

# **Volkenkunde Museum and its Visitors**

## **A case study on the making of the Hajj exhibition**

Laura Ilgen

S0816000

[l.m.ilgen@umail.leidenuniv.nl](mailto:l.m.ilgen@umail.leidenuniv.nl)

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Supervisor: Mariana Francozo

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# 1. Introduction

Since the economic crisis, or credit crisis, started in 2007 the Dutch government had to make budget cuts in order to hold back the government shortages (Rijksoverheid 2013). One of the budget cuts that was made in the following years concerned the funding of museums in the Netherlands. Museums in the Netherlands used to rely on those subsidies. Museums had to face financial problems since they lost part of their subsidies. Some museums eventually had to close down and many museums had to fire part of their staff. And this is not just happening to museums in the Netherlands. Museums all over the world face budget cuts and they need to look for funding elsewhere. Museums in the United States also had to fire staff, close down or staff was facing loss of part of their salary. The economic crisis for U.S. museums led to the loss of the three of their largest funds which were museum endowments, donations and public funding (English, 2009).

In 2009 the museums in the Netherlands attracted more visitors than the previous year. The growth in the number of visitors was due to more Dutch people visiting museums in their own country. People stayed in the Netherlands because they had less money to spend and they would visit tourist sites in the Netherlands. Museums have become more popular since they are cheaper than for example an amusement park. The popularity of the museums in the Netherlands is measured by the number of visitors they get in one year and this will determine their spot in the top 55 of the most important museums in the Netherlands (Smet, 2009). The most popular museums in 2009 were the Van Gogh museum, the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, the Hermitage Amsterdam and the Anne Frank Huis. According to Smet the economic crisis is both a curse and a blessing for the museums. A curse because they lost most of their funding due to budget cuts, but a blessing because it ensured more visitors. For visitors it became cheaper to go to a museum than to go to an amusement park or have a dinner in a restaurant. Museums also became more popular because their image changed. Museums are no longer seen as boring. But time has taught that museums are deeply affected by the loss of most of their funding. In 2012 seventeen museums expected that they would have to close which is more than museums faced in the years before (NRC, 09-01-2012). This shows that despite the fact that museums attract more visitors, they still are having financial problems.

Since museums were affected by the budget cuts, they needed to find other ways to get the money they need to keep their heads above water. And in getting the money they need, it is important for museums to show their popularity and importance. Thus they are more likely to attract funds from private organizations or they are more likely to succeed in crowd funding. Crowd funding is a way to finance projects. Via a website a museum will describe their project and the amount of money they need for this project. Visitors of the website can donate money for that project through the website.

Crowd funding has become an important source of income for museums. Last year ten percent of the money raised through crowd funding was for museums. Crowd funding is used by museums to sponsor specific projects so that the visitor knows what he or she is sponsoring. It can also be used to avoid being closed, the Museum Oriëntalis in Heilig Landstichting is trying this for example (nu.nl, 23-01-2013). During the Museumcongres in 2008, people in the museum world expected museums in the 21th century to show a greater flexibility, capability and focus on the public. The Museumcongres is a congress that takes place every year for people in the museum world to discuss their work and ideas (Museumcongres, 2008). It was discussed that museums are more open to the outside world and their exhibitions are more surprising and confronting. This shows that museums in the 21th century have changed and will continue to change in order to stay relevant and that is especially important now with the budget cuts.

In this thesis I want to look at how a museum, in this case the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden, is affected by this crisis and how they are trying to resolve their problems by attracting visitors. I want to show how the museum is attracting their visitors through the case study of the making of an exhibition. The exhibition is about the Hajj, a topic that has never been displayed in the Dutch museums before which shows that Volkenkunde is showing their flexibility, capability and that they focus on the public. With this case study I want to show how complex the negotiation with the public is since their target audience is new to them. A comparable of exhibition has been on display in the British Museum in London before where it was highly successful. An exhibition like this can make Volkenkunde more popular and put it in the spotlights which will be relevant in getting more funds. The exhibition on the Hajj was my starting point in my research, by showing how this exhibition has been set up, I hope to make it clear how Volkenkunde is changing with their situation in order to “survive” the current financial situation. This has led to the following research question: *How does the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden attract visitors during the making of an exhibition?* To be able to answer this research question I will first answer the following sub questions:

- What measures did the museum take to attract visitors before the economic crisis and how did this change following the onset of the crisis?
- How is the “new” audience being targeted for the Hajj exhibition?
- How does the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde compare to the exhibition in the British Museum?
- How do the strategies of Volkenkunde relate to theories within the field of visitor studies?

## 1.1 Methods and Ethics

To be able to answer the research question and sub questions, I did my fieldwork in the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden. I worked there for two months as an intern on the making of the Hajj exhibition. From the first day it became clear that I had to change my original research plans. First I intended to study the museum as it dealt with the financial difficulties. But it was not possible to do an internship with the departments involved. The limitations I would face if I would still continue to do this research were too big to carry out my research. Since I was working on the Hajj exhibition, I changed my research by studying the making of an exhibition. This research had less limitations for me since I was part of the making of that exhibition. As an intern I was able to observe the workings of the museum and more specifically I was able to observe how the museum makes an exhibition. My research methods mainly consisted of doing participant observation by doing an internship and semi structured interviews.

The participant observation did not work out in the way that I thought. I had expected to be closely observing the work of the curator, but instead I felt like I was stuck behind a computer in a room with other interns. This made it harder for me to gather information on what the museum staff was exactly doing and what they were saying to each other. If I was able to listen to what they were saying I could have picked up on information about the hard times the museum is facing. The participant observation and being an intern helped me in getting to the people I needed to talk to for my research. My internship supervisor was helpful in introducing me to these people and getting me an interview with the director. With the museum staff I had semi structured interviews. To interview the director I had to send my questions to his assistant before the interview, but during the interview I was able to steer the interview a bit away from the previously set questions. My position as an intern helped me to be able to interview the museum staff, but I was also seen as an intern. I had to explain what my research was about and that I was not interested in objects like some of the other interns.

At a couple of moments I got the feeling that as an intern I was at the bottom of the hierarchy within the museum. The people I had nothing to do with also ignored me by not saying 'good morning' etcetera. All this limited my fieldwork, as an intern I was seen as part of the museum staff but at the same time I was still an outsider. Another limitation is that the people I interviewed are part of an organization and that during the interviews they might have tried to put the museum in a more positive daylight since they will have felt that they were representing the organization. The scheduling of the interviews was easier than I thought, none of my respondents was unwilling to do the interview and were able to schedule the interview on a short notice. The only thing that did not quite work out was looking into the visitor feedback. I was not able to look at it by myself but someone of the

museum staff was willing to talk to me about it. There were other limitations to my research. I was not able to be present at meetings on the making of the exhibition. At these meetings the museum staff that was involved with the Hajj exhibition were present. Another limitation was that I was only part of the making of the exhibition for two months. I was present during the beginning stages but I missed the rest. To still be able to get information on the making of the Hajj exhibition after I finished my internship, I attended meetings with other interns and the curator to see how the exhibition was developing. So the methods I used during my field work were semi-structured interviews, a structured interview and participant observation by doing an internship.

One of the biggest ethical issues I had to deal with during my research was that as an intern I was part of the organization but at the same time I was researching that same organization. When I introduced myself to my respondents, in person or through email, I told them that I was an intern working on the Hajj exhibition. Especially through email, I had a feeling that if I was not an intern I would have had more difficulties in arranging the interviews. I told my respondents in very general terms about what I was doing, that I was looking into how they were attracting visitors. But by representing myself as an intern and someone who is interested in what their work is about, it is possible that they had more the impression that I was there to learn as an intern than that I was there primarily as a researcher although I tried to emphasize this. Another ethical issue for me is that it is highly likely that my respondents will read my thesis. My internship supervisor has already asked me if she can read it. When your respondents read your research, it is possible that they don't agree with your view on things or how you represent them.

## **1.2 Definitions**

To answer my research question I need to define what I mean with the term "visitor" in this thesis. A visitor is "...any individual who visits the museums or galleries whether at home or at a destination" (Stylianou-Lambert 2011: 405). This means that a visitor may also be a tourist who are also among the audience of Volkenkunde. To make clear what a tourist - in this case a cultural tourist -, is, I will define it as: "...any individual who visits cultural institution or places such as museums, archeological and heritage sties, operas, theatres, festivals or architecture while away from home" (Ibid. 405). I think that a cultural tourist and a visitor can be compared in their reasons on why to visit a certain museum. The term "away from home" can be defined in different ways which means that a cultural tourist in Volkenkunde can also be someone who lives in the Netherlands but not in Leiden. In this case I see cultural tourists as visitors who came from outside Leiden to visit the museum as part of their trip to

Leiden or just to visit the museum. So I will use the theories on cultural tourists to understand the visitor better in general term.

Stylianou-Lambert described different types of cultural tourists who visit a art museum. The types of cultural tourists can be arranged through their interest (Hughes 2002) or as specific or general (Silberberg 1995) cultural tourists. Hughes (2002) has arranged cultural tourists according to their interest. A cultural tourist can have a wide or narrow interest in culture and a cultural tourist can be interested in different types of culture. Culture in this sense is art etcetera. I think this is still applicable to culture in an ethnology museum since visitors will have their own interest in different cultures. One visitor can be more interested in cultures from Sub-Saharan Africa while another visitor is more interested in the cultures from Latin-America. The interest of a cultural tourist leads to core and peripheral types. A core cultural tourists travels to the museum to experience the culture at display. While a peripheral tourist has other reasons to come to the museum . The core type of cultural tourists can be divided into two other types according to Hughes (2002). These two types are primary and multi-primary types. They differ in the level of their motivation. The primary type is greatly motivated while the multi-primary type is just motivated. The peripheral types of cultural tourists can also be divided into two types. These two types are the incidental and accidental types. Silberberg (1995) classifies cultural tourists also according to their motivation which leads to four categories of cultural tourists: greatly motivated, in part motivated, adjunct and the accidental cultural tourists. These types of cultural tourists are applied to art museums but they are not the only ones who encounter visitors who are greatly interested to see their exhibitions or visitors who are less interested. A museum like Volkenkunde deals with the same visitors. Some visitors go to the museum to see a certain exhibition in which they are greatly interested while others go for other reasons, for example they may be part of a school class or they go because it will be fun for their (grand)children.

Visitors but also non-visitors will have an image of what a museum is like which is called a museum gaze: "...the way individuals make sense of museums, whether at home or a destination, inside and outside their walls, in relation to their everyday lives and their conception of self-identity" (Stylianou-Lambert 2011: 408). A museum needs to be aware of both the types of cultural tourists/visitors and the museum gaze of a visitor. The way a potential visitor looks at a certain museum will determine if this visitor will eventually visit the museum and how often. Like it has been said earlier, Volkenkunde mostly attracts women above 40, students, travelers and lovers of culture. These types of visitors all have their own museum gaze and reasons to visit the museum. To keep attracting these groups of visitors, Volkenkunde needs to know what they expect from the museum and what their reasons are for visiting. If Volkenkunde plays into these images and reasons they can be able to keep attracting these audiences which will mean more visitors and a higher income.



### 1.3 Relevance

This research is of societal importance, because the problems that museums in the Netherlands are facing are relevant now. This research will show how Volkenkunde is dealing with their problems. By showing this other museums can learn from the practice of Volkenkunde. By involving the British Museum I can show how this practice is different from a museum in a different country.

This research will also be of academic relevance. It fits into the debates about visitor studies and debates about place. It fits into the debate about visitors studies because it will answer the following questions: How is the interaction between the museum and its visitors? How does the museum deal with the critique given to them by scholars and visitors? Visitor studies "...is an umbrella term for a range of different forms of research and evaluation involving museums and their actual, potential, and virtual visitors which collectively might be termed the 'audience' for museums" (Hooper-Greenhill 2011: 363). My research will only be a part of the debate about visitor studies. This is because the research that has been carried out only producing a partial picture of what visitor studies is about. In my research I have focused on how the museum approaches potential visitors for the Hajj exhibition and how Volkenkunde is doing this throughout the whole process of making an exhibition. By comparing this to the Hajj exhibition in the British Museum, I want to show how different partnerships are relevant to the outcome of the process of making an exhibition. I also want to show that the society in which a museum is situated is of importance in deciding on what objects and information will be part of an exhibition. In the end I want to make clear that all the decision made on the various aspects of a museum during the making of an exhibition, are made to attract the target audience and at the same time they are made to make an exhibition successful. So I will show how the interaction between the museum and it visitors is from the perspective of the museum.

