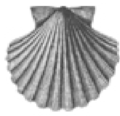
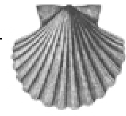


PEREGRINATIONS
INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF PILGRIMAGE ART



Pilgrimage and Faith: Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam

http://www.serindia.com/item.cfm/606 I

Curated by Virginia Raguin and Dina Bangdel with F.E. Peters
Funded in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts

For the fully illustrated brochure, click here.

2010-2011
Four venues
First Venue: Iris and B. Gerald Cantor Gallery, College of the Holy Cross, Worcester, MA, Spring 2010 January 27- April 10, 2010
Second Venue: Loyola University Museum of Art, Loyola University, Chicago IL, August 20 – November 14, 2010.
Third Venue: University of Richmond Museums of Art, January 28 to May 20, 2011
Fourth Venue: Rubin Museum of Art, New York, July 1 - October 24, 2011.

Figure 1a: Hajj; Arafat, 1974. Photo: S. M. Amin /*Saudi Aramco World*/SAWDIA
Figure 1b: *Scala Santa* (Holy Stairs) Rome, 2009. Photo: Michel Raguin
Figure 1c: Buddhist festival in Kathmandu, Nepal, 2003. Photo: Dina Bangdel

INTRODUCTION

This exhibition focuses on fundamental issues of the three religions and the many ways their practices converge in the pilgrimage experience. The pilgrim's goal is the holy site; to approach it involves both physical and temporal expense, beginning through detachment from the familiar. The hoped-for result is the acquisition of humility, acknowledging the smallness of the self and the greatness of the divine. Paramount is the injunction to exercise charity to others and also in humility to accept charity from others.

Although often rare and beautiful, art also functions as a vital part of social systems that cement the bonds of community, as well as supporting the role of religion in transcending human limitations. All three religions display a deeply felt motivation to affect the life of the believer through transformative experience, frequently involving art. All structure an intersection of the individual with both natural and built environments, ritualized behavior, and tangible objects. This tangible object may range from a bejeweled statue venerated at a national shrine to the commonly available chromolithograph. Pilgrimage ultimately creates a liminal situation within which the believer is neither in the realm of the ordinary nor yet within the sacred.

The juxtaposition of religions whose beliefs and practices are so often seen as incompatible reveals profound similarities. Participants on pilgrimages saw objects of supreme artistic skill (Islamic glazed tile, Christian enameled reliquaries, or Buddhist bronze statues) mingled with mass-produced objects (lead pilgrimage badges, terracotta souvenirs, or paper mementos) and personal acquisitions such as stones or soil from the holy place. Such objects make more tangible the ephemeral experience and thus enable the owner to intensify memories of spiritual commitment and social interaction. **(Figs. 2a and 2b)**

Figure 2a: Virgin & Child of Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Prague, 1902. Photo: Michel Raguin
Figure 2b: Clay plaque of Guru Rinpoche (2 ¾ inches), The Newark Museum, Gift of Mr. Leo LeBon 1982, 82.207 F2. Photo: by permission

The practices of Buddhists, Christians, and Muslims testify to a desire to believe in the sacred made more accessible at a holy place. This vital sacred power or blessing is known to Tibetan Buddhists as chinlab (*byin rlabs*). Early Christian tombs of saints were seen as possessing *praesentia*, the physical presence of the holy. Charity to the pilgrim can be seen as sharing the sacred power, the holy. For Muslims, charity is one of the Five Pillars of Islam, and acts of charity are imbedded in the *hajj* ritual, with the slaughter of animals whose meat is then distributed to the poor. In Tibet, Buddhist pilgrims can receive well wishes and material help in the form of food and money from many people, including Han Chinese and Westerners.

A pilgrim seeks to purify, connecting the inner process with the exterior physicality, especially ascent and circumambulation. Most pilgrimages involve long days of journey across often arduous terrain. **(Figs. 3a and 3b)** But even with the goal attained, Buddhists circumambulate many times the sacred objects such as a temple, a stupa or even an entire monastery; Christians climb the stairs to embrace the statue of St. James in Compostela; and Muslims circumambulate the Ka'ba. Pilgrims often wear special dress, such as a white coat in Japan decorated with stamps from the temples visited, or carry amulets: prayer scrolls rolled within cylinders worn in Iran, a Tibetan Gau with its small objects of blessing and memory, and Christian pilgrimage badges. These tangible manifestations of commitment are directed inward as much as outward. We are fragile beings; our attention wavers and our energy fails. Reminders are necessary, whether attention to scheduled hours of prayer, communal hearing, or recitation of holy texts, or the wearing of a particular form of dress or adornment, all serve to focus purpose.

Figure 3a Pilgrimage on the Camino of Santiago, 2008. Photo: Virginia Raguin
Figure 3b Pilgrimage in Tibet from Nyethang to Samye, 2007. Photo: Krisadawan Hongladarom

Buddhist Pilgrimage

And they, Ananda, who shall die while they, with believing heart, are journeying on such pilgrimage, shall be reborn after death, when the body shall dissolve, in the happy realms of heaven."

