

<b>Institution:</b> University of Leeds		
<b>Unit of Assessment:</b> 31 – Theology and Religious Studies		
<b>Title of case study:</b> <i>Establishing the Facts, Developing Professionalisation and Enabling Transparent 'Pilgrim-centred' Communication in the UK Hajj Sector</i>		
<b>Period when the underpinning research was undertaken:</b> 2000-2020		
<b>Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:</b>		
<b>Name(s):</b>	<b>Role(s) (e.g. job title):</b>	<b>Period(s) employed by the submitting HEI:</b>
<b>Seán McLoughlin</b> <b>Wahida Shaffi</b>	Professor of the Anthropology of Islam Research Assistant and Consultant	2000 - present 2019, 2020
<b>Period when the claimed impact occurred:</b> 2013-2020		
<b>Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014?</b> No		
<b>1. Summary of the impact</b> (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>In a period of significant restructuring in the global Muslim pilgrimage industry, <b>Professor Seán McLoughlin</b> published the first in-depth report (2019) describing and analysing burgeoning UK Hajj markets and their governance. Collaborating with key pilgrim welfare and trade organisations, <b>McLoughlin's</b> research has had three significant impacts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) 'Establishing the facts' about the sector, meeting a core objective of the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Hajj &amp; Umrah since its formation in 2018;</li> <li>2) Engaging key stakeholders in consultations, which, for UK Hajj organisers, enabled change, created consensus and lent credibility, supporting the industry to professionalise;</li> <li>3) Empowering c.25,000 British Hajjis annually with transparent, 'pilgrim-centred' information going beyond previous advice, including a co-produced visual <i>Hajj Package Explainer</i>.</li> </ol>		
<b>2. Underpinning research</b> (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>The underpinning research was published 2009-2019 and funded in part by external awards from the AHRC (2011-12, III), British Academy (2013-14, II), and ESRC (2018-19, I).</p> <p><b>McLoughlin</b> was the first to publish a systematic scholarly account of pilgrims' lived experiences of pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina among Muslim minorities in the West. Initial research focused on 18 in-depth interviews collected in a network of northern, working-class Pakistanis, who travelled independently before Saudi Arabia made commercial Hajj packages compulsory in the mid-2000s (5). During an AHRC-funded collaboration with the British Museum (III), <b>McLoughlin</b> and 3 RAs gathered 30 further interviews and 33 testimonies from a wider sample of pilgrims from across England (2). <b>McLoughlin's</b> (5, 2) research shows how opportunities for, and expectations of, Hajj-going have been transformed in migrant and post-migrant communities given their relative prosperity and the absence of Saudi quotas for Muslim minorities. <b>McLoughlin</b> argues that even while the desire to visit the spiritual homeland of Islam is especially potent among diasporas, the boundary between 'sacred' and 'mundane' lived experiences at each stage of their journeys is very fragile, as well as being contested in terms of race, gender, class and denomination.</p> <p>A British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship (II) enabled <b>McLoughlin</b> to analyse 11 in-depth interviews gathered during the British Museum project from: i) pilgrim welfare organisations; ii) Saudi-licensed UK Hajj organisers (Munazzams); and iii) central/local UK government departments. Publication of this research – including a preliminary report on organising Hajj-going in Britain (3) – pioneered the first analysis of Hajj industry markets and governance among Muslims in the West (3, 4). <b>McLoughlin</b> (3, 4) argued, first, that the structure and cultural logics of economy and premium markets are very different, with long, informal chains of buying and selling by sub-agents and touts at the bottom end of the former, reflecting the legacy of earlier, independent patterns of Hajj-going and sustaining the conditions for fraud. Second, <b>McLoughlin</b> contends that the UK government's efforts to improve pilgrim awareness of 'rights' and to encourage Hajj organisers' national self-regulation in the late 2000s and early 2010s were unsuccessful because a) many British Hajjis are only just beginning to think of themselves as 'consumers', b) British Muslim pilgrim welfare organisations lack capacity, and c) Hajj is typically organised by small, independent businesses that are still professionalising and wary of their competitors.</p>		

