represent the principle of monotheism in the form of ritual practice. The entire sequence of worship, from ihram, tawaf, sa'i, to standing at Arafah, affirms the oneness of God and the equality of all human beings before Him. There is no symbolically legitimized social hierarchy in the ritual; all pilgrims wear identical attire and move at the same rhythm. This principle resonates with the phenomenological approach to religion regarding the sacred and the profane, where space and time become sacred not because of their inherent nature, but because they are filled with religious awareness. Standing at Arafah, within this framework, can be read as a moment of intensified divine awareness that unites the spiritual and social dimensions in a unified whole (Eliade, 1996). However, as criticized in recent developments in religious studies, the phenomenological framework tends to accept the categories of "religion," "the sacred," and "religious experience" as neutral and universal. This is where it is important to enrich the analysis with a critical perspective that questions how these categories are constructed. Talal Asad, for example, shows that the concept of "religion" is never value-free, but rather shaped by history, power relations, and the context of Western modernity. In the context of the Hajj and Umrah, the experience of the "sacred" cannot be separated from state regulations, Saudi bureaucracy, and global discourses on Islam, which also shape how these rituals are understood and experienced (Asad, 1993).

An important addition to this theoretical framework can be found in the thinking of Dale Cannon, particularly in his comparative study of mystical and religious experiences. Cannon emphasizes that religious experience never stands alone as a pure reality, but is always mediated by language, tradition, and a particular conceptual framework. Thus, the sacred experience of the Hajj and Umrah is not simply a "direct experience with the Divine," but also the result of the internalization of Islamic theological, symbolic, and institutional discourses. This perspective helps avoid the romanticization of religious experience and opens up space for a critical analysis of how the meaning of worship is produced and reproduced. By combining the phenomenological approach of Rodrigues and Harding, the principle of tawhid in Islamic theology, and Cannon and Asad's critique of religious construction, this research's theoretical position becomes more comprehensive. The Hajj and Umrah are understood not only as authentic sacred experiences but also as religious practices shaped by history, power, and global modernity. This framework allows for a more reflective and critical reading, without negating the spiritual meanings inherent in the pilgrims' experiences, while also situating the rituals within a broader social and intellectual context (Cannon, 2012).

## 2. Phenomenological Dimension: Sacred Experience and the Structure of Worship Consciousness

Within the framework of the phenomenology of religion, as formulated by Mircea Eliade and further developed in the approach of religious studies by Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, religion is understood as a fundamental human effort to establish a relationship with sacred reality. This perspective positions religious experience not merely as a collection of doctrines or normative practices, but as an existential human response to the presence of the divine in everyday life. In this context, the rituals of Hajj and Umrah cannot be reduced to mere formal obligations or legalistic acts of worship. Instead, these two rituals represent a profound experience of encounter between humans and the sacred (hierophany), manifested through a series of symbolic actions, sacred spaces, and sacred ritual times. Sacred spaces such as the Kaaba, Arafat, and the Grand Mosque not only have geographical significance but also function

as cosmological centers that connect the profane dimension with the transcendent dimension (Chipman, 2013). Likewise, ritual actions such as tawaf, sa'i, and wukuf are symbolic expressions of human orientation toward the Almighty. Through these ritual experiences, pilgrims experience a transformation in spiritual awareness that shifts their life orientation from worldly concerns to total submission to God. Thus, the phenomenology of religion allows for an understanding of the Hajj and Umrah as living, reflective, and existentially meaningful religious experiences.

First, sacred space and transcendental experience. Sacred space in Islam is centered on the Kaaba as the axis mundi, the spiritual cosmos' axis, where humans reaffirm their connection to God. In Eliade's terminology, this space is not only geographical but also existential. When pilgrims perform tawaf, they do not simply circle a stone structure but enter a sacred axis that connects heaven and earth. This act represents a cosmic awareness of God's oneness (tawhid). Rodrigues and Harding explain that religious symbols serve as a medium for humans to experience and internalize the transcendent. In this regard, tawaf is a symbol of spiritual continuity that transcends time and space. The pilgrims' circular movement reflects the unbroken cosmic movement between humans and the Creator. Another important space is Arafah, which in Islamic theology is referred to as the meeting place of humans with God and a miniature of the Mahsyar Field. Phenomenologically, standing at Arafah creates an awareness of human mortality and a hope for divine forgiveness. Eliade calls this phenomenon a return to origins, a return to the point of origin of holiness (Bianchi, 2004). Thus, the Hajj ritual is not only a geographical journey to Mecca, but also an existential journey to the center of human spirituality.