Mahaparinirvana Sutra, Ch.IV, 140.

As the world's fourth largest religion with more than 350 million followers, Buddhism's foundational creeds are non-violence (*ahimsa*) and the development of the qualities of loving kindness (*maitri*), altruistic compassion (*karuna*), and wisdom (*prajna*). These basic tenets of Buddhism were taught by its founder Shakyamuni Buddha, who himself was an ordinary mortal,

born as a prince in 5th century BCE India who attained enlightenment (*bodhi*) through rigorous meditation and self-transformation. For Buddhist practitioners, Shakyamuni's life serves as a paradigm of this spiritual path, that full awakening is accessible to every living being, and enlightenment may be attained anywhere, anytime, through any method, as long as it is vigorously pursued. Hence, pilgrimage to the sacred places associated with the historical Buddha Shakyamuni becomes one of the most visible and enduring expressions of religious practice throughout the Buddhist world.

Called *tirtha yatra* in Sanskrit, "a journey to the ford/crossing," Buddhist pilgrimage serves as a means to accrue merit and as an act of purifying the physical body through the sacred journey. (**Fig. 4a)** The goal of Buddhist pilgrimage then is to profoundly change the practitioner through the transformative experience, both mental and physical. Art supports the ritual of pilgrimage as the engagement of a journey, the acts of merit-making, charity and alms-giving during the process and beyond, sacred viewing at the site, and construction of memory through ephemera.

Figure 4a: Woman with prayer wheel at Jokhang Temple, Lhasa, Tibet, 2006. Photo: Luca Galuzzi - www.galuzzi.it.
Figure 4b: Mahabodhi Temple (19th century), Bodhgaya, India. Photo: Dina Bangdel

From the earliest literary reference as indicate by the quote above, India was the sacred land for Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism. From as early as the lifetime of Shakyamuni Buddha (*c*. 563- 483 BCE), pilgrimage to India, the birthplace of the religion, naturally became the center of the Buddhist pilgrimage tradition. Sites related to the major events of the Buddha's life, known as the Eight Great Sites of Wonder (*Astamahapratiharya*), lie at the core of all Buddhist pilgrimage. These include the place of his birth at Lumbini, his enlightenment at Bodhgaya, India**, (Fig. 4b)** his first Sermon at Sarnath, and his death at Kushinagara and the sites associated with his four great miraculous events. The earliest art of Buddhism, from as early as the 1st century BCE, represents the visual narratives of pilgrimage.

Pilgrimage in the Buddhist tradition highlights the centrality of relics and their power. Because being in the presence of a relic and taking *darsan* ("sacred viewing") of relics accrues merit, visiting the sites where relics are found is a principal impetus for pilgrimage in Buddhism.

Sites associated with the physical relics (e.g., a tooth, a hair, or ashes from cremation) of the historical Buddha and relics by association (e.g., places made sacred by his presence, or a bowl or robe used by the Buddha) therefore map the sacred Buddhist landscape of India. A third category of relics is consecrated paintings or sculptures, which serve as reminders of the sacred sites. The objects associated with this relic category include not only art works of high artistic skill and materials such as gold, silver, silk or bronze, but also ephemeral objects of paper and clay that embody the experience and power of pilgrimage for the practitioner.

Buddhist practice has supported the re-creation of surrogate pilgrimage sites. In regions far from the Buddhist sacred center of India where there was little possibility of visiting the core sacred sites of Buddhism, Indian sacred sites were frequently re-created. This symbolic reconstruction created surrogate pilgrimage sites and produced a localized sacred geography and landscape. Many among these are associated with the natural world as the tangible expressions of the sacred in the natural world. These surrogate sites were often found in beautiful natural settings in distant places, where the rigors of travel became central to the pilgrimage experience. The remote Mt. Kailash in northwest Tibet, considered the center of the Buddhist, Hindu, Jain, and Bon world systems, is one such sacred place. **(Fig. 4c)** Ritual circumambulation around the base of the 22,000 foot mountain is a merit-making activity that takes four days. Indeed, in Tibet a Buddhist pilgrim is often described as a person who goes around a sacred place. These journeys reinforce the conception of the physical landscape as sacred.

Figure 4c: Mount Kailash. Photo: Toni Neubauer

Figure 4d: Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion, Tibet, 2nd half of the 13th century. The Newark Museum, Purchase 1979, The Members' Fund, 79.442. Photo: by permission

Figure 4e: Japanese Pilgrim's Robe, 1977, Collection Robert and Marilyn Hamburger. Photo: Michel Raguin