An ESRC-funded Impact Acceleration Award (IAA; I) enabled **McLoughlin** to employ RA **Wahida Shaffi** for 6 months and partner with the Council of British Hajjis (CBHUK, 2006-), a pilgrim welfare charity which is the Secretariat of the APPG on Hajj & Umrah. Three regional consultations were co-designed and co-convened with CBHUK, hosting representatives of Munazzams, Muslim associations and Trading Standards departments. Addressing the intractable issues of rising prices, fraud, regulation and professionalism, this project yielded material for the first full, in-depth and independent report mapping the UK Hajj sector (1). It synthesises the findings of the consultations and 27 stakeholder interviews collected by **McLoughlin** 2011-19, as well as his participation at over a dozen industry events. The report draws on the limited Saudi and UK data to piece together the most comprehensive picture of the UK's 117 Munazzams and their markets, which are the largest among Western Muslims. **McLoughlin** maps the regional distribution of UK companies and their history from the 1980s, their experiences of operating across Saudi Arabia and Britain, failed attempts to establish a national trade association in the 2000s, as well as tracking a 25% rise in the price of Hajj packages (2013-18). **McLoughlin's** key findings identify a longstanding vicious circle which puts c. 25,000 p.a. 'hard to reach' British Muslim pilgrims at risk of fraud. This is under-reported by pilgrims in part because there is a lack of transparency concerning gaps between systems of organisation, licensing and regulation across the UK and Saudi Arabia. A reactive approach to enforcement in the UK – because of a lack of resources, co-ordination and political will – means that non-compliance varies locally and can go unchecked.

### 3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

- 1) S. **McLoughlin** (2019) *Mapping the UK's Hajj Sector: Moving Towards Communication and Consensus*. Forewords by APPG on Hajj & Umrah Chair (Shadow Justice Minister) and Secretariat/CEO of the Council of British Hajjis. Centre for Religion and Public Life (CRPL), University of Leeds (UoL). Supported by W. **Shaffi**. <https://hajj.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/69/2019/08/Mapping-the-UK-Hajj-Sector-Full-Report.pdf>.
- 2) S. **McLoughlin** (2015) 'Pilgrimage, Performativity, and British Muslims: Scripted and Unscripted Accounts of the Hajj and Umrah' in Mols, L. & M. W. Buitelaar (eds) *Hajj: Global Interactions Through Pilgrimage*. Leiden: Sidestone Press & Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde, 41-64. <https://www.sidestone.com/openaccess/9789088902857.pdf>
- 3) S. **McLoughlin** (2013a) *Organising Hajj-Going in Britain: A Preliminary Report*, Community Religions Project/CRPL, UoL. <http://arts.leeds.ac.uk/crp/files/2013/10/Organising-Hajj-going-in-Britain-report.pdf>
- 4) S. **McLoughlin** (2013b) 'The Cultural and Political Economy of Hajj-going from Late Modern Britain: Global Pilgrim Markets and their Governance', CRPL working paper, UoL. <http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/76474/>. REF2014 output.
- 5) S. **McLoughlin** (2009) 'Contesting Muslim Pilgrimage: British-Pakistani Identities, Sacred Journeys to Makkah & Madinah, & the Global Postmodern' in Kalra, V. S. (ed.) *The Pakistani Diaspora*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 233-65. REF2014 output. <http://www.leeds.ac.uk/hajj/assets/resources/McLoughlin%20Hajj%20OUP%202009a.pdf>

### Grants

- I) ESRC Impact Acceleration Account: *Mapping the UK's Hajj industry (2011-18): Moving Towards Communication and Consensus* (2018-19, PI) **£14,959.50** [total value including in-kind contributions from partner, the Council of British Hajjis (CBHUK), **£31,778.13**].
- II) British Academy Mid-Career Fellowship: *The Hajj & British Muslims: Anthropology & Sociology of Islam in the UK* (2013-14, PI) total value to UOA **£102,171**.
- III) AHRC Large Grant: *Hajj: Journey to the heart of Islam* (2011-12, UoL PI) total value to UoA **£17,000** pass through from British Museum.

### 4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

Since 2013, **McLoughlin** has been a key expert for media outlets reporting on the rapidly changing structure of the contemporary Hajj industry and questions of pilgrim welfare, health and safety, contributing to public debate in British, European, Middle Eastern and Asian media (48 mentions across 9 countries and 3 continents, **A**). During a major disaster in 2015, when 700 Hajj pilgrims died during a stampede, for example, he was interviewed by British national news outlets *The Telegraph* (23.09.2015) and *BBC Radio 5 Live* (09.2015).