My research will also fit into the debate about place because it tries to give an answer to the following questions: What is the role of the museum in the society? How do people relate to the museum? The debate about place compasses theories on what a place is and what the meaning of a place can be. The museum is a place, something that has meaning to the people who use this place. The people who give meaning to the museum are the museum staff and the visitors no matter if they visit the museum frequently or not. So this means that a museum is a social space (Bennett 1995: 24). Bennett argues that the museum has always been a social space. In the beginning years of museums it was a social space only for the elite: "...the nature of the museum as a social space and the need to detach that space from its earlier private, restricted and socially exclusive forms of sociality" (Ibid.:24). Later on this changed by: "...the reversal of the tendency towards separation and social exclusiveness which had characterized the earlier formation of the bourgeois public sphere" (Ibid.:

26). Despite the fact that museums have tried to reverse their tendency towards social exclusiveness, they are still not completely seen as that. With the case study of the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde I wil show that in the Netherlands Dutch Muslims are excluded by not actively trying to include them. The Hajj exhibition has to change this.

According to Foucault a museum is a place but a place of difference and of representation (Lord 2006). Foucault argues that both place and space can be elements through which power is exercised (Bennett 1995). Instead of being a place of social inclusiveness, a museum is a place where there are differences and representations present and where power is exercised. Gieryn has a different point of view on place and space. A museum is a place which differs from what a space is. A place has meaning which it gains through naming, identification and/or representation (Gieryn 2000: 463). Gieryn is of the opinion that in the academic world there is not enough space for place. Logan (2012) on the other hand is convinced of the importance of space with which he means spatial thinking and analysis. Gieryn partly agrees with Foucault on the part that a museum is a place where power is exercised. Gieryn agrees with this in so far that he argues that places can be places of inequality, difference, power and also politics (Gieryn 2000: 463). But he also sees that places can be part of interaction, community, social movements and identity (Ibid.: 463). . Both Logan (2012: 521) and Gieryn (2000: 465) argue that boundaries and territories are not the same as space. Space can reach over those boundaries and territories. I can connect my research to this debate about place by looking at the decisions that are being made in the making of an exhibition.. In this way I can see how the museum thinks the visitor relates to the museum as a place. Should it be a place of education or is it more important that the museum is a place of spectacle?

According to the definition of place by Gieryn a museum is a place. There are three features to a place which a museum has: it is a geographical location, it has a material form and it is invested with meaning and value (Ibid.: 464/465). A place and thus a museum can be made according to Gieryn in three different ways: "...upstream forces that drive the creation of place with power and wealth, professional practices of place-experts, and perceptions and attributions by ordinary people who experience places" (Ibid.: 468). In this place that the museum is, there are power relations which have an effect on the way visitors are attracted. There are stakeholders within the museum (the director, curators and PR) and there are stakeholders from outside the museum for example fund providers or source communities. A museum is a place through the meaning that the visitors give to it and also through the interaction that takes place within a museum.

So my research fits into the debate about place and visitors. Since space itself is part of visitor studies. Foucault argues that museums are a space of difference and a space of representation (Lord 2006: 11). The image of what a museum space should be like has changed over time. Museums used to be a place of wonder and curiosities. Museums have changed with their surroundings into a space of

representation where the natural and the cultural objects are displayed to guarantee: "...the utilization of these for the increase of knowledge and for the culture and enlightenment of the people" (Bennett 1995: 224; Goode 1895: 3). Museums are part of the education of the people. Instead of being something to look at, it turned into something to learn from.

Like I said before according to Gieryn a museum is a place because it has the three features of a place: it has a geographical location, a material form and it is invested with meaning and value (Gieryn 2000: 464/465). The material forms of a place can make difference, power, inequality and other social processes happen (Ibid.: 465). The difference between place and space is that a place has a material form and a cultural interpretation. A space can turn into a place once unique gatherings take place, once it has a meaning and once it also has its values (Ibid.: 465). A place like a museums takes an active role in the game of detectable and independent effects on social life, in the case of the museum the social lives of the visitors and the museum staff (Ibid.: 466). A space turns into a place once it has the material form and cultural interpretation which is made by human practices and by institutions. A place is made through the "identifying, designating, building, using, interpreting, remembering" (Ibid.: 468). The making of place can happen through three different ways which are: "upstream forces that drive the creation of place with power and wealth, professional practices of place-experts, and perceptions and attributions by ordinary people who experience places" (Ibid.: 468). These three different ways of making a place happen within a museum. The museum was created and keeps being formed through power and wealth while the museum staff makes it a place through their professional practices. The visitors of the museum are the ones who experience the place and have their perceptions of and attributions to this place.

The role and the true nature of the museum has changed over time. According to Gramsci a museum is an institution, standing between the state and the public. In this case the role of the museum is a pedagogical (Bennett 1995: 91). The museum as this institution between the state and the people represents the ruling class of the society. Bennett argues that this perspective on the museum means that a museum can be used to encounter the ruling class which is not true according to Bennett (Ibid.: 91). Foucault has a different perspective on the role of the museum. Foucault argues that the museum is a heterotopia which is a place where: "...all the other real sites that can be found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted" (Foucault 1986: 24). In the case of Volkenkunde I agree with Foucault. Volkenkunde is a place where indeed the different aspects of one culture are displayed at once and with that it is represented but also contested and inverted. By visiting Volkenkunde, I got more the feeling of being in this heterotopia than that I was in an institution which stands between the state and the public. Visiting the permanent exhibitions is visiting a heterotopia, as a visitor you do not get the feeling that Volkenkunde is trying to be a museum with a pedagogical role.

Of course there is information to help the visitor to learn more but the objects are placed out of their context and put together.

Museums have a diverse audience. Visitors from different social and cultural backgrounds go to the museum. The museum has to take these differences into account when they make an exhibition - on what kind of audience do they focus? And once they know their target audience, they need to know what their audience already knows. A visitor comes to a museum with an expectation and image of what the exhibition is about. Once a visitor is in the exhibition, he or she comes into contact with another culture indirectly. This is of importance for Volkenkunde since it is an ethnology museum, showing different cultures. An exhibition becomes a place of the meeting between different cultures although indirectly. These meetings are interesting for anthropologists - these live shows are one of their broadest theoretical problems (Stronza 2001: 264). The exhibitions are a peaceful way of coming into contact with a culture other than your own. It is comparable to tourism. A tourist travels to the different cultures where they meet. Both sides have a chance to see the other cultures and also to reflect on their own lives from the perspective of these other cultures (Ibid.: 264).

A visitor in a museum does not come into contact with other cultures as directly as a visitor and the other cultures have no chance to see the cultures of the visitors. The visitor is still able to reflect on his or her own culture by seeing the other cultures at display. In a museum this meeting is a one-way traffic, but despite that it is still interesting for an anthropologist to see how a visitor reacts to other cultures and what they learn from it. With my research I have focused on the way the museum approaches its visitors and how they make an exhibition with the visitor in mind. So I have not been able to see how a visitor reacts to other cultures but I have been able to look at how a museum makes an exhibition on other cultures and how they will represent these cultures to their visitors. In this way I am able to make clear that the museum already has knowledge on their visitors and what they like to see in an exhibition and also how visitors view other cultures and how they will react to the way cultures are displayed.

Since the audience of a museum is diverse, the responses to an exhibition and different cultures are diverse. Every visitor will experience the exhibition in a different way. The amount of knowledge that a certain visitor has on the cultures at display differs from the knowledge of another visitor. When an exhibition is being made it is important to know how information should be included and if the museum wants to contribute to the image that visitors already have on a culture or topic or if it wants to change this image. In this way my research can also fit into debates on the meeting between different cultures under circumstances that in this case are controlled by the museum. The museum decides which objects and what information is placed in the exhibition. These decisions can be named with the so-called source communities, the communities which are at display and lend their knowledge and objects to the museum. Museums then become contact zones according to Clifford (1997):

“...social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world today” (Pratt 1991: 34). In the chapter on the Hajj exhibition I will argue that Volkenkunde is a contact zone. Volkenkunde is a place where cultures meet by cooperating with source communities in their exhibitions, the Hajj exhibition, for example, is made with some help from Dutch Muslims. But at the same time Volkenkunde is then a place where the cultures meet in “highly asymmetrical relations of power”. The source communities are not the ones making the last decisions, the museum still does. It is arguable that it should be the source communities making the decisions. Because won't exhibitions then only show their side and show themselves in the most positive way? The argument that museums are contact zones are used to show the relevance of museums (Shelton 2006).

## **1.4 Structure of the thesis**

In the next chapter I will show how Volkenkunde is dealing with the economic crisis. What has changed in recent years? Why did they choose to go a certain way? Is this in line with what other museums in the Netherlands have been doing? I will discuss how the PR department reaches its target audience for temporary exhibitions through its networks and the media. After that I will give a theoretical framework that relates to my research and experiences in the field. This chapter is of importance since it will show the general ways in which Volkenkunde reaches its audiences and how this relates to different theories. This chapter will give an overview so that I will can show in the third chapter how this all goes in practice with a case study.

In the third chapter I will discuss the case study of the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde. I use this chapter to show how the British Museum has attracted visitors and how it has handled the criticism of visitors on their exhibition on the Hajj. The Hajj exhibition makes the attracting of visitors interesting because both the British Museum and Volkenkunde have tried/will try to attract Muslim visitors who are not among the group of regular visitors. The fact that they try to attract Muslim visitors is interesting from an anthropological perspective. How does the museum approach this group of visitors? How will the museum display this important part of the Islam, a religion which has been put into a negative light in the media over the past years? The museum is aware that attracting Muslim visitors is more difficult than other target groups. That is why they have Muslims working on the exhibition who will spread the word about the exhibition through the (social) media and in mosques. In the last chapter I will come back to the research question and sub questions. I will answer them by summarizing my arguments from the previous chapters. This research has been done on Volkenkunde

which means that the answers I will give in this thesis are only applicable to Volkenkunde. One museum is different from another one. A museum can differ by its geographical location, in what city is it placed, it can differ on its topic - is it an ethnology museum or an art museum. Also history is of importance in how a museum attracts its visitors. Volkenkunde differs from other museums in the way that it is an ethnology museum in Leiden founded in 1837. This makes it hard to apply the results to for example a museum like the Van Gogh museum in Amsterdam. In the end I will conclude by giving an answer to my research question and subquestion. Then I will also look back at my fieldwork experience and how this affected my thesis. Now I will first discuss the general ways in which Volkenkunde is attracting visitors and how this has changed due to the budget cuts. With reports from the Vereniging van Rijksmusea I can show how Volkenkunde has changed over the past four years.

## 2. The Volkenkunde Museum

The Volkenkunde museum was founded in 1839 which makes it one of the oldest ethnology museums in the world. But even this museum is struggling due to the budget cuts. The government has made rules for the museums to be able to obtain from the government. These rules are that museums need to generate an income which is at least 17,5 percent of the subsidies given to them by the government. And above that museums need to have a growth of 1 percent each year to be able to get subsidies from the government. According to the end of the year results in 2011 of Volkenkunde, Volkenkunde has been achieving these goals. In the last three years their growth was 7,4 %, 10% en 17,1%. In 2011 this even became more (20,1%) because of a donation of a collection by Fritz Liefkes (Volkenkunde 2011: 4). Volkenkunde has been able to achieve a higher income because it was able to have a growth in the number of visitors, more income per visitor from the museum shop and catering, international loans and the lease of exhibitions, sponsoring most importantly from the BankGiro Loterij and by donations and legates from private individuals (Ibid.: 4). Their financial position was favorable at the end of 2011. This makes it easier to invest in renovations and services for the public. This relatively strong financial position will also guard Volkenkunde against political and financial setbacks (Ibid.: 5). Despite the fact that their financial situation is not as bad as the financial situations of other museums, they still need to keep innovating to attract more visitors who will generate a higher income. Also there will still be job losses among the museum staff, around 30 people will lose their job from the 100 people working at Volkenkunde.

The financial situation of Wereldmuseum is also hard. The Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam is like Volkenkunde also an ethnology museum. Wereldmuseum will fire between 10 and 20 people and in the worst case scenario maybe even 25 people of the total of 37 people working in the Wereldmuseum. It all depends on the municipality of Rotterdam. (Volkskrant, 25-10-2012). The Wereldmuseum has its own strategies to generate a higher income. They have focused on generating a higher income from their museum restaurant. One other interesting strategy however is selling their Africa collection which has led to a lot of debate among museum staff in the Netherlands (Ibid.). There is talk that they might even fire their curators. It depends on the structure within a museum but it is possible to fire all the curators. An exhibition can be made without curators. Of course the curator has the knowledge but they do not make the exhibitions in all museums. At Volkenkunde for example, there is a collaboration between the curator and other departments involved but the curator does not make the final decisions on what should be in the exhibition. There is a tension between the collection and knowledge and the exhibitions. This tension exists since these three are necessary for museums but not in the same amount. A curator would possibly make a different exhibition, more focused on

giving information while the situation now leads more to exhibitions focused on attracting visitors. During these financially hard times it is possible that a museum needs to choose between its collection or its knowledge or its exhibitions. The collection can be sold, the curators have the knowledge but they can be fired and exhibitions attract visitors and money but to set one up, a museum needs to spend money. The Wereldmuseum is of opinion that they can make exhibitions without the knowledge of their curators.

