



Stories from the Hijaz

THE MAKKAH CHRONICLES



The four corners of the Kaabah



Ruknul Aswad is the south-east corner of the Kaabah, where the Hajaratul Aswad is located.

Photo SALIM PARKER

SALIM PARKER

THE two main corners of the Kaabah are the south-eastern corner, where the Hajaratul Aswad is housed, and the south-western corner known as the Yamani corner. These are the two corners built according to the original foundations laid by Nabi Ibrahim (AS).

The Iraqi north-eastern and Levantine (Shaam, referring to Syria) north-western corners are not where the original structure was as the Quraish added the open area of the Hateem.

The Hateem area was thus inside the Kaabah initially and the Kaabah is currently smaller than

the structure built many thousands of years ago. This is why the Hateem is considered part of the Kaabah and tawaaf and compulsory prayers are not permitted to be performed in it.

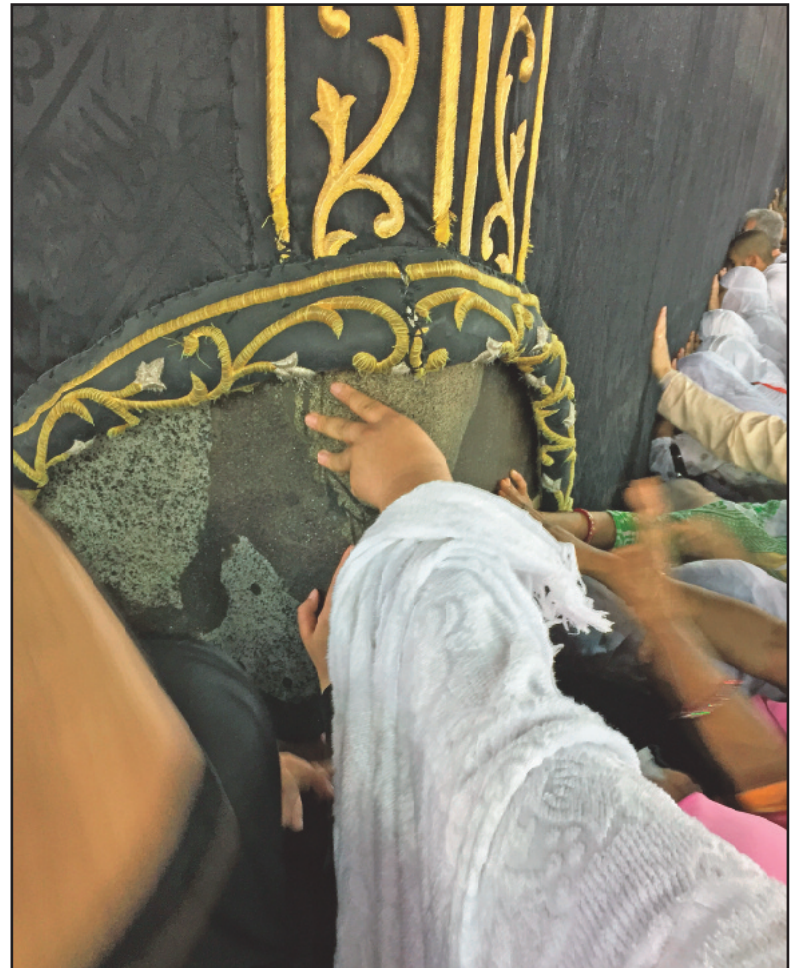
The south-eastern corner carried different names, such as Ruknul Aswad, and is associated with a sole sacred significance. It hosts the Black Stone, the Hajaratul Aswad, and marks the starting and ending point of tawaaf (the circumambulation).

Pilgrims make istilaam whenever they pass this point by either touching or kissing the Black Stone or, if the crowds make it difficult or impossible, by raising their hands towards it.

Pilgrims then move counter-clockwise past the Multazam, the door of the Kaabah and the Maqam Ibrahim to the north-eastern corner, known as Ruknul Iraq. This corner was known as the Iraqi corner because Islamic conquests had recurrently triumphed in Iraq.

Tawaaf has to be performed outside the Hateem area.

The next corner is the Ruknush-Shami or Levantine north-western corner, at which point half of a shoat of the tawaaf would be completed. Muslims were interested in the conquests of Syria and the Maghreb countries, such as Tunisia and Algeria. Muslim armies were known to have



Pilgrims performing tawaaf will try to touch the Kaabah at this corner, Ruknul Yamani, as was the practice of Nabi Muhammad (SAW). Photo SALIM PARKER

been active in those countries in the period after the passing of the Prophet (SAW).

The next and final corner is the Ruknul Yamani, the Yemeni corner, named after the country that has a close association with Islam.

Nabi Muhammad (SAW) used to walk from the Yemeni corner to the Black Stone, touching the Yemeni corner with his right hand and reciting the famous supplication: 'Our Lord, give us in this world what is good and in the hereafter what is good, and save us from the torment of the Fire.' (Surah Baqarah, verse 201)