**McLoughlin's** Hajj research has had enduring international reach, for instance, his 2018 *Conversation* article, 'Hajj: How globalisation transformed the market for pilgrimage to Mecca'

(14.08.2018; 39,526 reads by 13.10.2020, with 20,000 during Hajj 2018; 85.5% of readers beyond the UK) was republished by 13 online outlets and translated into Indonesian (A). Most recently, **McLoughlin** has been cited in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic, by Germany's world service, *Deutsche Welle* (06.07.2020; in March 2020, DW's content exceeded 1 billion global views in its 30 broadcasting languages) and was interviewed live on Turkey's public broadcaster, TRT (Turkish Radio Television) World (29.07.2020) (A).

**McLoughlin's** most significant impacts, however, have been on 1) the new APPG on Hajj & Umrah (the only national public arena for stakeholders to discuss the sector's challenges) and the sector's two key stakeholders: 2) UK Saudi-licensed Hajj organisers and their new trade association, Licensed Hajj Organisers (LHO, founded in 2016), and 3) UK pilgrims themselves and the British Muslim organisations that seek to reflect their concerns.

### **Impact 1: 'Establishing the facts' about the UK Hajj Sector**

When, in 2018, the APPG on Hajj & Umrah was formed to promote partnerships and good practice, **McLoughlin** was invited to join the group in recognition of his longstanding contributions to the sector: his preliminary report (3) had been presented at the Association of British Hujjaj [Pilgrims] UK (ABH)'s post-Hajj event at the House of Lords (11.2013) and the World Hajj and Umrah Convention in Westminster (12.2014). In 2016 **McLoughlin** received a Research Excellence Award at CBHUK's annual 'UK Hajj & Umrah Excellence Awards' at the Houses of Parliament (B). Then, in late 2017, **McLoughlin** was invited to meet a London-based MP (later APPG Vice Chair) and Croydon Muslim Association to discuss a case of Hajj-related fraud. This exchange provided the impetus for **McLoughlin** to partner with CBHUK to produce the first full, in-depth and independent report mapping the UK Hajj sector.

**McLoughlin's Mapping the UK's Hajj Sector (1)** was launched at the June 2019 APPG on Hajj & Umrah meeting at Westminster, with a joint University of Leeds/ CBHUK/ APPG press release marking its public launch online as Hajj began in August 2019 (C). The Shadow Justice Minister and APPG Chair observed in their Foreword (and at the launch) that the report, *"transforms the base of knowledge & understanding of its [the sector's] main contours from which the APPG on Hajj & Umrah can develop future deliberation and strategy"*. By summer 2019, the co-convened consultations, which were the main focus of the APPG's sub-group on fraud that year, in conjunction with **McLoughlin's** report, had enabled the APPG to meet one of its stated core objectives: establishing the facts about the UK Hajj industry.

The Shadow Justice Minister and APPG Chair further highlighted the report's significance for governance of the Hajj sector, which is worth around £150m annually:

*[McLoughlin's] report thus contains landmark resources & insights for all key stakeholders with governance-related responsibilities including licensed Hajj organisers, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, the Civil Aviation Authority, Trading Standards & the City of London Police (Action Fraud). (D)*

Key to this is the report's *"360 degree approach to sector-wide co-operation & co-ordination"* and its *"pilgrim-centred"* focus, especially in terms of the provision of well-informed, publicly available and transparent information (see *Impact 3* for more on this) (D). Two APPG Vice Chairs (a Bradford MP and a Member of the House of Lords) contributed to the consultations. At the Birmingham consultation, the latter introduced **McLoughlin's** *"brilliant"* research as key for the APPG's core aim *"to set up a 3-way communication system between the consumers, the service providers & the officials"*. They expanded: *"any information coming to us [from the consultations] can be shared between us all [...] in order to improve things & make these trips more smooth & problem-free"* (E). Indeed, in their own Preface to the report, the CEO of CBHUK and the APPG's Secretariat noted of the consultation process: *"I witnessed the immediate positive impact of bringing community organisations, licensed Hajj organisers & governance officers into a critical dialogue."* (D)

### **Impact 2: Professionalising the Hajj Trade: Supporting change, lending credibility & creating consensus**

In a relatively new industry, where there is little trust in governance agencies and scepticism is the norm, persuading traders and local Trading Standards officers to meet formally at the consultations was a first. As a LHO National Executive Committee Member emphasised: **McLoughlin** *"managed to bring us together [...] in the meetings, where to us Trading*



*Standards is the enemy & to the Trading Standards we are the criminals*". They also highlighted the *"difference in the contribution, in the seriousness of different parties [...] the way they were making serious effort in understanding & discussing the problem,"* which was *"[a] big step forward, because it put us, really, on the agenda"* (F).