Second, sacred time and self-transformation. The phenomenology of religion also highlights the concept of sacred time, a time separated from profane routines. The Hajj pilgrimage during the month of Dhul-Hijjah represents a re-enactment of the sacred history of the Prophet Abraham and his family. From Rodrigues and Harding's perspective, this religious act constitutes a performative memory, an attempt to relive the experience of faith through symbolic action. During the Hajj, pilgrims experience a time that ceases from the flow of the profane world and enters a transcendent sacred time. This experience creates a profound spiritual awareness, where individuals feel part of a continuing history of holiness (Bellah, 1964). Therefore, the phenomenology of religion helps explain how rituals can revive the meaning of faith and strengthen human religious awareness of the origins and purpose of life.

### **3. Anthropological and Sociological Dimensions: Community, Solidarity, and Religious Identity**

The anthropological and sociological dimensions of the study of the Hajj and Umrah rituals provide an analytical framework for understanding these acts of worship not only as individual experiences but also as social practices that shape the relationships, structures, and collective identities of Muslims. This approach positions ritual as an arena for encounters between individuals and communities, between personal expressions of faith and broader social constructs. From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, ritual is understood as a symbolic mechanism that affirms shared values, strengthens social bonds, and reproduces religious meaning across generations (Gold, 1992). Meanwhile, the sociology of religion highlights how ritual practices function to build solidarity, collective consciousness, and a sense of togetherness amidst diverse social, cultural, and geographical backgrounds. The Hajj and Umrah, as acts of worship involving millions of Muslims from various parts of the world, present a unique social space where differences in status, ethnicity, and nationality are dissolved within a framework of ritual equality (Stambach, 2006). Thus, the anthropological and sociological dimensions enable the reading of the Hajj and Umrah as religious practices that not only connect humans with God but also bind fellow human beings in a global network of Islamic meaning, solidarity, and identity.

First, ritual as a sacred community (*communitas*). Within the framework of the anthropology of religion, the concept of *communitas* refers to the feeling of equality and brotherhood that emerges during the ritual experience. This concept is highly relevant to understanding the Hajj and Umrah, where millions of Muslims from various nations gather in one time and space, wearing the same attire, performing the same worship, and erasing social differences (Erhard, 2019). Rodrigues and Harding emphasize that ritual always has a social function: it creates order and solidarity through shared symbols and actions. The *ihram* in the Hajj affirms this equality, as all pilgrims shed their social identities and worldly status to become equal servants of God before God. From the perspective of the sociology of religion, as explained by Emile Durkheim, such collective experiences strengthen the collective consciousness of believers and renew social solidarity through a sense of shared sanctity (Durkheim, 1912).

Second, the Hajj and Umrah represent the global identity of Islam. In the era of globalization, the Hajj and Umrah have become the most visible symbols of the global identity of Muslims. Every year, millions of people from various races and cultures converge in Mecca, creating what Turner calls a transnational spiritual community (Turner, 1977). In Clifford Geertz's view, religion is a system of symbols that connects personal experience with structures of social meaning (Geertz, 1973). The Hajj and Umrah become transnational symbols that connect Muslims from around the world in a universal system of meaning about submission, brotherhood, and the oneness of God. From Rodrigues and Harding's perspective, this demonstrates that religion never exists in a silo; it always interacts with its social and political context. The Hajj, for example, is not only a personal act of worship but also a social phenomenon that reflects the dynamics of power, economics, and global mobility of Muslims. This phenomenon demonstrates that the study of religion can help understand how religious practices function as a medium for the formation of social identity and global solidarity.