Pilgrimage sites are fluid; they transform to meet needs of devotees. First, they live in memory for those who have experienced the physical journey to the site itself. But, in many cases the original pilgrimage sites are replicated for easier access. The Bodhisattva of Compassion, Avalokiteshvara, has widespread devotion across Asia. **(Fig. 4d)** Known in Japan as Kannon, the Bodhisattva is chiefly honored through a pilgrimage in Saikoku (Western Provinces) in central Japan that was eventually replicated at some 230 different places in the country. In the twenty-fifth chapter of the popular sacred text, the *Lotus Sutra,* Kannon appears in thirty-three different forms to save all sentient creatures. This Mahayana Buddhist text presents the powerful concept that multiple emanations of individual deities manifest a unified spiritual whole. Mahayana thinkers believe in the permanent presence of the Dharma or Buddhist Law in all spheres of existence, and assert that countless Buddhas and Bodhisattvas fill the universe to assist sentient beings in their spiritual quests. Just as the historical Buddha Shakyamuni presented multiple versions of himself walking, standing, sitting, and lying down during the miracles at Shravasti in India, so too other deities, like Kannon, present multiple versions of themselves. The Pilgrimage to the Thirty-Three Holy Places of Kannon in the Western Provinces is a 1500-mile route including clusters of temples in the city of Kyoto, as well as temples in the remote countryside, by the sea or lakes or in the mountains. Pilgrims begin the Saikoku Pilgrimage at Seigantoji at Nachi on the coast due south of Kyoto. Just as pilgrims venerating the Eighty-Eight shrines on the island of Shikoku, they often wear a white coat or a simple white shirt on which the names of the temples visited can be stamped. **(Fig. 4e)**

Christian Pilgrimage

Christians have embraced pilgrimage as an essential search for stability in face of the ephemera of life. The practice can be seen in relationship to the religion's central tenet, the incarnation of Christ. Within a triune God, consisting of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the second person, the Son, is both God and Man through his birth from Mary. Consequently, both the search for the physical trace of God on earth and the desire to depict the person of Jesus have galvanized Christian piety from its origins. Since Christ's human nature died and rose from the dead, believers see a promise of the resurrection of the dead for all his followers.

Since the earliest evidence of the cult, adherents expressed a desire to be close to the sites where the God/Man lived. The first object of pilgrimage was therefore the Holy Land, to places such as Bethlehem, (site of birth), the Sea of Galilee (site of preaching) and above all Jerusalem (site of death and resurrection). The anonymous pilgrim of Bordeaux wrote around 333 CE, arriving in the Jerusalem while the construction of the basilica of the church of the Holy Sepulcher was still in process. These early pilgrims were desirous of returning with a tangible souvenir of the pilgrimage. Relics for the pilgrim might be a stone from paths where Christ walked, water from a well, or even a piece of cloth or a statue that touched Christ's tomb. Later Christians far from these places often constructed replica sites, as did Buddhists who lived a great distance from India. Christians created replicas of varying exactitude of the Holy Sepulcher, **(Fig. 5a)** such as the Temple Church in London, **(Fig. 5b)** enabling those who could not journey to the Holy Land to revere in a special way the tangible moment of Christ's death and earthly resting place before his resurrection.

Figure 5a: Holy Sepulcher; Tomb of Christ, from David Roberts, *The Holy Land,* 1842-1849, John J. Burns Library at Boston College. Photo: by permission

Figure 5b: Temple Church, London, 1185 and 1240. Photo: Michel Raguin

Places of worship grew up over the sites of other holy graves, just as the grave of Christ was honored. At the same time that he constructed the great church in Jerusalem, the Emperor Constantine built the basilica of St. Peter over a cemetery believed to contain the grave of the first pope. The demand to be close to the tangible remains of heroic Christians, great confessors and martyrs, especially in the founding of new churches, encouraged the partition of bodies to allow the sacred "aura" that facilitated God's grace to be shared among a growing community. Churches were founded with relics as their essential talisman and stone altars with cavities inscribed with their list of relics dated from 320, a practice that was later routine. For the founding of Canterbury in the 5th-century, according to Bede (673-735), the pope provided Augustine with "all the things needful for the worship and service of the church, namely, sacred vessels, altar linen, church ornaments, priestly and clerical vestments, relics of the holy Apostles and martyrs and also many books" (Hist. Eccl., I, xxix).

Pilgrimages continued as a vital aspect of Christianity through the centuries. The desire to honor a revered individual and to petition for special grace for oneself or for others provided the underlying reasons for the routine of pilgrimages. As Chaucer (d.1400) presented so vividly in the *Canterbury Tales,* when April comes with its good weather and sweet showers cause the bud to bloom, it simply follows:

Then do folk long to go on pilgrimage,
And palmers to go seeking out strange strands,
To distant shrines well known in sundry lands.
And specially from every shire's end
Of England they to Canterbury wend,
The holy blessed martyr there to seek
Who helped them when they lay so ill and weak (Prologue: lines 12-18).