In this thesis I will focus on how Volkenkunde is attracting more visitors so as to generate a higher income which is necessary to keep being able to continue to claim the subsidies of the government and to make sure that they do not have to close down. One of their decisions to attract more visitors is to make two temporary exhibitions each year. Previously they had only one temporary exhibition a year. According to the director of Volkenkunde, they have decided to not economize on their product which is their collection. That will be the last thing they will do. Without their product the museum will be not interesting anymore to potential visitors which will mean that they will lose their income. The two temporary exhibitions a year will have to make sure that Volkenkunde attracts 150.000 paying visitors a year. This bigger focus on the public can be found back in the visitation report by the Vereniging van Rijksmusea, from here mentioned as VRM, at the end of 2012. According to the VRM the focus of Volkenkunde has changed in the past four years. They also did a visitation in 2008 and by comparing their results from 2008 to the results of 2012 it can be said that Volkenkunde has been focusing on making it easier to visit the museum and to attract an audience that has never been to Volkenkunde before.

In 2008 the Vereniging van Rijksmusea felt like Volkenkunde was still searching and they were less focused on the “home” audience (potential visitors in Leiden and the Netherlands). This new focus has been successful. In 2008 76.315 people visited Volkenkunde where as in 2011 the number of visitors was up to 118.262, an increase of more than 50%. This is the number of all the visitors so also the non-paying visitors. So Volkenkunde still has a long way to go to reach their goal of 150.000 paying visitors. But in 2011 the museum was renovating which meant that a part of the museum was closed, so there is still room to grow. Another difference is that where as the museum used to focus on the entrance fee paid per visitor the focus has shifted to the total income per visitor, including money spend at the museum shop and the restaurant. A museum shop is not just a way to gain more income per investor. It is also part of the overall visitor experience. (McIntyre 2010). In the past four years the museum has been made more attractive. They have made new or made better use of: information columns, multimedia programs, software, informative texts and the network. In this way Volkenkunde provides their visitors with more information, depth and experiences. Other ways in which Volkenkunde is trying to make their museum more attractive is by making special websites and games. There are also plans to use augmented reality, they want to place objects virtually back in their



original context. And Volkenkunde is developing programs for virtual tours with smart phones and tablets.

On some points there is still much room for improvement, for example regarding the entrance and the museum shop. The museum shop can be improved by expanding assortment with more articles with a low price that will more easily be bought on impulse. Also the placement of the entrance and museum shop is not particular practical. The museum shop should have a more prominent place in the route through the museum. The placement of the museum cash register is not practical. It is not clear to all the visitors where the cash registers are which makes it possible to just walk into the museum without paying. Other ways in which Volkenkunde can attract more visitors is by being more visible. Most of the visitors are from the region of Zuid-Holland, of which Leiden is a part. They can achieve more visitors by being present outside their own region and in this way attract visitors from all over the country. This is an overview of what Volkenkunde has achieved with regards to making their museum more attractive to potential visitors and an overview of what Volkenkunde can improve to attract more visitors (VRM 2012).

Volkenkunde has improved over the past four years according to the VRM, but Volkenkunde is still heavily dependent on subsidies. They have been able to move from being 90 percent dependent on subsidies to 80 percent, but also in this regard there is room for improvement. The museum is trying to achieve this by having more paying visitors and more income per visitor. The VRM have concluded that at the end of 2012 Volkenkunde was a financially healthy museum. Volkenkunde scored a 'good' on four out of the five aspects researched by the VRM. They even scored an 'excellent' on their collection. The VRM concluded that Volkenkunde is a welcoming and dynamic museum with an appealing collection. The VRM agreed that Volkenkunde is a museum worth exploring according to the motto of Volkenkunde, "born to explore" (Ibid.). The visitation report of the VRM shows that Volkenkunde has tried hard to improve in the past four years to provide in their income in other ways than through subsidies from the government. They have showed that they are able to innovate.

## **2.1 Exhibitions**

Now I will focus more on how Volkenkunde is reaching its audience. Important in the attracting of visitors is the PR department that deals with press, sends out announcements and maintains the networks of the museum. I will focus here on the general way in which the PR department reaches the potential visitors of the museum for a temporary exhibition. In the next section I will show how this is

done with regards to the Hajj exhibition. About six months before a temporary exhibition will open, the PR department reaches out to the press by making a pre-announcement. In the appendix is a copy of the pre-announcement of the Hajj exhibition as an example of what a pre-announcement consists of. The press will publish these pre-announcements or they won't but then at least they know that in six months time they should write something about the new temporary exhibition in Volkenkunde. The pre-announcement is a warning to the press so that they can make room for it once the exhibition is almost there.

In the six months that follow there will be press photos of the exhibition to make sure the exhibition gets attention. Six weeks before the exhibition will open there will be a second announcement to the press which is more concrete than the first one. The PR department will also send a fact sheet to the press or selected press. Around this time the catalogue of the exhibition will also become available. The Volkenkunde does not hold any press conferences but it is possible for the press to make an appointment with Volkenkunde. These press announcements before the opening of the exhibition and the use of press photos are meant to make sure that the press pays attention to the exhibition which will also mean that potential visitors will hear about the exhibition in advance. Once the exhibition opens the PR department will stay in contact with the press. They will keep an eye on what is being said about the exhibition and they will publish their own announcements of the exhibition. They will attend radio and/or TV shows to talk about the exhibition. These interviews can be found on the website of Volkenkunde as well as their announcements to the press. The PR department aims at profiling the museum as an experience instead of emphasizing that Volkenkunde is one of the oldest ethnology museums in the world. This can mean that they try to move away from the "boring" image that museums used to have.

To promote an exhibition, Volkenkunde is using a variety of media. They use advertisements, radio, TV commercials, they give posters to different institutions that might be interested in the exhibition and they give out flyers. They also use different spokes persons who will deal with any questions from the press. Around some temporary exhibitions, Volkenkunde works together with an institution or organization which will also promote the exhibition in activities that relate to the temporary exhibition. For example, during the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde there will also be a film on the Hajj played in the Omniversum. Volkenkunde concludes an agreement with the Omniversum so that both institutions can promote each other's activities. Another example of an instance when Volkenkunde tries to work together to promote their exhibitions is through book promotions. Additional ways in which Volkenkunde tries to get the word out are word of mouth advertisement and the social media. In all these various ways Volkenkunde tries to reach the intended audience for a temporary exhibition. Most of the visitors in Volkenkunde are women above 40, students, travelers,

students and lovers of culture. To attract women above 40, Volkenkunde will publish advertisements of the exhibition in for example female magazines.

Once a temporary exhibition opens, there will be certain activities around the exhibition. These activities attract visitors that might consider going to visit the museum again without being part of an activity. Examples of these activities are: Ladies nights, weekends that focus on the exhibition, like a Maori Tattoo weekend and so on. These activities focus more on the culture behind the objects, it makes the exhibitions come to life for visitors. These activities also target a specific audience. Ladies night is of course for women and there are also activities that focus more on children as to attract families to the museum. Film weekends are also part of the activities. Film weekends are more interesting to young adults and adults. These activities are a different way of attracting visitors that more frequently visit the museum but also potential new visitors. For these activities all visitors are obliged to pay so it is a source of income for the museum. These activities show that Volkenkunde has indeed more focus on their temporary exhibitions than on their permanent exhibitions. The temporary exhibitions are the ones that visitors want to see because they hear about them in the media or through family members or friends. The museum puts more effort in promoting the temporary exhibitions. The website of Volkenkunde focuses more on these exhibitions as well. More information can be found on them than on the permanent exhibitions. The homepage is also focused on the temporary exhibitions. From this I conclude that Volkenkunde is indeed focusing on attracting visitors through temporary exhibitions and by organizing at least two a year they try to attract more visitors so that they generate a higher income. Everything around the temporary exhibitions is focused on the public whereas there is almost no specific communication to be found on the permanent exhibitions.

Volkenkunde wants to know what their visitors think of their exhibitions. They have different ways in researching this. They used to make use of organizations who developed customized lists for the temporary exhibitions. They stopped doing this because it is an expensive method. Nowadays they use the results of research done by students specifically on visitors. And since two years they have been using the museum monitor made by TNS Nipo which is also used by other museums in the Netherlands. Visitors are being asked during the whole year to give their opinion on an exhibition through the museum monitor. The questions asked in the museum monitor are not customized for the specific exhibitions in Volkenkunde but they still can be used to see how an exhibition scores among the visitors. The museum monitor uses Benchmarks to decide if an exhibition did well or not. To decide on the successfulness of an exhibition different questions are being asked in different categories. Each of these categories is then being tested apart from each other category. The categories are: general, presentation, atmosphere, objects, information, how the exhibition is built up, the flow and the child friendliness. Each category scores a certain percentage which is compared to the Benchmark. This scores are used in looking at what visitors expect from an exhibition and what the

museum can do to make the visitors more satisfied and happy. The visitor sees the end result of the whole exhibition making process which is a process of constant negotiating. Different stakeholders within the museum have different ideas and they need to negotiate to come up with the end result.

The exhibition making process starts once it has been decided what temporary exhibition should come in the museum. They look at what is currently in the news and what the general public finds important. The museum staff makes a formulated document of what the intention of the museum is with the exhibition, what do they want to achieve. Once that has been decided - the process comes into motion. Objects need to be selected and also the information that will be put in the exhibition. Information that will not be in the exhibition will be made available elsewhere, for example on the website of Volkenkunde. The museum also needs to decide on the audiovisual means that will be used in the exhibition. When they have a hard time deciding on a certain aspect they can always go back to the formulated document to see what their original intentions are. They will not move away from this formulated document. The exhibition making process is complex since different people with different educational background work together and each as his or her ideas about the exhibition. Once the exhibition gets its general forms the PR process starts as described above. How for example the flyers and posters will have to look is again specific for each exhibition and that is why also on this aspect there has to be a negotiation. Volkenkunde has found that the best way to attract people to an exhibition with flyers and posters is by putting faces on them. It gives the potential visitor something to relate to. And they try to show that the exhibition is an unique one. In the chapter on the Hajj exhibition I will show how the exhibition making process operates in practice and how the PR tries to reach the “new” audience of Muslims.

Besides the permanent and temporary exhibitions the museum has recently decided to make smaller temporary exhibitions within the permanent ones by the use of galleries.

## **2.2 Theoretical Framework**

The way a visitor looks at a certain exhibitions differs individually, it is determined by different aspects. Bourdieu’s theory on habitus can be applied to the way a visitor looks at an exhibition. The habitus of a person is based on the insights this person has, his experiences and also his customs which give this person an individual way of looking at the world but at the same time he is not aware that there are other ways of looking at the same world (Appelrouth a.o. 2008: 686). Every visitor has his own habitus and because of this they look differently at the same exhibition. Of course a group of people with the same customs share a part of the same habitus. The audience of a museum will not all

differ that widely in their habitus which makes it possible for the museum to make exhibitions in the way that will fit the habitus of a part of their audience.

A museum should not only be aware of the habitus of their visitors but also of the cultural and economic capital of the museum itself. According to Bourdieu the economic capital of a person is the riches, the land and the money that person owns (Ibid.: 688). Volkenkunde owns objects which are of economic value and these objects attract visitors who give the museum an income. An expensive, well-known object will possibly attract more visitors than another object. If the museum wants more visitors, they can decide to put an object like this on display and center an exhibition around it. The cultural capital of a visitor is also important for the museum. The cultural capital of a person consists of the immaterial possessions, for example the knowledge and expertise of a person (Ibid.: 688). This cultural capital is something that is acquired unconsciously (Kraaykamp & van Eijck 2010: 210). The cultural capital of one visitor can be different from the cultural capital of another visitor. This is important for the museum in a way that this means that one visitor doesn't have the same knowledge of an exhibition as another visitor. The museum needs to know what their visitors already know and what they don't know. In this way a museum decides on what information should be placed in the exhibition. If the museum thinks that their visitors know more about the topic than they actual do, it is possible that the visitors will not completely get the meaning of the exhibition. By including too much information that the visitors already know, a visitor might not learn anything new. Economic capital and the cultural capital of a person together make up the habitus of this person (Appelrouth a.o. 2008: 689).

Earlier I discussed the meeting between cultures within a museum. A visitor comes into contact with other cultures through the museum. A visitor in this aspect can be seen as a tourist. When a tourist travels to a different country to meet different cultures, they travel outside their comfort zone. When a tourists travel outside this comfort zone, he or she is kept in a 'tourist bubble' (van Beek 2007). A third party is present to keep the tourist in the 'tourist bubble'. This third party are the organizations that prevent problems on the journey of the tourist, they put the tourist in the bubble. The 'tourist bubble' is the place where the tourists travel to, where they arrive and where they stay. The 'tourist bubble' is there to prevent the tourist from encountering the less favorable sides of the country they are visiting, but the bubble leaves enough room for the tourist to experience the other culture. The bubble determines what the tourists will see and what they will experience from the other culture. This theory of the 'tourist bubble' can be applied to the visitor in the museum. The visitor will also be kept in a bubble. In this case the museum is the third party who determines what the visitor will see and experience from the culture at display.