Third, the economic and political dimensions of ritual. In contemporary sociological readings, the Hajj and Umrah also function as global economic and political arenas. These pilgrimages involve the transportation, hospitality, and information technology industries, all of which are integrated into the global religious economy. Peter Berger calls this phenomenon the sacralization of the secular, where economic and social activities acquire religious meaning through spiritual intentions and goals (Berger & Luckmann, 1990). Rodrigues and Harding assert that modern religion cannot be understood without considering the sociocultural and economic contexts that shape it. In the context of the Hajj, the commercialization and digitalization of worship services demonstrate a shift from traditional ritual forms to modern, organized and standardized forms. Nevertheless, their spiritual meaning persists because the symbols and intentions of worship are not lost to modernity. In other words, rituals remain sacred even though they are carried out within a modern rational system.

#### **4. Philosophical and Psychological Dimensions: Self-Transformation and Religious Awareness**

The philosophical and psychological dimensions of the Hajj and Umrah rituals occupy a crucial role in understanding how religious practices function as a means of shaping self-awareness and human existential transformation. Unlike approaches that emphasize only the normative or legal-formal aspects of worship, philosophical and psychological perspectives seek to explore the inner meaning and profound impact of rituals on an individual's life orientation. Within the framework of religious studies, these dimensions highlight religion as an existential experience that touches the deepest layers of human consciousness, particularly in its relationship to the meaning of life, suffering, hope, and the ultimate purpose of existence. Rodrigues and Harding emphasize that religious practices cannot be separated from the subjective experiences of their adherents. Rituals are not simply a series of symbolic actions inherited from tradition, but also a medium for self-reflection that allows individuals to renegotiate their identity, values, and moral orientation. In the context of the Hajj and Umrah, total physical, emotional, and spiritual involvement creates a psychological space conducive to the emergence of a new awareness of self and God (Silk, 2005). Therefore, philosophical and psychological analysis is key to understanding how these acts of worship function as a continuous process of self-renewal, not merely as a ritual obligation.

First, worship as existential transformation. From a philosophical perspective, the Hajj and Umrah rituals can be understood as a form of ultimate concern, the highest expression of humankind's existential orientation toward God (Tillich, 1957). In these rituals, all physical actions (thawaf, sa'i, wukuf, tahallul) serve as symbols of the inner journey toward spiritual wholeness. Rodrigues and Harding state that one of the goals of religious studies is to understand how ritual actions express human awareness of the transcendent. In the context of the psychology of religion, intense religious experiences can produce moral and psychological transformation (Childress & L. Beauchamp, 2019). The Hajj and Umrah present this experience. Many pilgrims report changes in their attitudes after performing these rituals: increased patience, inner peace, and a higher moral awareness. This demonstrates that worship is not merely an obligation, but also a spiritual therapy that shapes a religious personality.

Second, the dimension of consciousness and symbolism. The symbolism of the Hajj and Umrah also has profound philosophical meaning. The stoning of the devil, for example, symbolizes the struggle against ego and worldly desires; while the Tahallul signifies rebirth in purity. Within a hermeneutic framework, as explained by Paul Ricoeur, these symbols are polysemic, possessing multiple layers of meaning that can be interpreted existentially (Ricoeur, 1976). Rodrigues and Harding emphasize that religious symbols are not merely visual

representations but also tools for revealing the structure of human consciousness toward the sacred. Therefore, a symbolic analysis of the Hajj and Umrah rituals reveals that every action contains a moral and spiritual message that guides humans toward self-transformation.

### **5. Theological Dimension and Universality of Religious Messages**

The theological dimension and the universality of religious messages are crucial in the analysis of the Hajj and Umrah rituals, as this is where the relationship between religious experience, faith doctrine, and human values most fundamentally intersects. The theological dimension serves as a normative foundation that provides legitimacy, direction, and spiritual meaning to the entire series of rituals, while the universality of the religious message affirms that the ritual is not only relevant to the internal community of its adherents but also contains ethical values that can be interpreted across cultures and religious traditions. In the study of religion, the combination of these two dimensions allows for a more comprehensive understanding of how particular theological teachings can produce universal moral and spiritual messages (Achfandhy & Rohmatulloh, 2025). Therefore, the analysis of the Hajj and Umrah does not stop at merely ritualistic or symbolic aspects, but rather goes further to examine how the concepts of divinity, humanity, and moral responsibility are realized in concrete religious practices. This framework also demonstrates that religion, through its rituals, has the capacity to build a bridge between personal faith and broader social ethics.