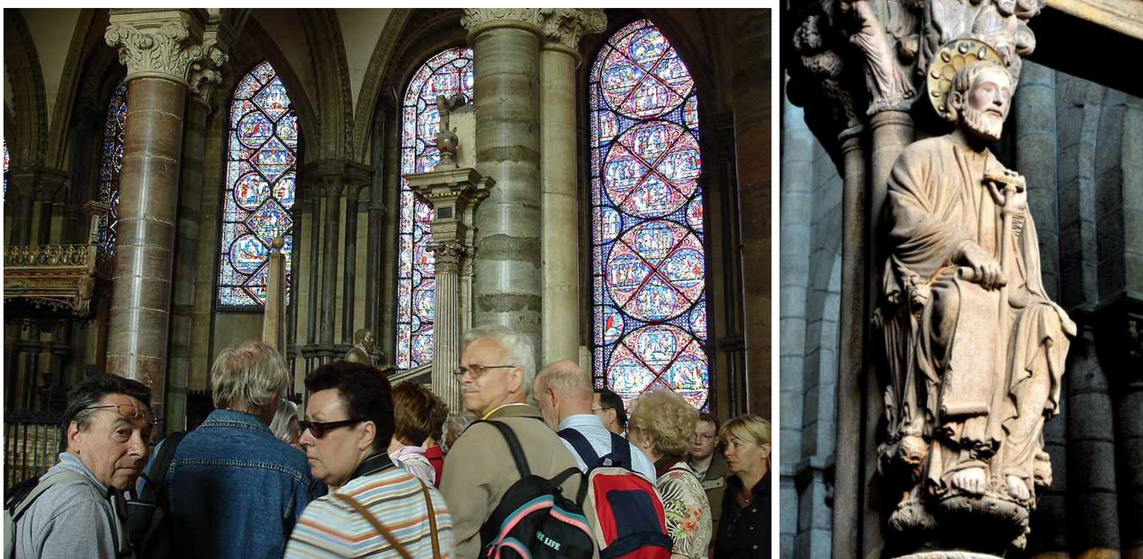


Figure 5c: Miracle windows of St. Thomas Becket, 1213-15/20, Canterbury Cathedral. Photo: Virginia Raguin
Figure 5d: St. James, 1166-1188, Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. Photo: Michel Raguin

It was the rhythm of life, a rhythm deeply imbedded into landscape, architecture, paths, buildings, statues, and images. Throughout the entire Middle Ages, and in Catholic Europe through the Renaissance and Baroque eras, the possession of relics of important saints made sites popular. Such indeed was Canterbury, with its body of a martyred archbishop who had challenged the authority of the English king. **(Fig. 5c)** Veneration even included significant displacement to visit theses relics. The well-known autobiography of English pilgrim Margery Kempe (*c*. 1373-1440s), who journeyed to numerous shrines, invariably associates them with relics, even locally, as at the tomb of St. William of Norwich.

The tomb of the Apostle St. James the Great in Northern Spain was particularly important. Pilgrims walked hundreds of miles from Germany Switzerland and Northern France across the Pyrenees through northern Spain to reach the site honoring the man who lived and worked with Christ. Soon the image of the saint acquired the characteristics of a pilgrim to his own shrine, carrying a staff for walking, a broad-brimmed hat, long cloak, and the symbol of the pilgrimage, the scallop shell acquired from the sea a short distance from the shrine **(Fig. 5d)** The worshipper did not believe that the souls of the saints remained in such relics (body, bone fragment, or clothes worn), but that these things would act as conduits to grace. They would link the revered intercessor, the saint favored in the eyes of God, to his or her faithful on earth. Not only sacred viewing, at the core of Buddhist pilgrimage, but also alms-giving was essential to Christian practice. The last chapter of the 12th century Pilgrim's Guide to Santiago de Compostela discusses charity to be offered to travelling pilgrims.

Commentators, however, not infrequently questioned the value and the validity of the pilgrimages. Santiago became a rallying cry for the "reconquest" of Spain by Christians and the saint developed into Santiago Matamoros: James the slayer of the Moors**. (Fig. 5e)** What for one group may be a means of spiritual detachment and also charitable acts along the pilgrimage route could also become a focal point for xenophobic antagonism towards those who do not share the belief.

Figure 5e St. James the Moorslayer (Santiago Matamoros), late 18th century, Cristo Rey Church, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Photo: Virginia Raguin
Figure 5f Shoes left as *ex-votos* for the Santo Niño de Atocha, 2006, Santuario de Chimayó, New Mexico. Photo: Virginia Raguin

Christian pilgrimages are popular today. Holy cities like Jerusalem, with its places marking the death and resurrection of Christ are revered as sites sacred to the origin of the religion. The road to Santiago still attracts numerous individuals, young and old and from a

diversity of nations. The motivations are diverse and include personal purification, experience of illness, and desire for bonding to a greater and more global community. Deeply personal needs are still expressed. In the New World, places like the Sanctuario of Chimayó in New Mexico bristle with petitions and thank offerings (ex votos) of baby shoes, portraits of children in the military service, or crutches and braces testifying to restored health. **(Fig. 5f)**

Muslim Pilgrimage

In the year 610 CE, when he was about forty, Muhammad, a citizen of Mecca, Saudi Arabia, had a vision which he experienced as a call from God to relay to his townsmen a message from God (called *Allah*). For twenty-two years he publicly proclaimed that message in what he called the Quran, "The Recitation." What God required was "submission" (*islam*), to a belief in a single God, This was troubling news for the great majority of Meccans who wanted no part in "The Submission" that was Islam. They got rid of their troublesome prophet, who found asylum in the oasis of Medina, but it was only a temporary respite. In the end, Muhammad returned in triumph: the Meccans became "submitters" (*muslimun*).