Volkenkunde is one of the oldest ethnology museums in the world. They have a great variety of objects, mostly historical objects. And these objects are part of the heritage of different cultures.

People from these cultures might be interested to see their heritage at display and other people might be interested in the heritage of other cultures. It is a form of heritage tourism which can be seen as part of cultural tourism according to Richards (1996). A cultural tourist chooses to go somewhere through heritage degrees. There are two types, “traditional” heritage sites and “new” heritage sites (Richards 1996: 262). Traditional heritage can be both immaterial and material, for example a dance or a museum like Slot Loevestein. New heritage sites are more recent like Robben Island in South Africa. Having heritage sites attracts cultural tourists who generate an income. Volkenkunde is in the possession of objects which are part of a heritage, just like other ethnology museums. There is a competition between European cities to attract these heritage tourists which leads to more cultural facilities to attract these tourists. First it is important to know what these tourists want. What tourists want can be translated to the visitors of the museum. Volkenkunde owns heritage objects which will attract visitors. They compete with other museums to attract these visitors by displaying what their potential visitors want to see. And just like other cultural institutions they need to know what their visitors want.

What visitors and tourists want has changed over time. I will use here the example of the Grand Tour which took place in the eighteenth century. Despite that it is a phenomenon from the eighteenth century, it is still applicable to study patterns of tourism and to study how the characteristics of visitors have changed over time. The Grand Tour was one of the first form of mass tourism. It was a tour in the eighteenth century through Western Europe. The people who were able to go on this tour were mostly the elite of Europe (Towner 1985: 298). In the beginning the tour was a long journey which could take more than a year. Later on it was a tour that mostly took place during the summer. In the beginning of the Tour most of the tourists were from the elite but in later years this shifted towards more tourists from the middle class (Ibid.: 326). It is the same with the visitors of museums - in the early years of the museums, the visitors consisted of people from the elite which later shifted towards more visitors from the middle class. Museums lost their image of an elite institution to something that was open to the wider public which makes it easier now to attract more visitors since they can fish from a greater pool.

The term ‘culture’ has changed with the Grand Tour. Back then it was used as: “...a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development” (Richards 1996: 265). Other ways in using the term culture is: “...as indicative of a particular “way of life”...” (Ibid.: 265). Or culture as “...the works and practices of intellectual and artistic activity” (Ibid.: 265). Cultures displayed in exhibitions in museums fall under the last two definitions of culture. These definitions of culture are not the same as the definitions of anthropologists who see culture as the rules of behavior within a group (Ibid.: 265). However this is hard to apply to museums where there are only objects displayed of a culture with some information on those objects. The term culture has been under criticism in recent years. The

criticism has been that culture is seen more as a product than as a process. Tourism is supposed to be the driving force behind the commodification of culture which means that culture is transformed from being a process towards a product (Ibid.: 265). Within a museum culture is not displayed as a process. It is shown as a static product. It is not only culture that has been commodified, history has faced the same development. Hewinson (1987) calls the commodification of history, heritage. Commodification of history leads to the making of “empty” objects. History is turned into a heritage industry. Heritage industry can be used for political and economical means instead of where it was originally used for - for cultural means. The heritage industry is part of the museum world. I said before that the objects in museums are part of the heritage of a culture. Museums are part of the commodification of culture. The objects were part of a culture, but they have been taken outside that context and are put on display as static products instead of part of a changing culture, as part of a process.

Museums have been part of different discourses within the academic world. One of the new discourses is new museology. Gorman (2011) sees new museology as the engaging and embracing of community representation, transparency, inclusiveness and relevance (Ibid.: 150). Gorman sees new museology as something that has derived from the idea that the universal constructs from the global context are barely ever the right entries into the daily lives of the people who visit, who use and those who are represented with the museums (Ibid.: 150). Just like in other discourses, there are ethics involved in new museology which are the ethics of authority and ownership that are influencing the practices within museums. Museology is part of this research since it explains the practices of the museum. With the budget cuts it is possible that the museum has changed its role of being an educational institution to attract more visitors. My view on Volkenkunde is that they still want to educate their visitors through showing different viewpoints on one topic in the same exhibition and at the same time make their exhibitions more interesting so as to attract more visitors and by having a focus on what kind of audience they want to attract. Chapstick argues that the nature of a museum is to: “...provide interest, education and enjoyment to its visitors” (Chapstick 1985: 365). In Volkenkunde the making of an exhibition is a negotiation between these three different aspects of the nature of the museums. But like I said before the experience of one visitor will be different than the experience of another visitor. According to Chapstick the quality of the experience of a visitor is determined by the age, the education, the type of collection, the presentation of the exhibition and the visitor services available.

A recent development within museums is that they have a larger number of visitors which has large economic benefits for the museum (Ibid.: 365). Because of these larger number of visitors and the greater economic benefits of the museums, they play a bigger part in the tourist industry. Another recent developments are that there is a growing interest in heritage and the fact that there is a realization that the material evidence of culture and natural culture is something fragile (Ibid.: 365).

Museums have these in their collections which make them more important in preserving the evidence of culture and natural culture. It is there for the people who have this realization that it is fragile. A greater number of visitors also means that management within museums has become more important. A museum needs to know what kind of visitors visit their museum and they need to know how those visitors view their exhibitions (Ibid.: 366). Volkenkunde has changed with the greater number of visitors. In the beginning of the 21th century they changed the way they made exhibitions and with that their relationship with their visitors. Before that curators decided on the exhibition, now more departments within the museum are involved. The PR department for example is more focused on the visitor and the museum does more research on their visitor for example through the museum monitor of TNS Nipo.

Earlier I have explained the connection between tourists and visitors of a museum. Because of this connection I will also use general theories on tourism to understand the relationship between Volkenkunde and its visitors. One of the theoretical problems of tourism is the meeting between cultures. In the case of the museum this meeting is only one-sided, the visitor is the only one coming into contact with a different culture while the different culture will see nothing from the culture of this visitor. Despite the fact that this meeting is only one-sided it will still be of importance within museums since the visitor leaves with a new experience just like a tourist does. When a tourist travels to a different culture, the tourist will already have an idea on this other culture which is the same with a visitor visiting an exhibition on a different culture. These ideas about other cultures are formed in different ways. Travel agencies, television, magazines or things like posters all have an effect on how people perceive other cultures. A good example of how these ideas are being formed is “Africa”. It is talked about like it is one country, forgetting the fact that there are many countries and cultures within Africa. Africa can be viewed by travel agencies as an exotic and dangerous place which is hard to reach, it is viewed as a dark place (Van Beek 2003: 254). Travel agencies use these ideas to persuade tourists to travel with them to those places. Terms used to promote for example travels to Africa are “a different planet” or for example “Where Africa is still Africa” (Ibid.: 255/265). These images are being used to attract tourists but these images have found a way into the minds of the public. So a visitor of the Africa exhibition in Volkenkunde will also be influenced by the general way of thinking about Africa. The visitor will expect to recognize their image of Africa in the exhibition. A museum has to decide if it wants to play into the images of the visitor or if it aims to show Africa in another way so as to learn the visitor something new or try to change the ideas of the visitor. These are decisions a museum has to make when making a new exhibition and it is possible that the decision they make is will vary with different exhibitions.

Narratives are seen as important to learn something of the different aspects of the culture where the tourist has travelled to or the culture on display before the visitor (Ibid.: 262). Only placing



objects in an exhibition without giving the narratives of the cultures displayed, makes it hard to give the visitor the full image of the culture. The objects themselves need an explanation, what are these objects being used for? But there is also a need for background information on the cultures. Without any background information on the exhibition, a visitor might leave with different ideas than the museum intended. Background information is important in ethnology exhibitions to be able to educate the visitors. So narratives are important to experience part of the cultures displayed, to understand these cultures and to understand the meaning of these objects within the cultures. Another aspect of tourism that is applicable to the visitor of a museum is that the meeting of cultures needs a direct trust and respect (Ibid.: 262). In the case of the museum, the museum is the mediator in this meeting and they have to ensure the direct trust and respect. Objects within the museum might be borrowed from the cultures displayed. The museum needs to handle these objects with the respect and care the source community expects from them. If they violate the trust given to them by these source communities, the communities might decide not to lend the museum any objects again or pull out from the collaboration. The dialogue with source communities is a difficult one. The stories of the source communities do not always match the goal of the exhibition. In this case the museum needs to decide what will be part of the exhibition and what will be left out and at the same time they need to make sure that they do not offend the source communities. Working with source communities is also complicated because it is not always clear if this is the way to attain the goal of the exhibition that the museum wants or that it is the goal of the exhibition. In the next chapter I will discuss the practice of the museum in more detail with the case study of the Hajj exhibition.

### 3. The Hajj Exhibition

The Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde will be called: “Verlangen naar Mekka – de reis van de pilgrim” (Volkenkunde 2013). In English this means: “Desire for Mecca – the journey of the pilgrim”. On their website Volkenkunde describes the exhibition as a unique exhibition about the pilgrimage to Mecca. The exhibition will consist of wonderful objects, personal stories and intriguing reports on the impressive pilgrimage which is done each year by millions of people worldwide. The exhibition is a coproduction with the British Museum. Volkenkunde states that the exhibition is the first one in the Netherlands on the Hajj, the pilgrimage, on this scale. They represent their exhibition as something unique, something that has never been done before. By trying to be unique they hope to attract more visitors. The exhibition will open on the 10<sup>th</sup> of September. In the exhibition there will also be objects used that the museum will borrow from their potential visitor. They have organized this collection day on which they have asked the Dutch Muslim population to bring their objects and stories of their own Hajj to the museum so that the museum can put these in the exhibition. I find this interesting because they try to involve their target audience in the exhibition at an early stage. They try to make them part of the exhibition. If this will work with regards to attracting this group of people remains to be seen, but it might be a good strategy. I was not able to be at the collection day myself, but I have talked to other interns who were there. About sixteen people showed up with their souvenirs from their Hajj. Those people brought some fifty souvenirs with them. This was more than the museum expected so it could be said that the collection day was successful (see Appendix 2.2). After the collection day there were more people who wanted to bring their souvenirs to the museum, but there were already so many souvenirs brought to the museum on the collection day itself that it is not certain whether all souvenirs can actually be placed in the exhibition. The collection day also gained some publicity for the museum and the exhibition. The day after the collection day, the Volkskrant published a full page article on the collection day. They wrote about four families with their souvenirs that came to the collection day (Volkskrant 03-06-2013). Normally the papers start writing about exhibitions just before or during an exhibition. So the collection day generated publicity early on and it also shows that Muslims are willing to cooperate with the exhibition.

The museum connects their exhibition also to recent events. The year of 2013 is the year in which the University of Leiden celebrates the 400 years of existence of the chair of Arabic Language and Culture which makes it one of the oldest in Europe. There will be various events to celebrate those 400 years in a program set up by the University of Leiden and museums in Leiden. By connecting the exhibition to broader events the promotion of the exhibition becomes bigger. People visiting the events on the 400 years anniversary might become interested in visiting the exhibition on the Hajj by

hearing from it or by advertisements used during the events. The exhibition is not something standing on itself, it is part of something bigger. Volkenkunde shows that it knows what is going on in the world and more particularly that they know what is going on in Leiden itself. They show that their exhibition is of relevance today, they show that the museum is part of society itself, part of the city of Leiden. The events on the 400 years celebration on the chair of Arabic Language and Culture will possibly attract visitors from outside Leiden which means that Volkenkunde will also be visited by these groups of tourists who travel to Leiden to spend the day there. The exhibition on the Hajj can be part of the city trip of the tourists. This is the way Volkenkunde represents the exhibition on their website. I will look now at how they set up the exhibition and the PR before the opening of the exhibition. Then I will show how they want to represent the exhibition in practice to the visitor. Finally I will discuss the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde in comparison with the Hajj exhibition in the British Museum.

### **3.1 Ritual**

The making of an exhibition is a complex process with different people involved. Of course there is the curator who gives the information and makes a list of objects that could come into the exhibition. Those objects are not all from the depot of Volkenkunde itself. In the case of the Hajj exhibition there are objects coming from other museums or private collections. One of these museums is the British Museum who has done the same sort of exhibition before. The curator contacts the institutions to arrange for the loaning of the objects. The curator is not the one who will eventually decide on what objects should be in the exhibition and what information will be there. Also in this case there is a formulated document with the intentions of the museum with the exhibition. The exhibition will be implemented according to these intentions. Someone else involved in the making of the Hajj exhibition is the director of the museum. He does not want the Hajj exhibition turning into something like a carnival that would make the exhibition seem cheap. There should be a good balance between the use of images and film and the objects to make sure that it will not become cheap according to the views of the director. This balance should show that the exhibition is an exhibition of this time. The museum educates but at the same time it is a fun learning experience because of the use of sound, images and by making exhibitions that are seen as interesting by potential visitors.