LHO (2016-), the only trade body dedicated exclusively to the 117 UK Saudi-licensed Hajj organisers, took **McLoughlin's** research extremely seriously, as *"[i]t came at a crucial time"* for the sector. A newly-elected, progressive National Executive Committee recognised that *"if we don't step in we will not survive"* as *"things were becoming really, really bad"* with *"scams left right & centre"* and *"if we continue[d] like this the ship w[ould] sink."* (F). **McLoughlin's** research enabled internal deliberation and debate about the benefits of engagement with the authorities among LHO's membership: regional and national meetings were held to prepare for the consultations. **McLoughlin's** report, the draft of which was debated by LHO members for three weeks, has shaped, amplified and lent new authority to Hajj organisers' emergent voice at the national level: *"it provided a voice for agents to the authorities [...] document[ing] & [...] giv[ing] credibility to our concerns when we voice them to the officials, whether in Parliament or [with] the diplomats or even in Saudi Arabia"* (F). As an example, LHO cited the Hajj Awards 2019, when, for the first time, the British Consul-General in Jeddah publicly addressed the rising price of Hajj packages, directing his comments not only to Hajj organisers but also airlines and other suppliers: *"he quoted the [McLoughlin's] report & only because it was in the report [was he] able to say it on the stage"* (F).

As *"a map for the whole [Hajj] sector,"* **McLoughlin's** report has allowed LHO members to better *"understand one another"* in the face of internal competition and in-fighting in a sector that has struggled to organise on a national scale since the early 2000s. The report has enabled more effective internal and external communication, ultimately allowing the nascent professional organisation to become more cohesive and grow in strength: it has helped *"as a trade association to understand what others [across different regions and market segments] are going through, to bridge these differences"* (F). A united front is crucial when the UK government's neoliberal approach means that the UK Hajj sector must itself instigate change and lead on self-regulation even when its capacity is limited. Cognisant of *"our challenges,"* LHO observed that whereas before many agents considered things *"out of our hands,"* now, with **McLoughlin's** report and its *"structured, organised, balanced [...] analysis of the market & the challenges,"* the trade has resources to work with. LHO acknowledges that *"we have crossed a very big gap [...] for policymakers to take us seriously"* (F).

### **Impact 3: Empowering pilgrims by making sector communications more 'pilgrim-centred' and transparent**

Amongst key local and national British Muslim organisations it is widely acknowledged that many UK pilgrims have suffered because traders sometimes fail to deliver on the promise of Hajj packages: *"their lifetime spiritual experience [...] [is] tainted by the extremely distressing & painful events that they may endure [...] due to lack of communication, transparency or governance"*. By *"encourag[ing] an open & critical dialogue between stakeholders"* the Chair for the Mosques & Imams National Advisory Board (MINAB, 2006-), which facilitates good governance among the UK's c.2000 mosques, recognised **McLoughlin's** report as a remedy to this difficult situation through *"bring[ing] about much needed transparency & accountability in the UK Hajj sector"* (G). At the London consultation, Croydon Muslim Association reflected: *"For a lay person it [the selling of Hajj packages] is very difficult to understand. Some of the things I've heard today give me a better understanding of the issues"* (1, p.14).

In their introduction to the report, CBHUK's CEO observed that *"the interpretation offered here [...] will benefit more than 125,000 British Muslim Hajj & Umrah pilgrims [annually]"* (D). *5 Pillars*, the only regulated Muslim news site in Europe, Australia and the Americas, ran a version of the press release under the title 'UK Hajj Report Calls for Measures to Protect Pilgrims' and shared a link to the report in the run up to Hajj 2019 (H; as of 27.10.2020 the platform had 20,675 Twitter followers and 13,800 subscribers). A year later, and with **McLoughlin** arguing that the Covid-19 crisis highlighted concerns about transnational Hajj governance and regulation, the online platform *Middle East Eye* (29.07.2020; translated into French (31.07.2020)) underlined the wider significance of **McLoughlin's** research for US pilgrims. Reporting on his invited contribution to a George Mason University webinar