Every Muslim assumes a fivefold religious obligation. The first is a matter of faith, to pronounce and adhere to the conviction expressed in the Muslim creed, which begins with the rigorous statement of monotheism, "There is no god but the God," and ends with the specifically Muslim affirmation, "... and Muhammad is the Envoy of God." There follow four prescribed ritual acts: formal liturgical prayer five times daily; the payment of a annual alms; dawn-to-dusk fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan; and, finally, the performance, at least once in a lifetime, of the Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca if physically and financially able. **(Fig. 6a)**

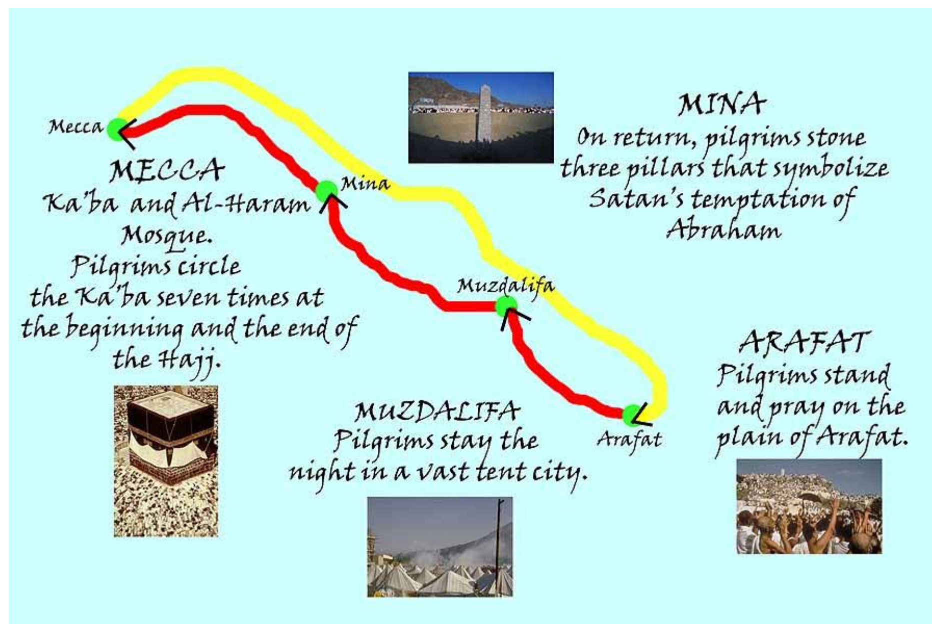


Figure 6a Diagram of Hajj, Mecca, Mina and, Arafat. Design: Rachel Raguin

Muhammad identified an ancient structure held in reverence by the people of Mecca, a house believed to have been built by the Jewish patriarch Abraham (Ibrahim) and his son Ishmael (Ismael). Other religions, however, apparently had defiled the holy house (*Ka'ba*)

meant to honor the one God with images that were idols of false gods. When Muhammad returned to Mecca, he cleansed the site of its idols. He kept, however, rituals associated with ancient practice. The first was the *umra,* the veneration of the Ka'ba and the second ritual was the *Hajj,* the journey from Mecca to Arafat and back in memory of Abraham.

Upon entering Mecca pilgrims proceed to the sevenfold, counterclockwise circumambulation of the Ka'ba. **(Fig. 6b and 6c)** They also attempt to kiss, touch or at least point to the Black Stone associated with Adam and Eve that is embedded in the eastern corner of the Ka'ba. The circuits of the Ka'ba completed, pilgrims go to the place called Safa, on the southeast side of the Haram, and complete seven "runnings" between that and another place, called Marwa, a distance altogether of somewhat less than two miles. The ritual commemorates Abraham's wife Hagar's desperate search for water for her son Ishmael. Today both hills, and the way between, are enclosed in an air-conditioned colonnade. The circuits of the Ka'ba originally formed part of the Meccan *umra*, but the empathetic running between Safa and Marwa was connected to it by Muhammad (Quran 2:153).