Other people involved in the making of the exhibition are the PR department and the exhibition makers. Together they have regular meetings to discuss the exhibition. The decisions on what objects and information should be in the exhibition will be decided by the exhibition makers but the curator can give advice. Which was not what I originally expected since the curator is the

specialist. The fact that the museum has chosen to involve more departments in the making of an exhibition shows that the museum has changed. Instead of a curator making an exhibition which he or she finds interesting, the making of an exhibition is becoming more focused on the visitor. The visitor ensures the survival of the museum on the financial level, by paying the entrance fee and possible souvenirs from the museum shop, but the visitor also ensures the popularity of the museums which is necessary for funds and more visitors.

The people of the PR department are in contact with the media and they try to use their networks to reach their target audience. The target audience of the Hajj exhibition are Dutch Muslims. The focus is on Dutch Muslims since this group rarely visits the museum and in this way the museum tries to motivate a new audience to come to this exhibition and possibly to future exhibitions. The museum has decided they want to attract two groups of Dutch Muslims: the young and highly educated and the elderly and less educated Muslims. There is a woman working for the museum who has been on Hajj herself. She uses her networks to reach the target audience for the museum. She has been hired especially for this exhibition. By having her working on the exhibition, the museum hopes that other Muslims will also feel part of the exhibition. The exhibition will not be an exhibition made about the Hajj by non-Muslims but it will be a collaboration by involving Muslims in the making of the exhibition. There is also an intern working on the exhibition who is a Dutch Muslim. They can use their contacts by talking to them, motivating to come to the exhibition and talk about the exhibition with their family and friends. Through this word of mouth advertisement the Volkenkunde always tries to attract visitors to their exhibitions - the Hajj exhibition is no exception.

Other ways that Volkenkunde tries to reach their new audience is by contacting Muslim organizations, mosques and Muslim schools to reach the young and highly educated Dutch Muslims and the elderly and less educated. The museum hands out flyers to these organizations and ask whether they can hang up posters on the exhibition. Social media are also being used for this exhibition. This will help in reaching the younger audience since they are more likely to use social media than the more elderly. Volkenkunde will set up an interactive website for the exhibition to make visitors of the website enthusiastic for the exhibition. In these ways the museum tries to reach the Dutch Muslims through the internet. Something else that Volkenkunde has initiated is involving the target audience. Like I said before is that Volkenkunde has organized a day on which they collected stories on the Hajj and souvenirs brought back from Mecca.

I agree with Duncan (1995) that a museum can be seen as a ritual site because it is not just a collection of objects, it is a constructed combination of architecture and a collection of objects. Rituals are : "...fixed sequences of actions" (Bowen 2008: 43). Rituals are performed by people to: "...try to conform to certain rules to get the ritual right. Sometimes they seek a specific end, such as healing, pleasing a deity, or restoring fertility; sometimes they perform rituals out of a general sense of

obligation (Ibid.: 43). Duncan applies her theory to art museums but it also applies to other museums since their exhibitions also consist of the constructed combination of architecture and a collection of objects. Behind the layout of any exhibition goes a lot of thought, there is a reason behind it. As any ritual site, the museum has a script which consists according to Duncan of a combination of place, the non-neutral spaces within a museum and the objects of the museum (Duncan 1995). This script is written so as to force the visitor to make a performance which is where they move to and through the site which is the exhibition. As visitors move through an exhibition they will experience values and beliefs which are put up there by the museum. The way Duncan views the visitor seems passive. Not every visitor will walk through the exhibition as the exhibition makers intended. They can deviate from it or reject it completely. Macdonald (2005) also shows the museum as a ritual site, because it has always “involved an interplay of science and magic, authoritative knowledge and enchantment” (Ibid.: 212) The enchantment is created by: “...the architectural and aesthetic exhibitionary strategies used to attract visitors – and also the magical excess provided by objects (Ibid. : 212/213). Which means that a museum is not only a ritual site with regards to an exhibition, also the making of an exhibition can be seen as a ritual: “If museums can be analyzed as ritual sites, then anthropological ideas about ritual may be deployed in the process of scriptwriting exhibitions” (Bouquet 2000: 222). During the making of the exhibition, which can be seen as writing a script, the exhibition is made aiming to separate the audience from the outside world. This shows that the museum is indeed the third party according to Van Beek (2007). The museum creates the bubble which protects and separates the visitor from the outside world. During the ritual of making an exhibition different actors are involved who each have their own role during the ritual. Exhibitions will differ but the way they are made, stays roughly the same.

Every time an exhibition is made the same roles must be played out. The curator has to come up with an idea, in this case the idea to make an exhibition about the Hajj. Then the curator has to make a document in which the idea is worked out and then it will go to a meeting where is decided on what exhibitions the museum wants to make. During the meeting, different actors come into play. Different actors have to look at the idea and see if it is possible and whether it will be successful. An exhibition is successful when it is visited by a certain number of visitors and when it reaches the Benchmarks which I discussed earlier. Now I will describe how the Hajj exhibition is made and how this can be seen as a ritual.

First there has to be a decision where the focus of the exhibition will be. In the case of the Hajj exhibition the museum wants to focus on the relationship between the Hajj and Dutch society. They do this by using objects from Snouck Hurgronje who was the first Dutchman to photograph the Hajj and they use many objects from the previous colony the Dutch East Indies. They use the common past of the Dutch to relate Dutch society to the exhibition. The Dutch visitors who are non-Muslims will

relate to the exhibition as they see part of their common past. The Dutch Muslims will see part of their past and their religion. After the focus of the exhibition has been decided upon, the curator starts with making a list of objects which possibly will be displayed in the exhibition. These objects are from the museums' own depots and from other museums. The networks of the museum and of the curator are used as to get all the objects they want in the exhibition. The object list is more of a wish list of the curator. Not all objects on the list will be used in the exhibition. What objects will be or will not be in the exhibition is decided upon by the exhibition makers but these decisions are made at a later stage of the making of an exhibition. Not only are the networks of the museum needed for loaning of objects, they also have to have networks to reach their targeted audience. This makes the Hajj exhibition interesting since the museum does not yet have networks to reach their target audience for this exhibition which are Dutch Muslims. Like I said before, the museum has hired a Dutch Muslim to help reach their audience. She knows what is the best way to represent the Dutch Muslims in the exhibition and how to involve them. Besides being part of the making of the exhibition, she is also part of the target audience.

The PR and marketing process will go as described in the previous chapter. They use their regular ways of publishing the exhibition. They use promotional material for which they pay. These include: advertisement, radio, TV commercials, posters and flyers. And they have collaborations with different institutions that are doing the same sort of projects. In this case they work together with the Omniversum in the Hague which will be streaming a movie on the Hajj during the same time as the exhibition is open for public. And they work together with the different institutions involved in the celebration of the 400 years existence of the chair of Arabic Language and Culture. The museum also uses free promotion by giving announcements of their exhibitions to the press. Because of the collection day and the article about it in the Volkskrant they had some additional free publicity. The pre-announcement has already been published in different media, but it is also used as a warning to the media that there will be a temporary exhibition opening in September in Volkenkunde which has to make sure that the media reserves space for articles about the exhibition, when the time comes (see Appendix 2.1). I will discuss the pre-announcement in more detail in the next section on visitors. During the making of the exhibition, there are several meetings in which the details of the exhibition are being discussed. They discuss and decide on how the exhibition should look, what aspects of the Hajj should be in the exhibition - How is the Hajj to be represented? The museum decided to present the Hajj as a journey from beginning to end and through time. As for now the layout of the exhibition will be the following:

- general introduction on the Hajj and the five pillars of the Islam
- Preparation for the Hajj

- Journey
- Transition from the journey to Mecca; from the travel clothes to the Hajj clothes
- Rituals in Mecca and Medina
- Pilgrims souvenirs
- The coming home of the pilgrim

This layout is in fact the whole journey which is intended to give the visitor the feeling that he or she actually is on Hajj. This layout also shows that the museum is not showing their opinion on the Hajj. They try to give a “neutral” representation of the Hajj by simply stating facts and by showing the opinions of people and institutions involved with the Hajj. In the exhibition there will be room for videos of interviews with people who have been on Hajj which will show their experience and opinions. The exhibition will also contain information on how Saudi Arabia organizes the Hajj which attracts at least a million pilgrims each year. The museum is also thinking of including photographs of the demolition of various historical sites in Saudi Arabia by the government. Besides the professionals that play a role in the ritual of making an exhibition, there are also important roles for interns. I was surprised to find out that, besides me, there were nine more interns working on the exhibition. I was the only one working on the object list, the other interns were involved in the interviewing of Muslims who have been on Hajj and in the gathering of information and statistics. Some of the information and statistics gathered by the interns will eventually be part of the exhibition. It is not possible to put it all in the exhibition since the visitors will not have the time or don't want to read it all. But for the museum it is important to have all the information in case that there will be questions. The information is already available on the specific website of Volkenkunde for the Hajj exhibition. The statistics and facts gathered by the interns will be placed on a statistic wall in the exhibition. The interns hand in their facts and statistics and then an exhibition maker goes through them to see what's missing or what can be seen as less important. The exhibition makers decide on what information will eventually end up in the exhibition. After the decisions on what objects and which information will become part of the exhibition, the physical making of the exhibition begins. To help design the exhibition, an outside designer company has been hired.

The making of the Hajj exhibition can be seen as a ritual because it is performed according to set rules of how to make an exhibition. Every exhibition is made in the same sort of ritual. It always starts with an idea and it ends with the closing of the exhibition. The steps made in the process are all part of the life cycle of the exhibition: “...birth, puberty, marriage, and death (Bowen 2008: 43). The birth of an exhibition is in the moment when it is decided to make the exhibition. The way it was decided upon to make the Hajj exhibition is the same as it has been with exhibitions that came before

the Hajj exhibition. There are certain fixed sequences of actions that determine which exhibition will be made. A curator comes with an idea. He or she has to make a document in which is described the intention of the exhibition and the reason why this exhibition should be made. After different curators have come with ideas, there will be a meeting in which will be discussed on what exhibition will be chosen. The exhibition is born once it is chosen. After that the exhibition will be evolving through fixed sequences. Contact will be made with other museums and institutions for the loaning of objects. The people of the PR department reach out to their networks to promote the exhibition and so on. The exhibition slowly takes shape which can be seen as the puberty. The exhibition goes to the next stage of the life cycle once it is finished and opened for public. This is also done according to fixed sequences of actions. The opening will be celebrated as part of the next stage of the life cycle of the exhibition, marriage. At some point the exhibition will be closed, the death of the exhibition. The public is not allowed to visit it any longer. This part of the life cycle is also marked by various fixed sequences of action. The exhibition is closed, the objects will be removed from the room where they were displayed and the audiovisual material will also be removed. Some objects will be placed back into the depots of Volkenkunde, others have to be sent back to the various museums and institutions from which they came. In the end the exhibition will be evaluated by the museum so that in future exhibitions they would not make the same mistakes and so that they can use the ideas from the various aspects of the exhibition that were successful.

The process of making an exhibition can be seen as a ritual because it consists of various fixed sequences of actions that are performed throughout the process. Those fixed sequences of actions are being executed in the different stages of the life cycle of the exhibition – birth, puberty, marriage and death. The fixed sequences of actions are being performed by the people involved in the making of the exhibition, the museum staff and people from outside the museum. Everyone from the director to the designer company are involved in the ritual of making an exhibition. And once the exhibition opens the visitors will be part of a ritual as well by going through the exhibition. They will move through the exhibition like a performance written by the museum as a script. Visitors can choose whether they will be part of the ritual or they can reject it and go through the exhibition in a different way.



## 3.2 Visitors

The main target group of visitors for the Hajj exhibition is, as has been mentioned earlier, the diverse group of Dutch Muslims. The interesting aspect of this is that this is a group that is not among the frequent visitors of Volkenkunde. Normally the focus is on highly educated 40 plus women, students, travelers and lovers of culture. But the museum is of the opinion that it is important to attract a new group of visitors who can visit the museum after this exhibition. This exhibition is also regarded as not a family based subject, because the museum is of the opinion that the subject is too difficult for younger children. The museum is also trying to involve their target group with the making of the exhibition. Months before the opening of the exhibition, Muslims who have been on Hajj are interviewed about their experience. Some of these interviews will be part of the exhibition to give the visitor people to relate to. By asking visitors for their opinion about exhibitions the museum has found that their visitors like to see faces in the exhibitions. So by using faces the exhibition becomes more alive for the visitor. Also the Muslims interviewed are part of Dutch society which will show that the Hajj is part of the lives of people the visitor might know, for example a neighbor. This will help gain understanding of a religion the non-Muslim visitor might not know much about except for the stuff the media publishes which these days is mostly negative. For the Muslim visitors who have been on Hajj the exhibition is a way to experience the Hajj all over again or to show their friends or family members who not have been on Hajj what the Hajj is about. For Muslims who want to go on Hajj or are not able to go, the exhibition is a way to learn more about it and to hear through parts of the interviews what the experience is like.