First, the integration of theology and religious studies. The analysis shows that although religious studies and theology depart from different epistemological paradigms, they can complement each other in understanding the meaning of the Hajj and Umrah. Islamic theology provides a normative and spiritual framework for the implementation of worship, while religious studies provides a scientific framework for interpreting the experience and its meaning. Rodrigues and Harding reject the dichotomy between faith and science, stating that both are two sides of the human search for the same meaning. In the Islamic context, this principle aligns with al-Ghazali's idea of the unity between knowledge and practice, between rational knowledge and inner experience. Thus, this interdisciplinary approach does not diminish the sanctity of worship, but rather deepens understanding of it (Al-Ghazali, 2004).

Second, the universality of the message of the Hajj and Umrah. Theologically, the Hajj and Umrah contain a universal message of equality, sacrifice, and human brotherhood. This principle is in line with the teachings of the Qur'an: "O mankind, indeed We created you from a male and a female, and We made you into nations and tribes that you may know one another." (Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:13). This message emphasizes that the Hajj ritual is not merely an act of worship for Muslims, but also a symbol of the unity of humanity in devotion to the one God. In Rodrigues and Harding's view, the world's religions have a universal function: to shape human ethical and spiritual awareness towards transcendent values. The Hajj and Umrah are thus concrete examples of how Islamic spiritual values resonate with universal human values.

Third, the challenges of modernity and contemporary relevance. In the modern context, the practices of Hajj and Umrah face challenges in the form of industrialization and the digitalization of religion. The emergence of bureaucracy, commercialization, and economic competition in the implementation of these rituals raises concerns about the loss of sacredness. However, as Rodrigues and Harding state, religion is adaptive: it adapts to social change without losing its essence. The rituals of Hajj and Umrah retain their spiritual power even when performed in a modern system, because what determines their sanctity is intention and symbolic meaning, not merely external form. Thus, modernity does not erase the religious value of worship, but challenges Muslims to rediscover its spiritual meaning amidst the dynamics of the times.

### **6. Hajj and Umrah as a Model for Interdisciplinary Religious Studies**

The results of this study confirm that the Hajj and Umrah rituals have strong potential to serve as empirical models for applying an interdisciplinary approach to religious studies, particularly in the Islamic context. These two rituals not only represent normative religious obligations but also provide a broad analytical space for the study of religion as a complex and multidimensional human phenomenon. By utilizing the theoretical framework developed by Hillary Rodrigues and John S. Harding, this study demonstrates that religious studies can bridge the dimensions of faith and scientific analysis without reducing either one. From a phenomenological perspective, the Hajj and Umrah demonstrate how humans

experience the sacred through direct involvement in space, time, and ritual actions. The experiences of tawaf, sa'i, and wukuf, for example, are not merely understood as a series of symbolic movements, but as expressions of religious awareness that connect individuals with transcendent reality. This experiential dimension emphasizes that religion lives not only in texts but also in the concrete experiences of its adherents. This perspective aligns with the phenomenology of religion, which places sacred experience at the core of human religiosity (Azra, 2004).

Anthropological and sociological approaches allow for the interpretation of the Hajj and Umrah as social practices that shape the collective solidarity of Muslims. The presence of millions of pilgrims from diverse ethnic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds creates what Victor Turner calls *communitas*, a state of equality and togetherness that transcends everyday social structures. In this context, the Hajj not only strengthens the individual's spiritual bond with God but also affirms the collective identity of the global Muslim community (*ummah*). Through philosophical and psychological approaches, the Hajj and Umrah can be understood as processes of profound self-transformation. The intense ritual experience, the detachment from mundane routines, and the symbolic encounter with the values of sacrifice and surrender encourage existential reflection that has the potential to transform the pilgrims' life orientation. This transformation is not always instantaneous, but often manifests in changes in attitudes, behavior, and perspectives upon returning to daily life. At the same time, theological approaches remain central in affirming the meaning of the Hajj and Umrah as acts of worship grounded in Islamic teachings (Pargament, 2007). The theological dimension ensures that academic analysis remains untethered from the framework of faith that underpins the ritual practice. In this regard, Rodrigues and Harding's framework proves effective in maintaining a balance between internal (insider) understanding and external (outsider) analysis. Thus, this research demonstrates that religious studies are not only relevant for comparatively understanding other religious traditions but also have a reflective function in deepening understanding of one's own religious tradition. From this perspective, the Hajj and Umrah serve as concrete examples of how an interdisciplinary approach can enrich Islamic studies while expanding Islam's contribution to contemporary religious studies discourse.