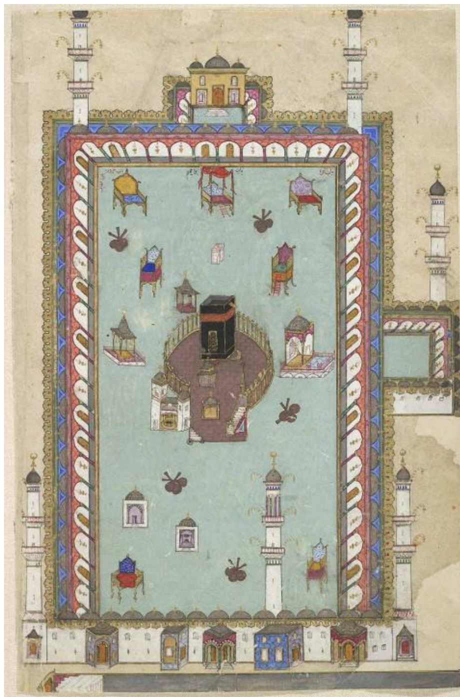
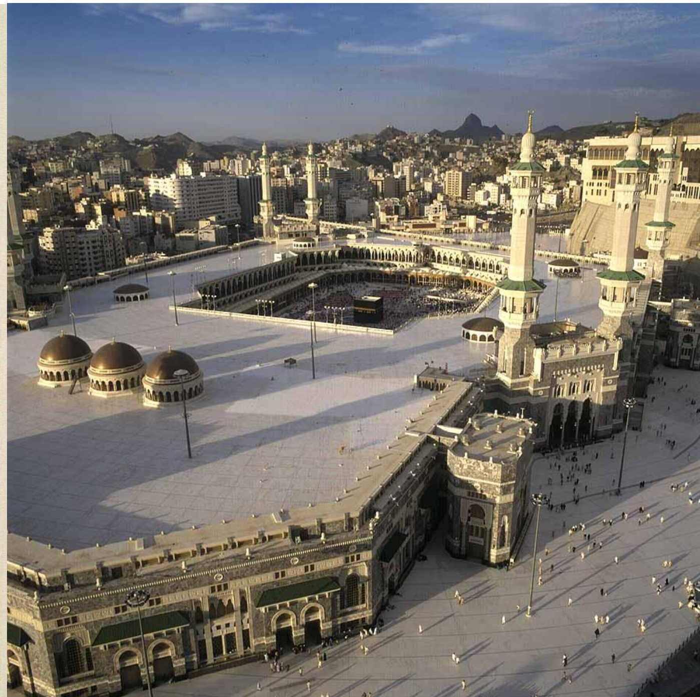



Figure 6b: Haram at Mecca, Folio from a Manuscript of the Javahir al-ghara'ib Tarjomat Bahr Al-Aja'ib (Gems of Marvels: A Translation of the Sea of Wonders) of Cennabi 1582, Harvard Art Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Harvard Art Museum, 1985.219.1. Photo: Allan Macintyre © President and Fellows of Harvard College
Figure 6c: Mecca, Aerial View of the Mosque, Haram, and Ka'ba. Photo: Abdullah Y. Al-Dobais/*Saudi Aramco World*/SAWDIA

On the eighth of the month of Dhu al-Hijja, the *Hajj* proper begins. The pilgrims proceed to Mina, a village five miles east of Mecca, where most spend the night where they become, for that solitary evening, citizens of one of the largest cities in the Middle East. The next day, the ninth, is the heart of the Hajj. On the plain of Arafat that surrounds the tiny hill called the Mount of Mercy, pilgrims stand in white-garbed equality. At times sermons have been delivered during this interval, but the essential act is precisely the "standing before God," and examination of

conscience from noon to sunset. Just before sunset there occurs the “dispersal,” a rush to Muzdalifa, a place halfway back toward Mina. The night is spent there, and the next morning, the tenth, the pilgrims hasten to Mina for the “Stoning of Satan,” the casting of seven pebbles at stone pillars. **(Fig. 6d)**The ritual commemorates the belief that Abraham was tempted by Satan to resist God’s order to sacrifice Ishmael; he banished the tempter by throwing stones. An animal is then sacrificed, commemorating Abraham’s sacrifice of a ram, and the meat distributed to charity. The pilgrims then return to Mecca and again circumambulate the Ka’ba.

Figure 6d Pilgrims “Stoning Satan,” Mina 2006. Photo: Courtesy Ministry of Hajj, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Hajj itself is profoundly personal and thus deeply transformative. A Muslim does not simply observe the liturgy of others, but performs himself, though in the company of other Muslims, an elaborate set of liturgical rites in which he is the sole and unique actor. Though he may be assisted through the intricacies of the complex ritual— Mecca has had from the beginning a guild of professional guides—his guides are only prompters; there are no intermediaries, no priests or clergy who mediate his actions to God. Like Abraham himself on that same terrain, he stands solitary before his God.

Although it is in no sense part of the Hajj, many pilgrims proceed to Medina to honor the Prophet’s tomb before returning home. **(Fig. 6e and 6f)** The practice of pious visits to shrines has long been a part of Muslim practice. Ibn Battuta was a legal scholar, born in Morocco, who traveled extensively across Northern Africa, the Middle East, India, and China. In 1325, at the age of twenty-one, he embarked on his first Hajj to Mecca. He passed through Medina before arriving at Mecca, leaving a moving reminiscence: *On the third day they alight outside the sanctified city [of al-Madina] the holy and illustrious. Taiba, the city of the Apostle of God (God bless and give him peace, exalt and ennoble him!) On the morning of the same day after sunset we entered the holy sanctuary and reached at length the illustrious mosque. We halted at the gate of peace to pay our respects. And prayed at the noble Garden between the tomb [of the Apostle] and the noble palm-trunk that whimpered for the Apostle of God (God bless him and*

give him peace) . . . We paid the meed of salutation to the lord of men, first and last, the intercessor for sinners and transgressors, the apostle-prophet of the tribe if Hashim from the Vale of Mecca, Muhammed (God bless and give him peace, exalt, and ennoble him).

Gibb, Sir Hamilton, ed. 1958. *The Travels of Ibn Battuta*, vol. 1. [The Hakluyt Society] London: Cambridge University Press, 163-64.