The museum is aiming to attract Dutch Muslims but this does not mean that there will be no non-Muslim visitors. When making the exhibition the museum has to think of both Dutch Muslims and non-Muslims which in itself are already diverse groups. But the museum is of the opinion that most of the Dutch Muslims who have not been on Hajj will not know that much more about it than non-Muslims. And the history of the Hajj that will be part of the exhibition is also not commonly known among Dutch-Muslims. This will make it easier for the museum to decide what information will be in the exhibition. For every exhibition the museum staff has to decide how much their visitors already know. If the museum gives too much information that visitors have already knowledge of, the exhibition will be boring or seen as not worthwhile since they have not learnt anything or almost nothing new. If the museum makes the mistake of thinking that their visitors know more than they actually do, the visitors might find the exhibition confusing or they might take the wrong conclusions. But according to the museum the knowledge of the Dutch Muslims as well as the knowledge of the non-Muslims visitors is not far apart. The non-Muslim visitors will have a chance to experience a bit of the Hajj since they are not allowed to go on Hajj themselves. Most of this group of visitors will not

have an extensive knowledge of the Hajj so it will also be a learning experience. These are the experiences and information the museum hopes to give to their diverse groups of visitors. It is the goal of the exhibition to give the visitors an experience and at the same time teach them more about the Hajj.

The question is how the museum tries to attract their visitors and especially Dutch Muslims to the Hajj exhibition. The reaching of their potential visitors is not only by PR, it starts with the choosing of which objects should be in the exhibition. This is also the reason why the curator is not the one who decides on the objects but the exhibition makers will do this since they know what objects will be appealing to the visitors. The objects also need to form a coherent whole, they will have to tell a story. The curator makes a list of objects which are available for the exhibition and from this list the exhibition makers will choose the objects according to the intentions of the exhibition which have been decided upon earlier. The exhibition makers are the ones who decide on the objects because they know by experience what the visitors will find interesting and also because they don't have the knowledge of the subject that the curator has so they see the objects as just that, objects.

From the beginning of the making of the exhibition, even at the stage when it is decided what temporary exhibitions will be made, the museum is thinking of what their visitors would like to see. The visitors are not passive, they don't just come to the museum and walk through the exhibition as it is intended. According to Baker (2010) visitors of museum have the desire to be part of the cooperation about the interpretation of the past and to make the past meaningful - recent studies show that making people part of this process can be crucial to the learning success. Programs based on or within museums have shorter time to encounter with their visitors, they are more dependent on self-guided activities, and visitors are expected to have some knowledge in advance of the creation of the exhibition and/or programmatic activities. This means that a successful museum program depends on visitor studies to be able to play into the needs and the backgrounds of the various museum visitors (Ibid.). So visitors are active agents and they want to be a part of the making of the exhibition. Volkenkunde does this by making it possible for visitors to participate in various programs during the time that the exhibition is opened. And they also involve the people that are represented in the exhibition. In the case of the Hajj by loaning the souvenirs from their potential visitors, by interviewing them and also by working with Dutch Muslims (one from the museum staff and also an intern) on the exhibition.

During the making of the exhibition the PR and Marketing department are looking for ways to get in touch with their potential audience. In the case of the Hajj exhibition they have been focusing on Muslim institutions, like mosques and Muslim schools and through social media since their potential audience is active on social media. The Muslim institutions have gotten the pre-announcement and also flyers to promote the collection day. Just like with most of their exhibition Volkenkunde has used

flyers with a face on it to appeal to the visitors. The photograph they used for the flyers promoting the collection day is this one:



*Source: Wikimediacommons*

This photograph was also shown on the website of Volkenkunde on the page about exhibition coming soon. It is not certain yet whether this will be the photograph used on the final posters and flyers, it was the first one they found. The pre-announcement (Appendix 2.1) is written by the PR department as an early promotion for the exhibition. It is interesting to see how the exhibition is being presented to the public. They emphasize that the exhibition is made in cooperation with the British Museum which is a well-known and big museum. They also write that it is the first of this kind in the Netherlands. In this way they show that the exhibition is special. Later on in the pre-announcement they come back to the British Museum, saying that they helped Volkenkunde gather more than 250 unique and diverse objects coming from different parts of the world. This emphasizes again the uniqueness of the exhibition. The pre-announcement relates the exhibition to Dutch society by saying that the Mecca is more a part of our society than we know and that the word “Mecca” even has a place in our language. To motivate people to come to the exhibition they ask questions to which the answers will be found in the exhibition. In the last part of the pre-announcement they present Volkenkunde as one of the oldest ethnology museums in the world with a big and varied collection, despite the fact that the PR department told me that they do not want to emphasize that Volkenkunde is an old museum. The pre-announcement shows how Volkenkunde tries to attract their visitors by emphasizing the uniqueness and the scale of the exhibition and also by relating it to our society.

The report on the collection day (Appendix 2.2) is also a way of promoting the exhibition. The collection day was successful for the museum. I heard that they received around 50 souvenirs, but they do not say anything about numbers in the report. I find this remarkable because then it is not clear how the collection day was successful. Also interesting is that the museum describes their cooperation with different cultures on their exhibitions by saying: “Not about them without them”. I think that they want to show, in this case to the Dutch Muslims, that the exhibition is made with the endorsement of

other Dutch Muslims. The report also encourages people to follow a twitter account on which there will be tips for people who want to go on Hajj. The twitter account opened on the 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 and up until now has acquired (26<sup>th</sup> of June 2013) 36 followers and it follows 162 people. Interesting to see is that it follows mostly Muslim institutions and Dutch Muslims. They use twitter to get in touch with their target audience. The tips are relevant since the Hajj this year will be around the same time the exhibition is open to the public. And again the report ends with the exact same part on Volkenkunde as the pre-announcement. So they actually emphasize the fact that Volkenkunde is one of the oldest ethnology museums in the world while according to the PR department that is not their intention. Earlier I mentioned that the Volkskrant published an article on the collection day (Volkskrant 03-06-2013). The article highlights four people coming from four different cities (Leiden, Alphen aan den Rijn, Den Haag and Rotterdam). Those four cities lie reasonably closely together but it shows that the museum was able to reach people beyond Leiden and in this way reach a larger audience.

During the making of the exhibition the museum will hire a designer company to make the designs for the exhibition which will include everything from where the objects should be placed to writings and images on the walls. There is already a special website for the Hajj exhibition (<http://verlangennaarmekka.volkenkunde.nl/nl/verlangen-naar-mekka-de-reis-van-de-pelgrim>). Most of the information on the website is gathered by the interns working on the exhibition. They have gathered the information and will write text for the website to inform visitors before they go to the exhibition. The information that has been gathered and also what kind of statistics the interns had to look for were discussed during meetings which I attended. It became apparent that also in these meetings it always comes back to the visitors. Will they find the information interesting? Do they already know this or that? It was decided by the curator the following information should be placed on the website:

- Quran verses on the Hajj
- The five pillar of the Islam
- Hadith on the Hajj
- The history of the Ka'ba
- The Kiswa and the Mahmal
- The specific routes to Mecca up until now
- The preparation for the Hajj
- The modernizing of Mecca and Medina
- Travel journals from different centuries
- Social media, apps and tracking systems concerned with the Hajj
- Shopping and pilgrim souvenirs

- Famous Dutch hajjis (people who have been on Hajj)

The information given to the visitors on the website is basic information on the Hajj, the history and the Hajj now. Up until the last three points it is about information, teaching the visitors the most important aspects of the Hajj. I find that the last three points should make the exhibition more “popular”. These points should appeal to the visitors who want to learn the fun facts, it should show that it is not all “boring information”. Every singular subject mentioned above, should not contain more than 400 words. The museum has learnt from experience that people will stop reading and continue to a different website. The interns will write these pieces but they will be evaluated by the web editor to make the text more catching. The information should be written for a general public with no knowledge on the Hajj.

There was also a whole one hour meeting on what Arabic words are integrated in the Dutch language and the correct spelling of those words. It is important to know this because there are different ways of spelling of many of the words related to the Hajj. In every text the same spelling should be used so as not to confuse people. Some words are not commonly known which means that they should be explained first or not used at all. When Arabic words have become part of the Dutch language, they will be spelled accordingly. Some words are not even known by the Dutch Muslims, so they will not be used. As a group we discussed with the curator every word from a list of the words that could possibly be used on the website or in the exhibition. On this aspect it was important to have two interns with an Islamic background present. One of them is from Moroccan descent and the other from Turkish descent. They know what words are known by the two different groups they represent. Muslims from Moroccan and Turkish background form a big part of the Dutch Muslim population in the Netherlands. These two interns could tell how the words are known by these two groups. This is important because the wrong spelling or use of words can possibly offend Dutch Muslims or show that Volkenkunde might not have the correct knowledge which could mean negative publicity. So the interns are used as advisers.

During the exhibition there will also be a special education program aimed at school classes with children from the ages of ten to twelve and for high school students. The PR department has said that the exhibition is not a family based subject which is shown in the special education program since the program is for teenagers. The education program is mostly about the social aspects of the Hajj in Dutch context. The school classes will hear stories about the experiences of the Hajj, the rituals and the festivities. After the stories a museum guide takes the students in an interactive tour in which they learn more about the Ka’ba and the Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and the Islam). Then the students will make a digital tour and the program ends with a discussion. There is free preparation and post processing material available. The most interesting aspect of the education program is that the teachers are asked to come to the museum for a special teachers day to learn more about the program surrounding the Hajj exhibition. This is interesting because the museum, in this way, tries to broaden

the learning experience by involving teachers which means that before and after their visit, they will continue to learn more on this subject. The teachers day is another way of the museum to involve visitors in an active way, make them think more about the exhibition. Also the students are being stimulated to think about the exhibition by doing a preparation before they come to the museum, by having a discussion after the tour and continue the program in class after visiting the museum.

Besides the activities already mentioned, the special education program and the cooperation with the Omniversum in the Hague, Volkenkunde also has a symposium planned which relates to the Hajj exhibition. This symposium will take place at the end of November 2013 and is being organized by the curator of the Hajj exhibition and a professor from the University of Groningen. During the symposium there will be speakers from the Netherlands and from abroad. By organizing a symposium surrounding the Hajj exhibition, the museum shows the academic relevance of the exhibition. It shows that there are debates on the subject which are relevant in- and outside the Netherlands. An exhibition can be successful regarding the number of visitors and the feedback giving by them, but that does not mean that an exhibition is relevant in social and academic context. The symposium can show that this exhibition could be successful on visitor numbers and feedback as well as in the social and academic context. An exhibition that has social and academic relevance can help Volkenkunde demonstrate that they are true to what they say on their website, that education is a big priority for them. It means that Volkenkunde is an educational institution.

Both during and after the time that the Hajj exhibition is opened, the exhibition will be evaluated to see if the museum could be rated as successful and to learn from the mistakes made in this exhibition so as to avoid them in following exhibitions. The feedback of the visitors will not only be influenced by their experiences in the exhibition. The experience starts when the visitor walks into the museum and it ends when the visitor walks out. This means that in the experience there is also place for the museum shop. In the report of the VRM it was stated that the placing of the shop is not practical, it is not a logical part of the tour through the museum. The museum should be aware that a museum shop and the way it is being displayed is important for visitors. Within museum literature there is a debate whether cultural destinations, like a museum, should have a more commercial or marketing-based approach to visitors which is seen by many curators as a negative development (McIntyre 2010: 181). For visitors the museum shop is an important part of their visit to a cultural destination (Ibid.: 182). During the Hajj exhibition there will also be a section of the shop dedicated to the exhibition. Visitors can buy souvenirs to remember there museum visit, by gifts or just enjoy walking through the shop. Volkenkunde uses the shop to gain more income per visitor but they also make it part of the museum experience.

### 3.3 British Museum

From the 26<sup>th</sup> of January until the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 2012 the British Museum had the first ever exhibition in the world dedicated to the Hajj (The British Museum 2012). The British Museum had a partnership with the King Abdulaziz Public Library Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. The museum has been gathering objects related to the Hajj over the years to be able to make this exhibition. Just like Volkenkunde, the British Museum aimed at targeting a new audience which was also for them Muslims. This group is rarely seen in museums and the British Museum hoped to get this group to this exhibition and other exhibitions in the future. The Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde will have similar aspects as the one in the British Museum. Volkenkunde is also portraying the Hajj as a journey which was done in the same way in London. Objects that were on display in London will also come to Volkenkunde which is the result of the cooperation with the British Museum. The museum in Leiden will also use interviews with people who have been on Hajj as mentioned earlier. This was already done in the British Museum. These are some of the similarities between the two exhibitions. Now I will first look at how the British Museum has tried to reach their audience and how this differs with Volkenkunde, then I will discuss the differences between the two exhibitions and how Volkenkunde tries to avoid making the mistakes made by the British Museum.

