

Pilgrimage

Sacred Geography

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Pilgrimage

- From Old Provençal word *pelegrin* = foreign
- Definition: a deliberate, extended journey to a sacred place, performed by religionists, electively or under obligation, for the ostensive purpose of achieving spiritual merit

Christian connotations

- Chaucer
- John Bunyan - *The Pilgrim's Progress*
- Medieval pilgrimages to Rome, Santiago, Jerusalem

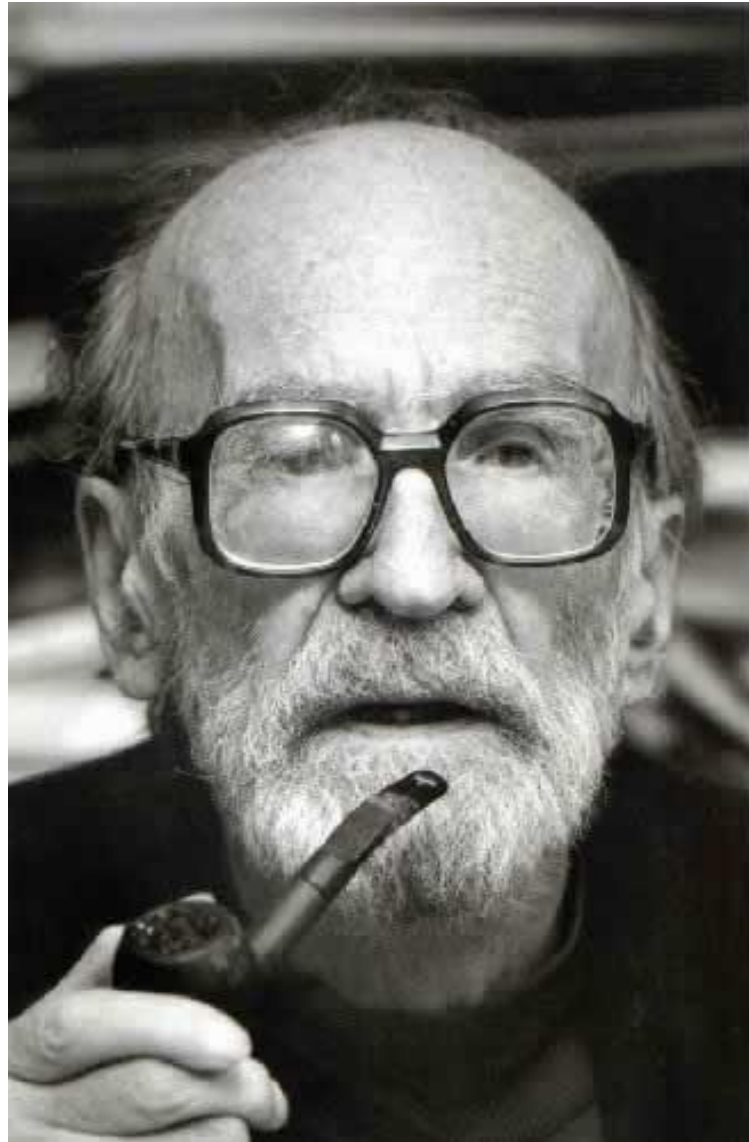
But found in all world religions

- And many NRMs
- Most famous, perhaps, is the *hajj* - attracted 3 million in 1982
- Hardship and expenditure of effort may be important - ie on foot
- literally a 'spiritual journey'
- pilgrimages may not have official sanction

Destinations

- How do they become sacred?
- Some, **hierophany** has occurred
- Eg vision of the Virgin Mary
- Others, weight of legends/myths/traditions
- Eg Glastonbury Abbey/Tor

Mircea Eliade (1907-1986)



Eliade wrote that...

- Myths have their own time, a sacred time standing outside normal time and in ritual reenactment the person is able to stand outside time, and enter the domain of sacred reality
- Ninian Smart describes this as 'then becomes now' (Smart, 1995: 80).

