



- 1- There had been a population explosion among Muslim Countries, raising the World Muslim population to 1 billion.
- 2- In many Islamic Countries, especially in oil producer ones, the economic resources of the people have increased, encouraging them to undertake the pilgrimage.
- 3- The number of Muslim employees in Saudi Arabia had increased because of the construction activities and they undertook the chance of pilgrimage one or more times.
- 4- The fact that the pilgrimage period has fallen into the cooler season from 1968 to 1982, made it safer and easier. (5)
- 5- The possibility of air travel made the pilgrimage cheaper and faster and greatly increased personal safety from pirates and bedouin raids, and from passing through countries that belong to different blocks of influence.
- 6- In Muslim Countries various institutions ran information campaigns which encouraged Muslims to undertake the pilgrimage.
- 7- Duty-free markets in Jeddah and Makkah offered a variety of modern consuming goods which were unavailable and/or unaffordable for the pilgrim in his/her own country.

The accumulation of such a crowd for such a short duration in Makkah brought along eventually many problems to be solved such as accommodation, nutrition, shopping, pedestrian and vehicular traffics, city services and so on, for Makkah Municipality and for Saudi Government as well.

On the other hand, at the dawn of 70's the first petroleum crisis shook the World for the great benefit of oil producer countries, which put an embargo on the crude oil they exported to the developed countries. As a result of this oil embargo, the revenues of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia increased beyond the dreams of the Royal Family and eventually a Development Plan has been launched to modernise the Country. The money is invested in development and growth, modern construction materials and technics, modern consuming goods, modern household materials, large number of vehicles have been imported in order to establish an infra-structure, to built new roads, airports, schools, universities, offices, dwellings and to improve the living standarts of the people.

As for Makkah, it took its share from this modernisation activities. To help to solve more easily the aforementioned problems of the pilgrimage the Great Mosque has been enlarged to 500.000 person's capacity, ring roads have been constructed around it to let the approach of car traffic, other new roads have been opened through the old quarters to link the new suburbs to the centre, new buildings have risen around the Great Mosque as business centres and hotels to serve and to accommodate the pilgrims, mountains have been pierced by gigantesque tunnels to ease the Hajj circulation. Thus, in a relatively short time, large historic areas of Makkah have disappeared in front of the powerfull arms of the heavy machines.

Despite the title of the paper is "The threats of petro-boom upon traditional houses of Makkah al Mukarramah", it seems rather there are two reasons for the demolition of the traditional houses, first the increase of the number of the pilgrims, second the increase of the revenues related to the rising oil prices. But if we carefully analyse the reasons for the increase of the pilgrims we can see that some of them are directly effected by the increase of the oil revenues among muslim countries:

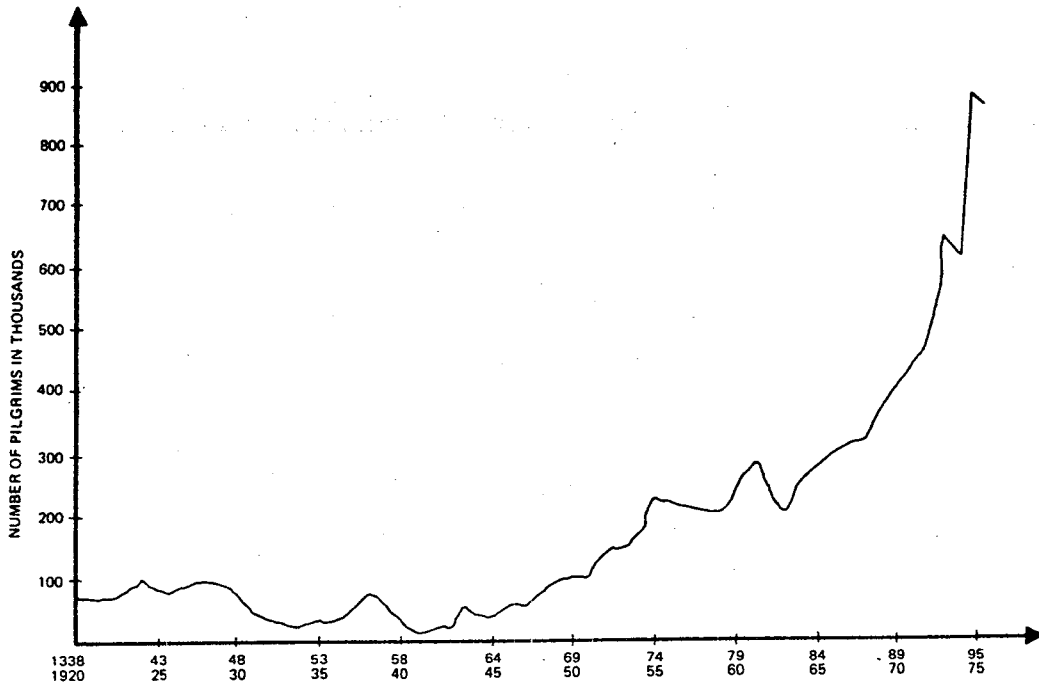
- 1- The economic resources of the Muslim Countries have increased as a result of the oil as in Iran, Iraq, Libya, Nigeria, Kuwait, Egypt, and others.
- 2- The number of muslim employees in Saudi Arabia has increased because of the construction-boom related to the oil richness of the Kingdom.
- 3- Duty-free markets in Jeddah and Makkah are also the result of the oil richness of Saudi Arabia.