In July 2011 the pre-announcements were mentioned in different newspapers and on websites. Here a difference with Volkenkunde already becomes apparent. On the website of The National which is the English voice in the Middle East (Holland 21-07-2011) and the website of Al Arabiya News (Moseley 19-07-2011) the comments given by the curator of the exhibition and comments given by the director of the British Museum were mentioned. In the pre-announcement of Volkenkunde there is now mention of the curator of the exhibition or other names. This can be the case because of the different statuses of the museums or it can be different because the English media differ from the Dutch media. The pre-announcement of the British Museum was released earlier to the opening of the exhibition than the announcement of Volkenkunde. On the websites mentioned above and other websites and papers the pre-announcement was more than just that. It contained more information on the exhibition and what the museum tried to achieve. On the website of The National the curator of the exhibition, Venetia Porter, shows that the British Museum is aiming to create a different understanding of the Islam in the West: "...initiatives designed to educate non-Muslims about Islam, are "absolutely crucial"... There is too much [in the media] about Islam in a negative way, unfortunately. We want there to be a positive feeling" (The National 21-07-2011). Volkenkunde has said that they try to be as "neutral" as possible in portraying the Hajj which is different from the British Museum who actually tried to change the general view on the Islam in the United Kingdom.

Another difference in the articles on the pre-announcement of the exhibition in the British Museum with the announcement of Volkenkunde is that of the way the cooperation with other institutions is being mentioned. Volkenkunde mentions the British Museum as helping them with gathering objects but they leave it at that, the British Museum has an advisory role. The partnership of the Library in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the British Museum seems to indicate that both parties have had a say in what the exhibition should eventually look like. Even the Saudi Arabian deputy education minister wanted to have a say in it; he hopes that the exhibition: "...bring about greater understanding of Hajj for non-Muslims" as well as celebrating the tradition for everyone else" (Ibid.). The director also mentions what they want to achieve: "...to illustrate the link between faith and society" (Al Arabiya News 19-07-2011). This is what they also have been doing with their other exhibitions. The Hajj exhibition is a way: "...to pay homage to one of the great religious and cultural phenomena of the Islamic world and to lead non-Muslims to a better understanding of its spiritual significance" (Ibid.). Volkenkunde is not working with any institution in Saudi Arabia nor are they in contact with anyone from the Saudi Arabian government. The British Museum worked closely with the country from which the most objects in their exhibition originated. Volkenkunde will not have any objects from Saudi Arabia in their exhibition. More interesting is that the exhibition in the British Museum is funded by HSBC Amanah which is a global Islamic financial services part of the HSBC Group of banks. This is interesting because an exhibition about Islam in a western country is funded by an Islamic bank; this raises questions, how much influence does the funder have on the exhibition? If the HSBC Amanah had significant influence, it is possible that the exhibition in the British Museum shows the perspective of the bank and also of Saudi Arabia. Of course there is nothing wrong with that but in that case they should inform their visitors of this. I will discuss later how the visitors viewed the partnership of the British Museum with the King Abdulaziz Public Library Riyadh.

A similarity with Volkenkunde is that the British Museum also had a Muslim woman working on the exhibition, Qaisra Khan the project curator, who has already been on Hajj. A difference is that Khan took several souvenirs back home with her while Volkenkunde has asked their potential visitors to loan their souvenirs to the museum. So Volkenkunde is working more closely with the source communities close by than the British Museum who works with (official) institutions from Saudi Arabia as source community.

The exhibition in Volkenkunde will differ from the one in the British Museum because the museum is situated in a different country. Both museums have tried or will try to relate the exhibition to their own society. This means that Volkenkunde is using objects and visual material from mostly Indonesia and the photographs made by Snouck Hurgronje, a Dutchman who went on Hajj as a spy. The British Museum has focused on objects from the Middle East, Mali, Europe and also Indonesia. Most of the Muslims in the United Kingdom have their roots elsewhere than the Muslims in the



Netherlands. This is why the focus is on different parts of the world, since their target societies have not the same ties.

During my internship I got the assignment to read the press coverage on the Hajj exhibition in the British Museum. I did this for my own research but also for Volkenkunde. The curator wanted to know what the criticism was on the exhibition. Volkenkunde then can see whether they can avoid making the same mistakes as the British Museum or anticipate on the criticism in a different way., for example by mentioning why they leave something out. Most of the press coverage on the exhibition was positive. They were positive on the message that the British Museum was sending out and they were also positive about the overall experience. Here are some comments on the exhibition:

- “Whether or not you have faith, the Hajj is one journey we all need to understand” (Patterson 04-02-2012).
- “You don’t have to go round it seven times, but you almost feel you should. You almost feel, when you go into what used to be the reading room at the British Museum, where Marx, and Kipling, and Orwell used to work, and hear the wailing of a human voice that millions hear as a call to prayer, as if you should swap your jeans for a tunic. You almost feel you should shave your head. You almost feel like shouting “Allahu Akbar”” (Ibid.)
- “This is an understandably didactic exhibition, addressing a subject which will probably be quite unfamiliar to many visitors – the story comes first, with the objects exhibited becoming illustrations, and means through which that story is told” (Billingsley 19-03-2012).
- “Implicitly challenging us to examine our own faith, this exhibition is a must for Christians wanting to learn about Islam, whether or not already involved in inter-faith contacts” (Cooper 23-03-2012).
- “The British Museum’s Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam finds its biggest strength as not just an educational look at the Muslims practice of pilgrimage, but more importantly as an act of cultural diplomacy, one that invites both Muslims and non-Muslims to come together in experiencing an otherwise very private world” (Jueid 25-03-2012).
- “Amidst a rapid news culture where speedy headlines are dominant, the exhibit is one where visitors can go to slow down, encounter new artworks and artifacts, erase their misconceptions, and leave having made, to some degree, their own pilgrimages towards a greater sense of cultural understanding and engaged dialogue” (Ibid.).

These are some of the positive comments on the Hajj exhibition in the British Museum. Many of the press coverage I read had the same positive reactions on the exhibition. The exhibition was seen as groundbreaking by most reviews. The comments mentioned above and also other comments are

mostly about the experience of the exhibition and about the possible difference to the attitudes of the public regarding the Islam that the exhibition can make.

There were not only positive reviews on the exhibition. Some reviews criticized the partnership of the British Museum with the King Abdulaziz Public Library Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. The partnership was criticized because some reviewers wondered how it influenced the exhibition. And also because of the recent politics of Saudi Arabia.

- “Is it really possible to have normal cultural ties with an abnormal society, especially one like Saudi Arabia characterized by sectarian oppression, denial of democracy and human rights and vicious repression of its own citizens and those of its small neighbor” (McRoy 2012: 37).
- “The picture of Islam and the Hajj it gives is very much in accord with a Saudi view” (Jakeman 2012: 17).
- “It not only fails to question Islam’s foundation myths but augments the myth-making by excluding evidence that might embarrass the Saudi royal family” (Cohen 18-03-2012).
- “Thus, instead of offering a frank conversation, the British Museum waffles to me and other journalists that the destruction of Mecca and the terrorist attacks did not fit into the exhibition’s remit” (Ibid).

So the British Museum is being criticized for not being critical enough and only showing what is good for the Saudi royal family. The museum failed to display or mention evidence of the destruction of historical sites by the Saudi government. This was done by modernizing the different historical sites of the Hajj and by destroying historical sites and replace them with hotels. But also the fact that the British Museum is working with a country which has been criticized of its politics, like the lack of democracy and human rights, is a point of criticism of the museum.

I told the curator of the Hajj exhibition of Volkenkunde about these criticisms and they will try to avoid doing the same things. First of all Volkenkunde is not working with any institution from Saudi Arabia nor are they funded by them. They are not “forced” in any way to portray the Hajj in a manner that is allowed by Saudi Arabia. I mentioned earlier the information of the different subjects that will be placed on the website for the exhibition. One of them is the modernizing of Mecca and Medina which will include the modernizing of the historical sites of the Hajj and the destruction of other historical sites. It is planned to put some of the information in the exhibition and possibly photographs of the modernizing of Mecca and Medina and the destruction of historical sites by the Saudi Arabian government.

Volkenkunde was not planning to do any of this in the first place but after they found out that the British Museum was criticized because they did not mention any of it nor did they make it possible to start a conversation or discussion. It is interesting to see how one museum is learning from the

mistakes off another museum. More interesting is the fact that before I said anything about this criticism that Volkenkunde had no idea about it while they were working together with the British Museum. Volkenkunde is also avoiding this because they have chosen to show different perspectives on the Hajj which means that also the Saudi Arabia viewpoint will be in the exhibition but also perspectives that contradict the viewpoint of Saudi Arabia.. The British Museum was also criticized for not starting a discussion but only showing the Hajj as a “fairy tale”. I don’t expect that Volkenkunde will start a discussion themselves. They try to be as “neutral” themselves so they will not have any of their own potentially critical views in the exhibition. The discussion in the case of Volkenkunde is possible since they show more perspectives in their exhibition which means that the visitors see more than one viewpoint so that they are stimulated to think. Visitors will see the changes of Mecca and Medina over the years and have the room to form their opinions about them. The British Museum did not give their visitors this opportunity since the visitors had no information about the other sides of the story.

The comparison of the Hajj exhibition in the British Museum and in Volkenkunde shows how two different museums with the same sort of exhibition approach their visitors and media in a different way. They have different partnerships which means that they will not show the same perspectives in their exhibitions. They also differ in the objects that will be or were displayed in the exhibition because of the different societies in which the museums are situated. Both have different objects to appeal to those societies, to make their exhibitions part of that society and to show its relevance within that society. But in what they are trying to achieve is more common ground, both want to attract a group of people to their museum that is normally rarely see within museums.

## 4. Conclusion

The economic crisis that started in 2007 has left the museums worldwide in financial difficulties. Budget cuts have led to the reduction of subsidies for museums. This means that museums have to find another way to generate money to keep their heads above the water. I was interested in looking at how the Volkenkunde museum in Leiden tries to do this through attracting more visitors to their museum. This led to the following research question *How does the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden attract visitors during the making of an exhibition?* To be able to answer this question I have done an internship and research at Volkenkunde. During this research I was able to speak to the staff involved in the making of the exhibition on the Hajj and staff involved in the attracting of visitors to the museum. I did my research as an intern in Volkenkunde. My position as an intern and at the same time as a researcher has influenced my research. As an intern I was part of the making of the exhibition and the people I have interviewed were at the time my bosses and colleagues. I am aware that as a researcher, it is impossible to be completely objective which means that I cannot exclude an influence of my internship on the outcome of my research.

During my research at Volkenkunde I have found that Volkenkunde has discovered different ways to get their money from somewhere else than the subsidies from the government. But it has proven hard to make this a success. Despite their efforts there still will be staff fired. To attract more visitors to the museum and in that way get more money, they have decided to do at least two temporary exhibitions a year. One of the temporary exhibitions this year is the Hajj exhibition. The interesting thing about this exhibition is that Volkenkunde tries to reach a new audience for them, Dutch Muslims. They do this in various ways. They have to make new networks which they do through people they hired. They also use social media and by promoting the exhibition by various Muslim institutions. The British Museum did the same sort of exhibition on the Hajj and they managed to attract Muslims which were also the target audience in this exhibition. Their exhibition was record breaking and around 50 percent of the visitors consisted of the target audience. It will have to be seen whether Volkenkunde will also be able to reach their target audience and turn the exhibition into a successful one.

While doing my research, I found a couple of things which I see as unexpected or most important for my research. One of my most important findings is that the Volkenkunde museum is investing in its temporary exhibitions. Normally they had one temporary exhibition each year. During the crisis they see the temporary exhibitions as the key to attract more visitors. Instead of one temporary exhibition, they have at least two temporary exhibitions which cost more money to set up but they attract more visitors. The new director who started in the summer of 2012 sees this at the best

option. The down side is that there is less money available for the permanent exhibitions. So the permanent exhibitions will stay mostly the same as they are right now. I have walked through the museum a couple of times at different hours and there are not many visitors in the permanent exhibitions. This made me wonder why. I know that the museum is keeping records of the feedback from the visitors but I have not been able to look at them yet. I want to look at the feedback to see what the visitors view is on the permanent exhibitions. I have seen in the online guestbook that most visitors comment on the temporary exhibitions. This is an indication that the visitors do mainly come for the temporary exhibition and that they are less interested in the permanent exhibitions.

In the chapter on the Volkenkunde museum in general, I have described how the museum is affected by the crisis and how they have tried to innovate to attract more visitors to their exhibitions which is vital for them to ensure continuity. I have showed that Volkenkunde succeeded in achieving the goal of earning at least 17,5 percent of the subsidies given by the government. But despite their achievements they still had to fire people and they need to keep innovating to attract more visitors. They are not the only ones affected by the budget cuts. Other museums, like the Wereldmuseum in Rotterdam, also have financial difficulties. They had to fire a bigger percentage of their staff than Volkenkunde. The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam even had to be saved by the Dutch government or they would have had to close. The evaluation of the VRM shows that in the past four years Volkenkunde has been innovating and that this has worked out for them. They have showed that they are able to find their income in other places than the subsidies of the government.