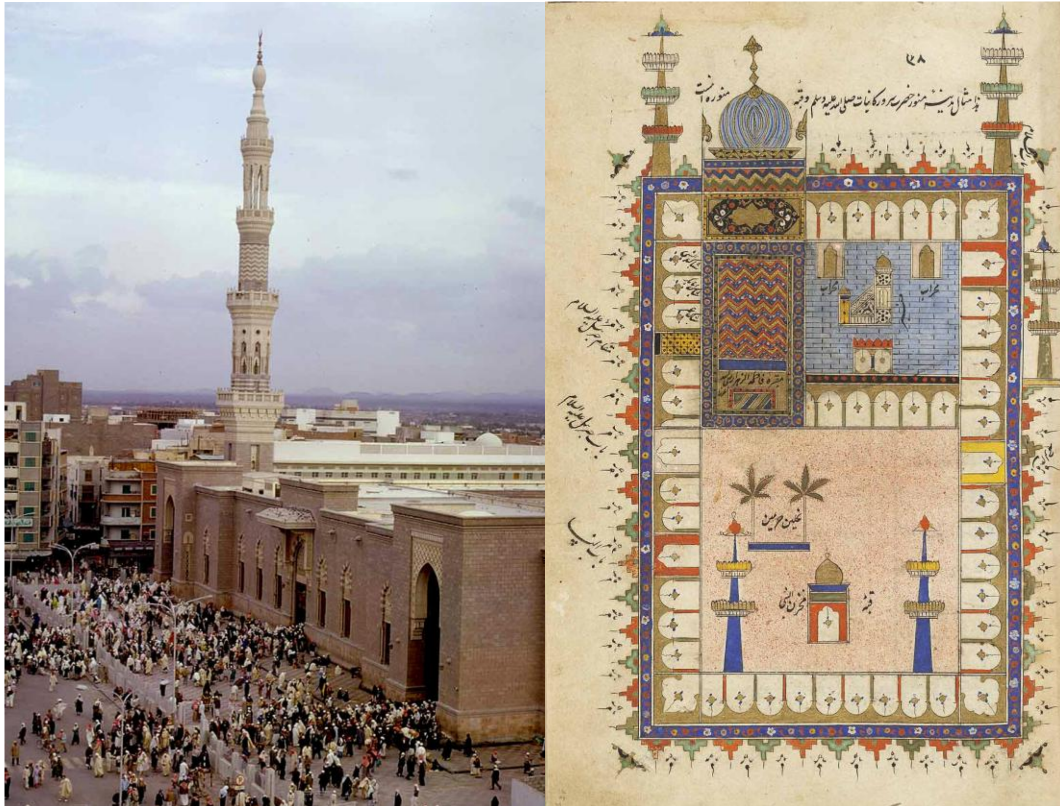


Figure 6e Mosque at Medina, 1974. Photo: S. M. Amin /*Saudi Aramco World*/SAWDIA
Figure 6f The Prophet's Tomb at Medina from Majmu'ah (anthology) of Persian Texts, 1550-1600, Ottoman Empire 16th-17th centuries. Harvard Art Museum, Arthur M. Sackler Museum, The Edwin Binney, 3rd Collection of Turkish Art at the Harvard Art Museum, 1985.265.20. Photo: Allan Macintyre © President and Fellows of Harvard College

Reflection

Pilgrimage sites are fluid; they transform to meet their transcending purposes. First, they live in memory for those who have experienced the physical journey to the site itself. But, in many instances, they experience extended lives in replication. The Saikoku Pilgrimage has been replicated in 230 sites throughout Japan. Christians created replicas of varying exactitude of the Holy Sepulcher, enabling those who could not journey to the Holy Land to revere in a special way the tangible moment of Christ's death and earthly resting place before his Resurrection. Muslims do not normally replicate Mecca, or the holy sites associated with the Hajj, yet in many ways the daily routine of prayer, turning toward Mecca, is a gesture of physical attachment to the geography of community. With the demise of pilgrimage opportunities in the birthplace of Buddhism in India, sacred sites became associated with other landscapes. For the true adept,

however, the voyage becomes entirely sublimated, subsumed into the soul, a mediation to transcend physical limitation.

But for the here and now, the vast majority of those seeking pilgrimage have recourse to the material. The preparation of one's clothes, conversation with companions, or the interaction with those passing by are central rituals. Souvenirs, the mass-produced wood blockprint, or even mementos as mundane as used airline tickets, serve to recall the actuality of the place and to encourage successive reflections on the meaning of the experience. Most vividly, the pilgrim seeks self-improvement. Reflection becomes a way of confirming to the self a continued commitment to that purpose, as well as a means of sharing with others. This is a global phenomenon and, as enacted by a community of real, living beings, ineluctably meshes with politics. The present, shared use of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem among the Latins, Copts, and Greek Orthodox can become both visibly and orally disjunctive. Public performance of ritual in areas of religious/ethnic tension has confronted opposition. Pilgrimage to Tibetan sites, now accessed through the government in Beijing, can involve changing visa restrictions. The management of the Hajj and the development of the new urban Mecca have, for some, presented tensions between the traditional purpose of the journey and contemporary tourism.

