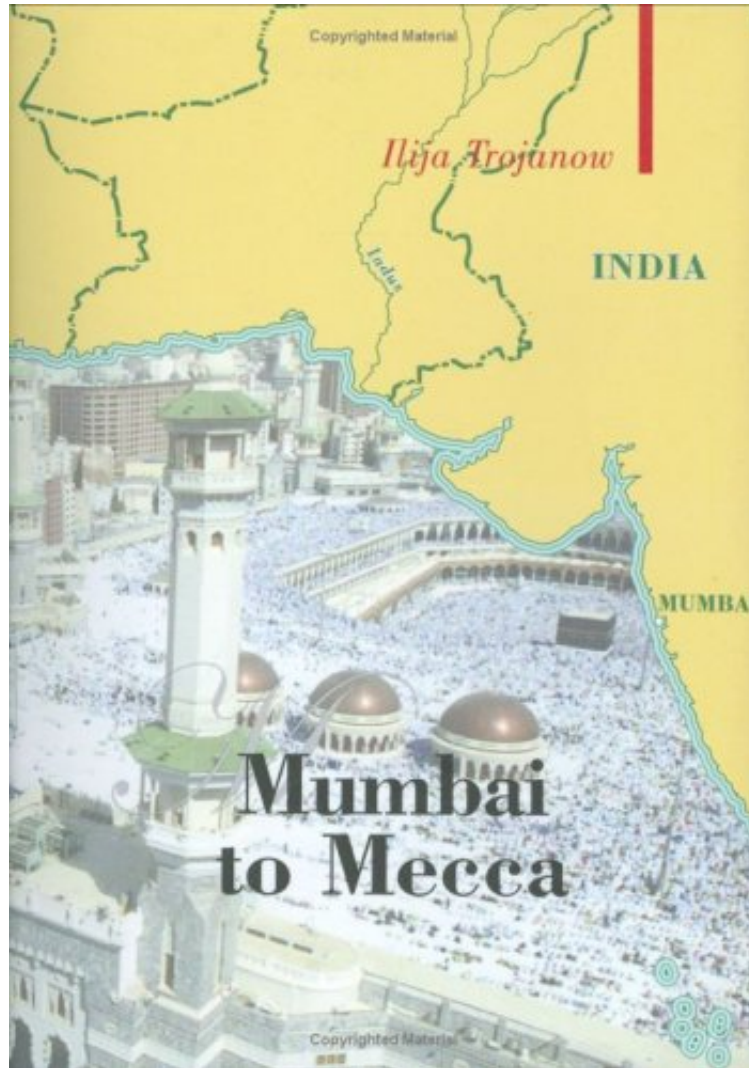


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## Mumbai To Mecca: A Pilgrimage to the Holy Sites of Islam

*Ilija Trojanow*

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**Ilija Trojanow : Mumbai To Mecca: A Pilgrimage to the Holy Sites of Islam** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Mumbai To Mecca: A Pilgrimage to the Holy Sites of Islam:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A revealing contemporary account of the Hajj By R. M. Peterson In early 2003, Ilija Trojanow -- originally from Bulgaria, but then living in Mumbai -- undertook the Hajj. MUMBAI TO MECCA is his account of the pilgrimage. As the fifth pillar of Islam, the Hajj is a lifetime objective for over 1.5 billion of this planet's people. For someone like me (a non-Moslem), the Hajj is an impossibility. Reading the book, therefore, gave me a glimpse and rudimentary understanding, otherwise unavailable to me, of an event central to the lives of so many of my fellow world-citizens. At one level, the contemporary Hajj is the world's largest, most raucous,

and most crass "tour group package". It might also be the most dangerous. (In the nineteenth century, tens of thousands of pilgrims died of cholera. Between 1990 and 2006, five different stampedes resulted in between 100 and 1400 deaths apiece. In 2003, while Trojanow was there, twenty-two pilgrims were trampled to death on one of the bridges leading to the pillar of the devil, site of the Stoning of the Devil ritual.) Trojanow shared his small hotel room in Mecca with seven others, four in beds jammed against the walls and four on mattresses on the floor. In the valley of Mina (where pilgrims go for the Stoning of the Devil ritual) he, like two million fellow pilgrims, slept in a tent. At the shopping center across from the Abdul-Aziz Gate to the Grand Mosque, "the wealthier pilgrims retire to [eat at] Burger King, Dunkin' Donuts and Pizza Hut" and "fully automated massage chairs offer five-minute respites from the rigours of prayer". Mammoth traffic jams and four-hour delays are matters of course. Saudi bureaucracy is pervasive; whether it eases problems of crowding or exacerbates them is hard to tell. On another level, the Hajj for Trojanow was indeed an ineffable, unforgettable spiritual experience. "The pilgrim lives in an uncompromising manner -- impossible in everyday life. He samples a taste of the perfect religious life, a simple, ordered, motivated, pure life. He should, of course, apply this new perspective to his every day life upon return -- there are some who change their lives after the Hajj. Most, however, return to their normal life and the Hajj becomes a magical memory, like a wonderful spiritual holiday infused with happiness." On any number of occasions Trojanow is critical of the host Saudis and their Wahhabi brand of Islam. "Pilgrims from Istanbul, Damascus and Cairo regard the Saudis as parvenus, nouveau-riche, and lacking in civilisation. And the Saudis do their utmost to live up to their assessment through their rude and coarse behaviour. Since time immemorial the inhabitants of Mecca have been called the neighbours of God, while simultaneously displaying, in this centre of faith, a measure of human weakness, greed and arrogance that provokes all idealistic pilgrims." But Trojanow is also critical of the materiality and superficiality of many of his non-Saudi fellow Muslims. I suspect that Ilija Trojanow is not your typical Muslim (Is there, for that matter, a "typical" Christian or Jew?), and therefore his account of the Hajj may be somewhat idiosyncratic. Still, it is the only contemporary one I have read and it is likely to remain so. As such, reading MUMBAI TO MECCA represents four hours well spent. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A PathBy Jocelyn Shannon I had hoped for a better understanding of Islam and I found it within these pages. I had not realized how many requirements must be met for a true Haj experience. Take time to read this and widen your world. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Any public library strong in either area will find this an inspiring, revealing read. By Midwest Book Review In 2003 the author journeyed from Mumbai to Mecca, and this is his memoir and travelogue, describing his pilgrimage as well as his Muslim heritage and beliefs. The author joined thousands of Muslims who each year journey on the Hajj, demonstrating their faith: this book could also have been featured in our Spirituality Shelf section, but is featured here as a broader recommendation for travel and spiritual holdings alike. Any public library strong in either area will find this an inspiring, revealing read. Diane C. Donovan California Bookwatch

A moving description of the Muslim pilgrimage

'Trojanow portrays a magnificent journey defined by contrasts... Non-believers are still banned from Islam's Holiest city: this short book may be the best substitute for going there.' FINANCIAL TIMES Magazine About the Author Ilija Trojanow was born in Bulgaria in 1965. After fleeing his homeland via Yugoslavia and Italy, he was granted political asylum in Germany. He spent ten years in Kenya and five years in Mumbai, before moving to Capetown in 2003.