The Hajj and Umrah rituals are multidimensional religious phenomena that cannot be reduced to merely the performance of normative religious obligations. Using the theoretical framework of *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (Rodrigues & Harding, 2009), this study asserts that the Hajj and Umrah function as symbolic practices that represent the spiritual, social, philosophical, and existential dynamics of humans in their relationship with the Transcendent. The analysis of the research results is divided into several main dimensions, namely the phenomenological, anthropological and sociological, philosophical and psychological, and the theological dimension and the universality of religious messages. In contemporary religious studies, Rodrigues and Harding occupy an important position because they reject the sharp dichotomy between faith and knowledge. The study of religion, according to them, is not merely a descriptive effort to record religious practices, but also a reflective and critical project to understand how humans construct the meaning of their religiosity. This approach is pluralistic and comparative, with the assumption that no single perspective is capable of explaining the complexity of religious phenomena. In this context, Hajj and Umrah become strategic objects of study because they simultaneously bring together theological, symbolic, social, historical, and existential dimensions.

Theologically, the Hajj and Umrah represent the principle of monotheism in the form of ritual practice. The entire sequence of rituals, from ihram, tawaf, sa'i, wukuf, to tahallul, affirms the oneness of God and the equality of all human beings before Him. There is no symbolically legitimized social hierarchy; all pilgrims wear the same attire and move in a uniform ritual rhythm. This principle resonates with the phenomenology of religion, particularly the concept of the sacred and the profane, which states that space and time become sacred not because of their inherent nature, but because they are filled with religious consciousness (Eliade, 1996). Wukuf at Arafah, within this framework, can be understood as a moment of intensified divine consciousness that unites the spiritual and social dimensions. However, recent developments in religious studies have also criticized the phenomenological approach, which tends to accept the categories of "religion," "the sacred," and "religious experience" as neutral and universal. Talal Asad shows that these concepts are always constructed through history, power relations, and the context of modernity. In the context of the Hajj and Umrah, sacred experiences cannot be separated from state regulations, Saudi bureaucracy, and global discourse on Islam. Dale Cannon's additional perspective further emphasizes that religious experiences are always mediated by specific language, traditions, and symbolic frameworks. Thus,

sacred experiences in the Hajj and Umrah are not "pure" realities, but rather the result of the internalization of Islamic theological and institutional discourses. This perspective helps avoid the romanticization of religious experiences and opens up space for critical analysis of the production of meaning in worship membantu menghindari romantisasi pengalaman religius dan membuka ruang analisis kritis terhadap produksi makna ibadah (Asad, 1997).

From the perspective of religious phenomenology, the Hajj and Umrah are understood as human beings' existential encounter with the sacred (hierophany). The Kaaba functions as the axis mundi, the cosmic axis connecting humans with God. The Tawaf is not merely a physical movement around the building, but rather a symbol of cosmic awareness of God's oneness. The pilgrims' circular movement reflects the order of the cosmos and the continuity of humanity's relationship with the Divine. Arafah becomes a powerful phenomenological space, as it is there that pilgrims experience an awareness of mortality, regret, and hope for forgiveness. In Eliade's terms, wukuf is a form of return to origins, namely the return of humans to their most basic existential condition in the presence of God. In addition to sacred space, sacred time also plays a crucial role. The performance of the Hajj in the month of Dhul-Hijjah is a re-enactment of the sacred history of Prophet Abraham and his family. Rodrigues and Harding refer to this practice as performative memory, namely the reviving of the meaning of faith through repeated symbolic actions.