Figure 7a Palestinian school children visiting the Dome of the Rock, 1996. Photo: David H. Wells/*Saudi Aramco World*/SAWDIA /*Saudi Aramco World*/SAWDIA

Indeed, the worlds of religious expression and of secular pursuits can often seem at odds. Yet are the goals of pilgrimage completely estranged from many aspects of modern tourist travel? For the Palestinian children visiting the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, do we need to separate or even differentiate the various goals of religious obligation, cultural heritage, or artistic admiration? **(Fig. 7a)** In Rome, we can still find people visiting the *Scala Santa* (Holy Stairs) and mounting them on their knees. The twenty-eight marble stairs have been associated with the steps that Christ climbed to face trial before Pontius Pilate, and their transference to Rome credited to St. Helena. **(Fig. 7b)** Yet, these same devotees will assuredly visit the church

of St. John Lateran just across the road, and look at some of the most revered works of Rome's medieval and Renaissance artists. **(Fig. 7c)**

Figure 7b *Scala Santa* (Holy Stairs) Rome; Pilgrims mounting stairs on their knees. Photo: Michel Raguin

An iconic image of pilgrimage, and of art, is Caravaggio's *Madonna di Loreto* (1604-1606), also known as the *Madonna dei Pellegrini,* or pilgrims, in the Roman church of Sant'Agostino. **(Fig. 7d)** The barefoot Virgin and naked Child appear to two peasants whose calloused feet are at the spectator's eye level. The setting is not celestial, but a doorway of a building with flaking plaster. The onlookers here depicted have spent almost a half-hour before the image, standing to the right, instinctively aligning themselves with the peasants gazing at the apparition. What are they thinking? Certainly they are drawn by mesmerizing effect of the image set within its shallow chapel. Are they pondering the Virgin and her Son, or traditions of depictions of the Virgin in Italy's many shrines, or possibly Caravaggio's personal struggles and artistic legacy? Perhaps they have accomplished the "Caravaggio circuit" of Rome, the Villas Borghese and Doria Pamphilj, depictions of saints Peter and Paul in Santa Maria del Popolo, and the chapel in nearby San Luigi dei Francesi with its magical *Calling of St. Matthew*, followed by the Apostle's Gospel writing and martyrdom. Do these works left by Caravaggio, certainly a man enmeshed in passions, function as "bodhisattvas" aiding all who gaze on them to empathize with the human condition, that ocean of sorrows (*samsara*)? In three-dimensional presence, sculpted by dramatic light, and intruding apparently into our own space, they embody the encounter of the commonplace with the divine. The discovery received with surprise as well as joy, as seen on the faces of the peasants, is that the divine actually is the ordinary. Concepts of separation are illusionary. Is this not the message of the Buddha? Are Mary and her Son not people like us? For those who have gazed, is this not that intense act of sacred viewing (*darshan)* that is vital to Buddhist pilgrimage? This process of engagement with materials, image, intention by the creators, and reception by fellow pilgrims seems not far removed from specified religious goals

such as alleviating suffering and sharing joy. Faintly, but surely, the Buddhist dedication prayer resonates.

> I dedicate happiness to all sentient beings without exception;
> May happiness spread in the air;
> I take on the sufferings of all sentient beings without exception;
> May the ocean of suffering be dry.

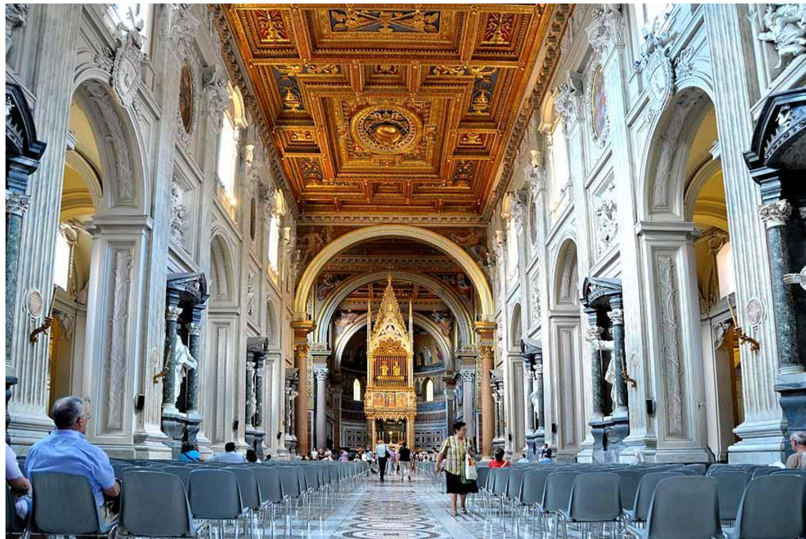


Figure 7c St. John Lateran (San Giovanni in Laterano), Rome, 13th-18th centuries. Photo: Michel Raguin

Figure 7d Caravaggio, *Madonna di Loreto* (1604-1606), Sant'Agostino, Rome. Photo: Michel Raguin