(28.07.2020), *Middle East Eye* asked: “Is it time to rethink how pilgrimage is organised?”, and emphasised one of his report’s headlines, the need for “*Better-coordinated communication*”. The same journalist recognised **McLoughlin’s** report as “a tremendous resource” (I). Further consultations with UK pilgrims (**Shaffi** 2020) established that among 39 Hajjis from across England (30 who had completed Hajj 2017-19) none knew to whom, or even how, to complain, if they experienced Hajj package-related problems (G). All 39 pilgrims said more transparent communications from traders and other industry stakeholders was crucial, with individual pilgrims confirming that *Mapping the UK’s Hajj Sector* closed the information gap: “what I found fascinating is that there is that much information in there that I was not aware of [...] it’s been really an eye-opener to me [...] and to be honest there’s a lot of information that has been helpful” (Bradford pilgrim). A Hajji from Dewsbury noted that “[p]eople don’t complain because it’s Hajj, they don’t understand the links between the UK & Saudi [...] if every Hajji was given a brochure like this [report] [...] it would actually make people’s lives a lot easier & it would probably take pressure off the agents as well”. A London pilgrim provided a gendered perspective: “Hajj in the UK is such a male space & trying to find the right information if you are a woman is even harder. I have gotten more information from the report about the different organisations”. A Burnley-based pilgrim captured the need for **McLoughlin’s** report, asking: “why has it taken so long for a report like this to be written?” They expanded: “I wasn’t aware of most things in the report, like the way Hajj visas work or about sub-agents”, and emphasised: “we need reports like this because how else are you meant to know what is happening, or what the issues are?” (G).

To empower pilgrims further, **McLoughlin** worked with CBHUK, the APPG and LHO to co-produce a *Hajj Package Explainer for British Hajjis*, going beyond previous advice (UoL/Research Retold, 2020) (J). With Hajj packages cancelled due to Covid-19 and Brexit exacerbating uncertainties about international travel, the *Explainer* is a free visual digest of the report’s key messages available online and to print. Given the need for Hajj organisers to “understand [their] customers better,” LHO “was very happy to see this [Explainer]” address the “lack of [...] transparency” and “lack of credible sources of information” available to Hajjis, as **McLoughlin’s** digital resource “is plain & clear” (F). It was circulated to all Hajj sector stakeholders via the APPG mailing list (31.12.2020) and shared as joint press releases on APPG and CBHUK websites (both 31.12.2020, A).

##### 5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of ten references)

- A) ‘Media Reach Report, 10.2013-2020: **McLoughlin** (UoL, 2020). Composite evidence.
- B) ABH, ‘ABH post-hajj event at House of Lords’ (26.11.2013). <https://www.abhuk.com/abh-post-hajj-event-at-house-of-lords/> (accessed 05.10.2020); CBHUK, ‘UK Hajj & Umrah Excellence Award Winners 2016’ (13.11.2016). <http://www.cbhuk.org/news/featured-news/uk-hajj-umrah-excellence-award-winners-2016/> (accessed 05.10.2020)
- C) APPG on Hajj & Umrah, ‘APPG Meeting Wednesday 19th June 2019’ (19.06.2019). <http://appghajjumrah.org/appg-meeting-19th-june-2019> (accessed 05.10.2019); UoL/CBHUK/APPG joint press release (09.08.2019). <http://appghajjumrah.org/first-independent-report-into-uk-hajj-industry-calls-for-better-public-understanding-of-links-between-uk-and-saudi-arabia-sectors> (accessed 05.10.2020).
- D) Shadow Justice Minister & APPG Chair with CEO of CBHUK & APPG Secretariat. Composite evidence, comprising their Forewords in **McLoughlin** (2019, p.5).
- E) APPG Vice Chair, Introduction to Midlands Consultation, transcript extract (01.04.2019)
- F) LHO National Exec Member & Director of Dome Tours, interview (15.12.2020).
- G) ‘Feedback from Pilgrims & Community Leaders’ report (by W. **Shaffi**, UoL, 2020). Composite evidence, comprising feedback from 39 interviewees & community leaders.
- H) 5 Pillars, ‘UK Hajj Report Calls for Measures to Protect Pilgrims’ (12.08.2019). <https://5pillarsuk.com/2019/08/12/uk-hajj-report-calls-for-measures-to-protect-pilgrims/> (accessed 27.10.2020).
- I) Umar A. Farooq, ‘Hajj 2020: Is it time to rethink how the pilgrimage is organised?’ *Middle East Eye* (29.07.2020) <https://www.middleeasteye.net/news/hajj-2020-time-rethink-pilgrimage-organised> (accessed 27.10.2020), plus Farooq’s related tweet (30.07.2020).
- J) *Hajj Package Explainer for British Hajjis*. UoL; Research Retold; APPG; CBHUK; LHO, 2020). <https://hajj.leeds.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/69/2021/01/Hajj-Package-Explainer-for-British-Hajjis-Research-Retold-Web.pdf> (accessed 25.01.2021)