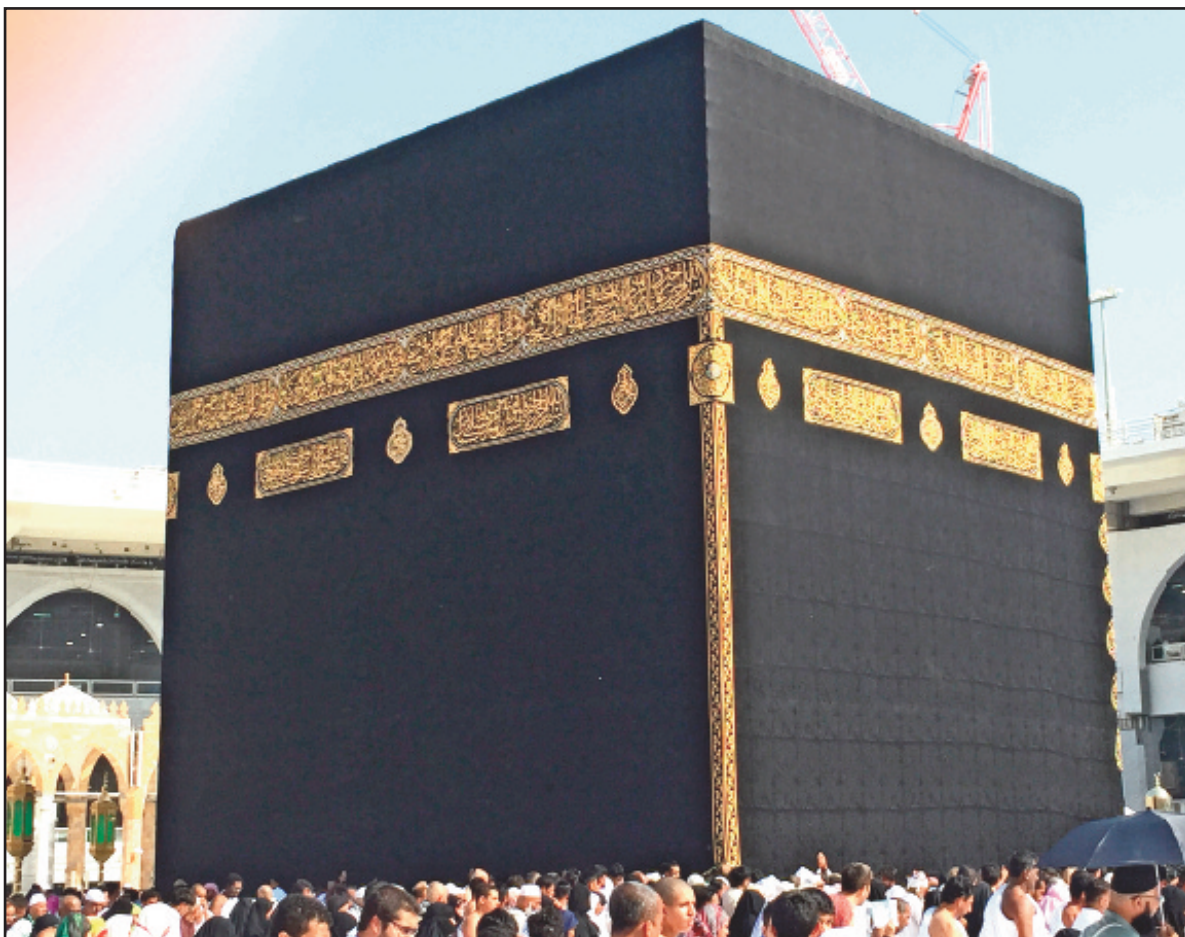
Touching the Iraqi corner is indicated by the hadith narrated by al-Haakim from Ibn Umar, according to which, when the Messenger of Allah (SAW) was performing tawaaf, he would touch the Black Stone and the Yemeni corner in each circuit.

It is also legislated in Muslim and Bukhari to only touch the Aswad and Yemeni corners as stated on the authority of Abdullah bin Umar bin al-Khattab, who said: 'I did not see the Messenger of Allah (SAW) touch any part of the House except the two Yemeni (Aswad and Yemeni) corners.'

It is hence not following the tradition (Sunnah) of Nabi Muhammad (SAW) to touch any other parts of the Kaabah. The Prophet (SAW) specifically touched them because they are from the foundation laid by Nabi Ibrahim (AS) while the other corners are from inside the House.

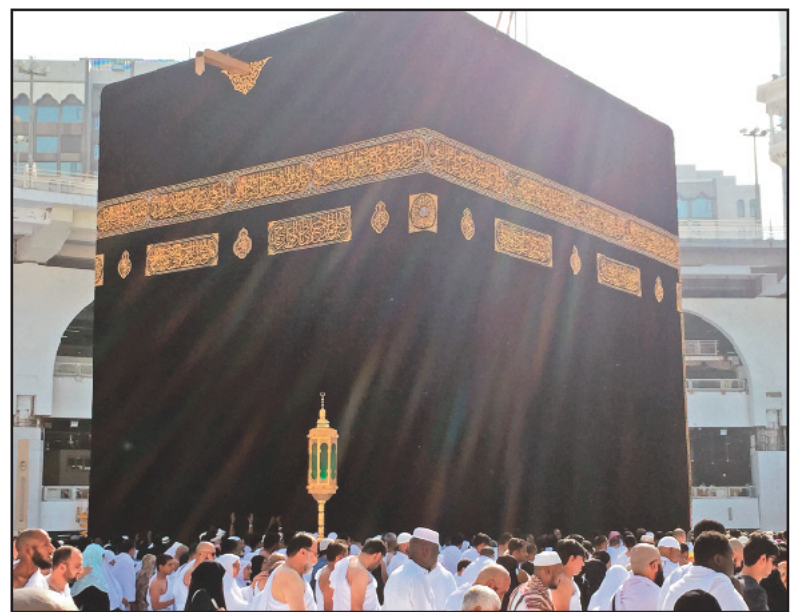
Thus, the Black Stone is touched and kissed and the Yemeni corner is touched but not kissed.

The remaining two corners are not touched or kissed.



Ruknul Yamani or the 'Yemeni corner' is where Nabi Muhammad (SAW) touched the Kaabah during tawaaf.

Photo SALIM PARKER



Ruknush-Shami, 'the Levantine corner, is the halfway point of a shoat (one round of a tawaaf) but not where the original Kaabah ended as the Hateem area was originally part of the Kaabah. Photo SALIM PARKER