Therefore we can conclude that the reason for the demolition of the traditional texture of Makkah is primarily due to petro-boom. Should the oil revenues of the Kingdom and the Muslim Countries not be increased, there would not be such an increase in the number of the pilgrims and nor would there be such a construction boom in Makkah to deteriorate the traditional texture to such an extent. There would of course be a normal increase of the number of pilgrims due to the population explosion among muslim countries, to the fact that the Hajj fell into cooler season, to the possibility of air travel, to the information campaigns, but would not effect so much the texture of Makkah as done together with the petro-boom.

On the other hand there are secondary reasons which encouraged the demolitions:

- 1- The Saudis belong to Wahabi secte of Islam. In Wahabism idols are strictly rejected. There is not any thomb, nor any marks in the cimeters, nobody is attributed any specific importance, even the King can be visited -theorically- in his palace and be addressed by his name. For the same philosophy no building is attributed with specific importance and consequently no building deserves to be preserved as an exception or as an example.
- 2- In countries where obligatory demolitions take place, people are payed by the governement, but usually under the real price, so the inhabitants do not wish their house to be demolished. The case is completely reversed in Saudi Arabia. When a house is to be demolished the Governement pays more than the real price, so that the owners ask the Governement to demolish their own houses.
- 3- The people are not aware of the beauties of their tradition and try to ignore them against the modern facilities and figure out the conservation as something very "à la mode".
- 4- And finally in Saudi Arabia there are more dwellings than the people in need of them. Land is distributed to the citizens with no benefit with a very long payment plan. As the savings are mostly invested in home constructions, nobody need the old traditional houses.

60 % of the traditional houses that we have surveyed in Makkah during four years, are no longer standing today. A tradition of 900 years, as far as we could know, (6) is under unconscious demolition for modernisation purposes. The seriousness of the mass demolitions can be more clearly seen from the aerial photographs produced each year by the Government. Should the precautions for preservation not be taken as soon as possible, in a very near future there will be no traditional example left in Makkah and the cultural link with the past will be demolished for good.



Source: Bushnak, A.Adil: "The Hajj Transportation System" Sardar, Ziauddin and Badawi, Zaki(editors) Hajj Studies vol:1, Hajj Research Centre publ. Croom Helm, London, no date, p:89.

Notes:

- (1) Hitti, K.Philip : Capital Cities of Arab Islam, Minneapolis, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1973, pp: 3-7
- (2) Rasch, Bodo : The Tent Cities of the Hajj, Doctoral Thesis, Stuttgart, Institute for Lightweight Structures, 1980, p:70
- (3) Proper estimation of the author, B.Uluengin, who made the pilgrimage on 1983 (1403 A.H.) For more information: Saleem ul Hasan, Mohammed: Basic Statistics of Hajj 1403 A.H., Report prepared by Hajj Research Centre, Jeddah, 1983.
- (4) Rasch, Bodo : op.cit p:71-72.
- (5) The arabic calendar is dependent on the movements of the moon, one month is about 29,5 days and one year about 354 days. Because the moon year is 10-11 days shorter than the sun year, it moves forth once in 33 sun years. That means that the date of pilgrimage appears 10 to 11 days earlier each solar year and falls back to the same date after about 33 or 34 moon years. This yearly moving has serious consequences for the Hajj. In the cool season many more pilgrims come, since the hot season brings on the danger of heatstrokes.
- (6) The descriptions of Makkah's traditional Houses in 10th and 12th centuries by Al-Muqaddisi and by Ibn Jubayr, are very similar to traditional ones existing today. See:  
Al Muqaddisi, Shams al Din Abu Allah: Ahsanut Taqasim Fi Marifatil-Awalim, Calcutta, The Baptiste Mission Press, 1897, p:137.  
Ibn Jubayr, Abu'l Husayn Muhammad Ibn Ahmad: The Travels of Ibn Jubayr, London, Jonothan Cape, 1912, p:120.



8<sup>e</sup> ASSEMBLEE GENERALE DE L'ICOMOS

"CULTURES ANCIENNES DANS LES MONDES NOUVEAUX"

Titre : LES MENACES DE LA RICHESSE DUE AU PETROLE SUR LES  
MAISONS TRADITIONNELLES DE MAKKAH AL MUKARRAMAH

Sous-thème : Monuments en Relation avec leur Environnement Bâti et  
Naturel et leur Contexte Historique

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Sommaire

Avant les jours de la richesse due au pétrole, il y avait une équilibre naturelle entre les revenus et la genre de vie à Makkah qui a profilé la Ville Traditionnelle avec sa Mescid al Haram et Kaaba, ses Mosques, ses Maisons, ses Ruelles, ses Magazins, ses Vallées.

Après le premier embargo du pétrole en 1973 contre les pays Développées, les revenus de l'Arabie Saoudite sont débordées considérablement et un plan de Développement est lancé dans le Pays. A la suite de ces développements et modernisations activités, la profile de Makkah s'est changée très rapidement, automobiles ont inondé les rues, nouvelles et amples routes ont été construites à travers les quartiers traditionnels pour servir l'automobile, tunnels ont été ouverts à travers les montaignes pour servir la cinculation des pilgrims, nouveau bâtiments ont été construit pour servir les pilgrims et même le Mescid al Haram a été élargit pour recevoir plus de peuples. Et finalement tous ces activités ont résulté la démolition de la texture traditionnelle du Makkah.

Etant une famille d'architectes qui a travaillé quatre ans et demi à Makkah pour surveiller les Maisons Traditionnelles, dont le 60% sont déjà démolit, nous désirons mettre en évidence les influences destructives de la richesse due au pétrole sur l'architecture traditionnelle du Makkah et nous désirons attirer l'attention des concernés sur cette unique Ville, avant qu'il ne soit trop tard.

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