From the perspective of the anthropology of religion, Victor Turner's concept of community is highly relevant to understanding the Hajj and Umrah (Turner, 1977). In a liminal state, pilgrims experience a sense of equality and brotherhood that transcends ethnicity, nationality, and social class. Ihram symbolizes the renunciation of worldly identity and the affirmation of equal spiritual status as servants of God. Sociologically, as Emile Durkheim argued, collective rituals strengthen collective consciousness. The Hajj and Umrah renew global Muslim solidarity and forge a collective identity that transcends the nation-state. Rituals function as symbolic systems that connect personal experience with structures of social meaning. Thus, the Hajj and Umrah become global symbols of Islam, uniting people in the values of submission, brotherhood, and monotheism (Reinhardt, 2020). However, in the era of globalization, these rituals are also integrated into the global economic and political systems. The Hajj and Umrah travel industry, the digitization of services, and the bureaucratization of the implementation of pilgrimages demonstrate that sacred rituals are inseparable from the logic of modernity. Peter Berger calls this phenomenon the sacralization of the secular, where worldly activities acquire religious meaning through religious intentions and symbols (Berger & Luckmann, 1990).

Philosophically, the Hajj and Umrah can be understood as expressions of ultimate concern (Tillich, 1957). All ritual actions symbolize the human inner journey towards spiritual wholeness. The psychology of religion shows that intense religious experiences can produce moral and psychological transformation. Many pilgrims report changes in life attitudes after the Hajj: increased ethical awareness, inner peace, and moral commitment. Ritual symbolism such as the Jumrah as a resistance to ego and Tahallul as a symbol of rebirth is polysemic (Ricoeur, 1976). These symbols reveal the structure of human consciousness and function as a means of self-transformation. Analysis shows that Islamic theology and religious studies do not negate each other, but rather complement each other. Theology provides a normative framework, while religious studies provides tools for reflective analysis. This principle is in line with al-Ghazali's idea of the unity of knowledge and practice. Theologically, the Hajj and Umrah contain a universal message of human equality and brotherhood, as emphasized in Q.S. Al-Hujurat [49]:13.

Amid the challenges of modernity, industrialisation, commercialisation, and digitalisation, the Hajj and Umrah rituals retain their sacred significance, as their sanctity is determined by intention and symbolic meaning rather than by their external form. This research demonstrates that the Hajj and Umrah can serve as empirical models for the application of interdisciplinary religious studies in an Islamic context. Rodrigues and Harding's framework has proven effective in bridging faith and rational analysis, deepening understanding of Islamic religious traditions without diminishing their sacredness. Thus, religious studies serve not only to understand other religions but also as a means of critical reflection on one's own religious traditions.

## CONCLUSION

This study has analyzed the Hajj and Umrah rituals through the Rodrigues-Harding approach to religious studies, which rejects the narrow dichotomy between faith and knowledge. The results show that

this approach allows for a holistic understanding of these two rituals, encompassing theological, phenomenological, sociological, and cultural dimensions. First, the Hajj and Umrah rituals have undergone significant historical transformations from the pre-modern to the contemporary era. In the pre-modern era, the Hajj was a spiritual expedition that served as a vehicle for cross-ethnic solidarity and the transmission of knowledge. During the colonial era, the Hajj began to be bureaucratized by the colonial government as a form of political control. In the contemporary era, the Hajj and Umrah have transformed into global phenomena that are industrialized, mediated by digital technology, and encompassed by the logic of the global market. Second, the application of the Rodrigues-Harding approach allows for the integration of insider and outsider perspectives in understanding the Hajj and Umrah. The insider perspective helps understand the spiritual and theological dimensions of these rituals, while the outsider perspective helps understand the social, economic, and political dimensions. The integration of these two perspectives results in a more comprehensive and less partial understanding. The Hajj and Umrah rituals are complex religious phenomena, reflecting not only theological but also social, cultural, and economic dimensions. In the era of globalization, these two forms of worship have undergone significant transformation, from simple spiritual journeys to global phenomena industrialized and mediated by digital technology. The interdisciplinary approach proposed by Rodrigues and Harding offers a relevant theoretical framework for analyzing the Hajj and Umrah. By combining theological, phenomenological, and sociological perspectives, this study demonstrates that these rituals are not merely formal acts of worship, but also existential journeys that transform the pilgrims' consciousness. However, modernisation and mediatization also bring new challenges, such as commercialisation, social stratification, and the paradox of sacredness and profanity. Therefore, contemporary religious studies need to continue developing a reflective and critical approach to understand how religious rituals can remain relevant in a changing world.

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