The PR department of Volkenkunde uses their network to promote the temporary exhibitions. They focus on the audience that has proven to be the most frequent visitors to their exhibition. That audience consists of women above 40, students, travelers, students and lovers of culture. The network of the PR department consists of the magazines, radio shows, newspapers and so on, that reaches that specific audience. Around the temporary exhibitions there are various activities organized to attract more visitors and those activities are also a source of income for the museum. The amount of energy that Volkenkunde puts in temporary exhibitions through the making and promoting of them, shows that they focus on the temporary exhibitions to gain a higher income. The director of Volkenkunde to make at least two temporary exhibitions a year to achieve their goal of attracting 150.000 paying visitors a year.

To avoid making the same mistakes in the exhibitions and to know what their visitors want to see in the museum, Volkenkunde uses the Museum monitor of TNS Nipo. The Museum monitor shows whether an exhibition was successful by asking visitors to rate the following categories: general, presentation, atmosphere, objects, information, how the exhibition was build up, the flow and the child friendliness. The outcome of the ratings of the visitors will be a percentage that is compared

to a Benchmark. Once an exhibition is rated higher than the overall Benchmarks, it is deemed successful.

With the theory of Bourdieu on the habitus, the cultural and the economic capital, I have explained how every visitor is different. The habitus of the visitor determines the way a visitor views an exhibition (Appelrouth a.o. 2008). The biggest part of the audience of Volkenkunde has a comparable habitus since they mostly come from the same society and share the same customs. It is important for Volkenkunde to know their visitors so that they can make the exhibitions according to their visitors habitus. The cultural capital of visitors is also of influence for the museum. This means that one visitor might not have the same knowledge that another visitor has. This is important to know because the museum needs to know what kind of information and how much should be part of an exhibition.

An exhibition is a place where different cultures meet. The visitor of the exhibition comes into contact with other cultures like a tourist that travels to other cultures. But just like a tourist, a visitor of a museum is kept inside a 'tourist bubble' (Van Beek 2007). The museum protects the visitor of the 'bad' sides of a culture by not giving information on that side. As an ethnology museum, Volkenkunde owns objects that are part of the heritage of different cultures. Those objects appeal to certain visitors. But they are not the only ones, other museums and cultural institutions also own different heritage objects. Volkenkunde competes with them to attract visitors to them and for that they need to know what visitors want to see so that they can display objects related to that.

My research fits into the debates about place and visitors studies. Volkenkunde is a place where people meet but it is also a place of the exercising of power. The museum determines which objects and information are available for their visitors. It is also a place of exclusion and inclusion. People are excluded by not actively trying to attract them to the museum. Volkenkunde has tried to change this with the Hajj exhibition. With this exhibition they have tried to attract Dutch Muslims who are not among the regular visitors of museums.

The Hajj exhibition is made with the help of the British Museum who have already done this type of exhibition last year. The making of this exhibition is interesting because the museum focuses on a new audience which means that they need to look for other networks to reach this group. I have showed that every decision that has been made within the process of making the exhibition has been made to attract visitors and to be able to make the exhibition as successful as possible. I compared the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde with the one in the British Museum. Both museums focused on the Muslim groups within their society. The Muslim groups within the Netherlands differ from the groups in the United Kingdom. Since both museums have tried to relate their exhibitions to their societies, they differ in the objects and focus of the exhibition. Volkenkunde is mostly focusing on Indonesia

while the British Museum focused primarily on the Middle East. I have looked through the press coverage of the exhibition in the British Museum to see what the criticism on the exhibition were. Most of the reviewers were positive, they were excited by the experience of the exhibition. There were some reviewers criticizing the partnership with the King Abdulaziz Public Library Riyadh in Saudi Arabia. They thought that the partnership blocked the British Museum from criticizing Saudi Arabia for the destruction of various historical sites. The exhibition was funded by HSBC Amanah which is a global Islamic financial services part of the HSBC Group of banks which led for some reviewers to criticizing the British Museum for only showing the aspects of the Hajj which were favorable for the Saudi royal family. Volkenkunde is trying to avoid these criticisms by not working with the government or any institution related to Saudi Arabia, they only work with the British Museum. They will also show different perspectives on the Hajj to avoid the same criticism. By comparing the Hajj exhibition in Volkenkunde and the one that was in the British Museum I have tried to show that different partnerships and a different focus leads to completely different exhibitions although they still wanted to achieve the same goal, attracting a new audience to their museum.

The way in which Volkenkunde is attracting its visitors to their Hajj exhibition is a complex process starting with the idea of an exhibition. Throughout the making of the exhibition, the museum always makes the decisions with the visitors in the back of their minds. The museum staff ask themselves the questions – what do visitors want to see or how much do they know – constantly throughout the whole process. Volkenkunde knows what a big part of their audience want to see and how much it knows because of their experience with making exhibitions. This thesis answered the research question - *How does the Volkenkunde Museum in Leiden attract visitors during the making of an exhibition?* – by describing the whole process of making an exhibition step by step with the case study of the Hajj exhibition. Now Volkenkunde has to wait until September 2013 to see how their visitors react to their exhibition and whether it will be successful in attracting more visitors to the museum.

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## **Appendix**

### **1.List of Interviewees**

Director of Volkenkunde – Stijn Schoonderwoerd

Herman de Boer – from the audio-visual department

Anne Marie Woerlee – Head of Exhibitions and Education

Geke Vink – Communication Manager

Luit Mols – Curator Middle East, West and Central Asia

## 2. Press announcements

### 2.1. Pre-announcement

Vooraankondiging, Leiden mei 2013

Verlangen naar MEKKA **De reis van de pelgrim**

Grote tentoonstelling in Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde Leiden 10 september 2013 t/m 9 maart 2014

**Dit najaar presenteert Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde een unieke tentoonstelling over de bedevaart naar Mekka. Schitterende voorwerpen, persoonlijke verhalen en indringende reportages geven een alomvattend beeld van deze indrukwekkende pelgrimstocht, waar jaarlijks miljoenen mensen wereldwijd aan deelnemen. De tentoonstelling is een coproductie met het British Museum in Londen. Het is de eerste keer dat er in Nederland een tentoonstelling van deze omvang gemaakt wordt over de *hadj*, de bedevaart naar Mekka. Inzameldag** De samenstellers

van de tentoonstelling doen alvast een beroep op Nederlandse moslims: op zondag 2 juni is er een speciale ‘inzameldag’. Het museum is op zoek naar voorwerpen en mooie verhalen die deel kunnen uitmaken van de tentoonstelling. Iedereen wordt uitgenodigd die dag naar het museum te komen met zogenaamde hadj-souvenirs: van gebedskleden, sieraden, tassen en sjaaltjes tot mokken en boekjes en alles wat er verder in deze categorie past. Het museum wil die spullen graag lenen om ze onderdeel van de tentoonstelling te maken. **De tentoonstelling** Voor een kwart van de wereldbevolking is Mekka de plek waar je een keer in je leven geweest moet zijn. Wereldwijd richten gelovigen zich dagelijks met hun gebeden in de richting van de heilige stad. Jaarlijks gaan miljoenen pelgrims op bedevaart. De stad Mekka in Saoedi-Arabië is alleen toegankelijk voor moslims, voor anderen is Mekka alleen bekend van foto’s met stromen pelgrims rondom de heilige ka’ba. Mekka is in onze taal zelfs spreekwoordelijk ingeburgerd als ‘paradijs’ of ‘uitgelezen plaats’ (gebruikt als: *Amsterdam is een Mekka voor architectuurliefhebbers*).

Mekka is meer onderdeel van onze Nederlandse cultuur en geschiedenis dan we wellicht beseffen. Honderdduizenden inwoners van ons koninkrijk hebben de pelgrimstocht in het verleden gemaakt; vanuit Indonesië, Suriname, Nederland. Mekka en de bedevaart ernaartoe zijn daarmee ook onderdelen van onze geschiedenis en cultuur. De bedevaart naar Mekka heeft eeuwenlang veel kunstenaars en vorsten geïnspireerd tot het (laten) vervaardigen van schitterende objecten. Samen met het British Museum zijn meer dan 250 unieke stukken bijeen gebracht uit enkele van de beste Islamitische kunstcollecties ter wereld. Met een grote verscheidenheid: van de tiende eeuw tot nu, van Indonesië tot Marokko.

Wat trekt de pelgrims? Welk verlangen drijft ze? Welke rituelen vervullen ze? Welke beproevingen komen ze tegen, welke loutering ondergaan ze? Welke onvergetelijke indrukken en ervaringen doen zij op, onderweg, ter plekke en na terugkomst? Aan de hand van persoonlijke verhalen wordt in deze tentoonstelling een uniek persoonlijk inzicht geboden in een van de grootste spirituele, culturele en religieuze fenomenen van de wereld.

Het stichtingsjaar 1837 maakt Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde in Leiden tot een van de oudste volkenkundige musea ter wereld. Het beheert anno 2013 meer dan 240.000 voorwerpen en 500.000 audiovisuele bronnen vanuit de hele wereld. Toonaangevend wetenschappelijk onderzoek, spraakmakende publieksprogramma’s en de vele internationale samenwerkingsprojecten maken Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde tot een van de belangrijkste Europese expertisecentra op gebied van mondiale culturen.

**Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde, Steenstraat 1, Leiden, t 071 5168 800, [www.volkenkunde.nl](http://www.volkenkunde.nl), [info@volkenkunde.nl](mailto:info@volkenkunde.nl)** -----

**Noot voor de redactie: voor meer informatie en (digitale) persfoto's kunt u contact opnemen met de afdeling PR van Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde.**

## 2.2. Report on collection day

PERSBERICHT 4 juni 2013

Inzameldag hadj-souvenirs groot succes Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde Leiden

**Dit najaar opent VERLANGEN NAAR MEKKA - De reis van de pelgrim. Een unieke tentoonstelling over de hadj, de bedevaart naar Mekka. Afgelopen zondag organiseerde het museum een inzameldag van hadj-souvenirs. Via verschillende kanalen waren Nederlandse moslims gevraagd om hun souvenirs aan het museum uit te lenen. Souvenirs die samen met het verhaal erachter een plek krijgen in de tentoonstelling. Het delen van de herinnering aan die betekenisvolle reis, bleek velen aan te spreken: met tassen vol kwamen zij naar het museum om hun persoonlijke aandenken beschikbaar te stellen.**

**Herinneringen in bruikleen** Zondag 2 juni stond een team van medewerkers van Volkenkunde klaar om de hadjies, de mensen die op hadj zijn geweest te verwelkomen en hun souvenirs in ontvangst te nemen. Het werd een dag vol persoonlijke verhalen en dierbare herinneringen. Op film vastgelegd en in september samen met de souvenirs terug te zien in de tentoonstelling Verlangen naar Mekka. Een geslaagd voorbeeld van de manier waarop Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde tentoonstellingen over wereldculturen samen met vertegenwoordigers van die culturen zelf wil maken. 'Not about them without them'.

**Verlangen naar Mekka** Voor een kwart van de wereldbevolking is Mekka de plek waar je een keer in je leven geweest moet zijn. Wereldwijd richten gelovigen zich dagelijks met hun gebeden in de richting van de heilige stad. Jaarlijks gaan miljoenen pelgrims op bedevaart. De stad Mekka in Saoedi-Arabië is alleen toegankelijk voor moslims, voor anderen is Mekka alleen bekend van foto's met stromen pelgrims rondom de heilige ka'ba. Wat trekt de pelgrims? Welk verlangen drijft ze? Welke onvergetelijke indrukken en ervaringen doen zij op, onderweg, ter plekke en na terugkomst? Aan de hand van dergelijke verhalen wordt in deze tentoonstelling een uniek persoonlijk inzicht geboden in een van de grootste spirituele, culturele en religieuze fenomenen van de wereld.

**100 Hady-tips** In aanloop naar de tentoonstelling Verlangen naar Mekka - De reis van de pelgrim (10 sept. 2013 t/m 9 mrt 2014) geeft Volkenkunde 100 hadj-tips via twitter. De praktische tips zijn opgesteld door hadj gangers zelf. Ze zijn handig voor zowel de voorbereiding als de reis zelf. De speciale hadj tips volgen? Ga naar [www.twitter.com/mekkainleiden](http://www.twitter.com/mekkainleiden).

Het stichtingsjaar 1837 maakt Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde in Leiden tot een van de oudste volkenkundige musea ter wereld. Het beheert anno 2013 meer dan 240.000 voorwerpen en 500.000 audiovisuele bronnen vanuit de hele wereld. Toonaangevend wetenschappelijk onderzoek, spraakmakende publieksprogramma's en de vele internationale samenwerkingsprojecten maken Rijksmuseum Volkenkunde tot een van de belangrijkste Europese expertisecentra op gebied van mondiale culturen.

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