Pilgrimages accrue

- **Cartographies** - routes, way-stations, start points, end points
- **Choreographies** - gestures, costumes, prayers, movements
- It is the unique combination of the two that allows pilgrims to know they have performed the pilgrimage correctly

Santiago de Compostella

- Hand print worn into the column of the cathedral
- Can only touch if you have completed the pilgrimage
- Marks the official 'end' of the journey



Turner's ritual process model applied to Pilgrimage

- The separation (the departure)
- The liminal stage (the journey, the being there, and ritual performances)
- The re-aggregation (the homecoming)
- Turner's model: *societas* -> *communitas* -> *societas*

Ellipse Theory

- Pilgrimage differs from initiation rites of passage because the transition is to a religious centre 'out there' and not over challenging a threshold that confirms the change in an individual's social status (pilgrimage to Mecca being the exception)

- The middle stage (or period of being away) is characterised by 'an awareness of temporary release from social ties and strong sense of *communitas*' i.e. fellowship
- Movement is the pilgrim's predicament (be it physical, intellectual, or spiritual)

There and back again

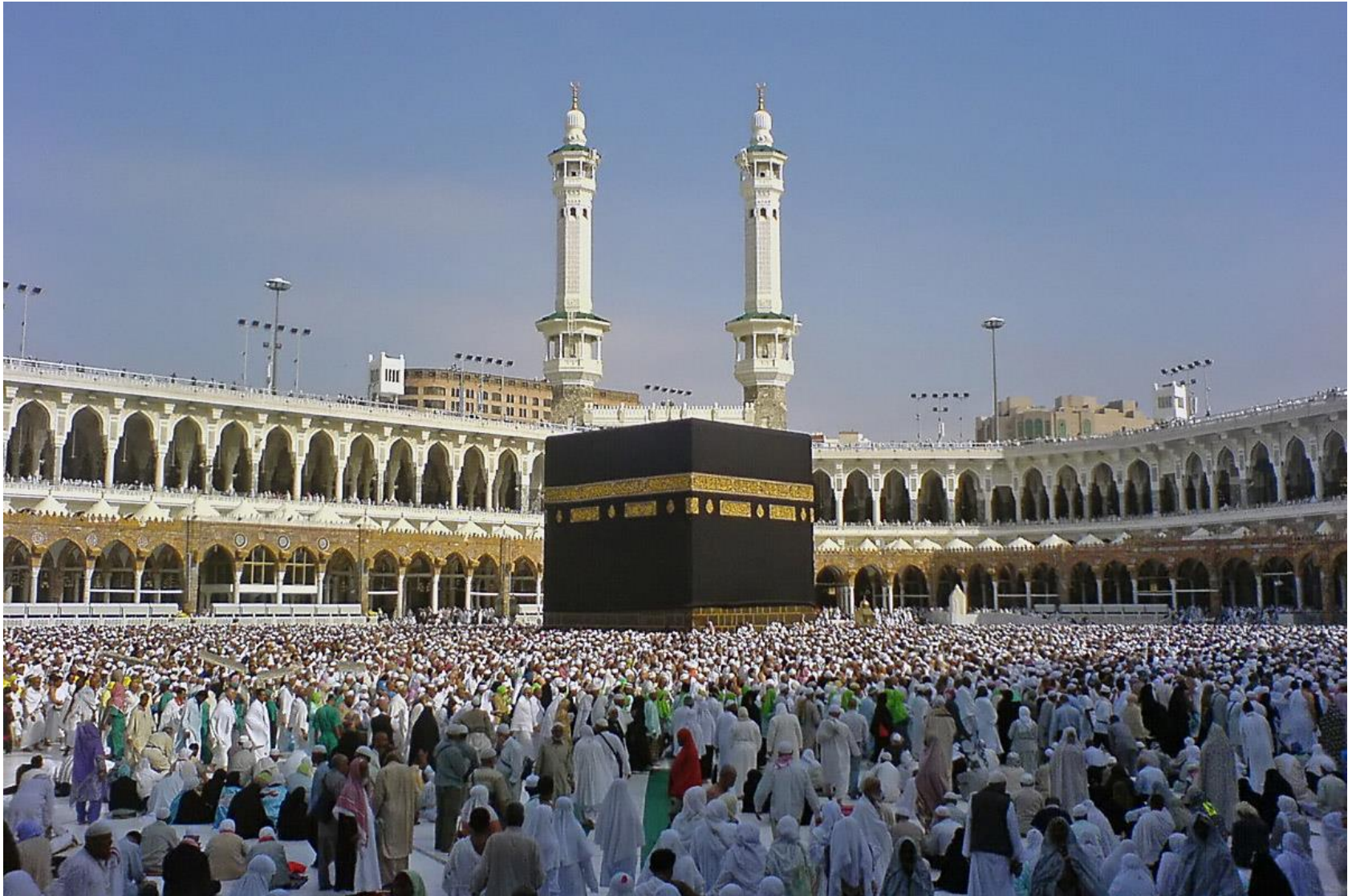
- Pilgrimage routes: how does the approach road differ from the return road?
- Can we say that the perceived change in the road is 'psychological', or is this too simplistic?
- Latin *peregrinus* (a pilgrim who is walking)
- Greek *proskynima* (a pilgrim who is worshipping)

Tibetan Pilgrimage

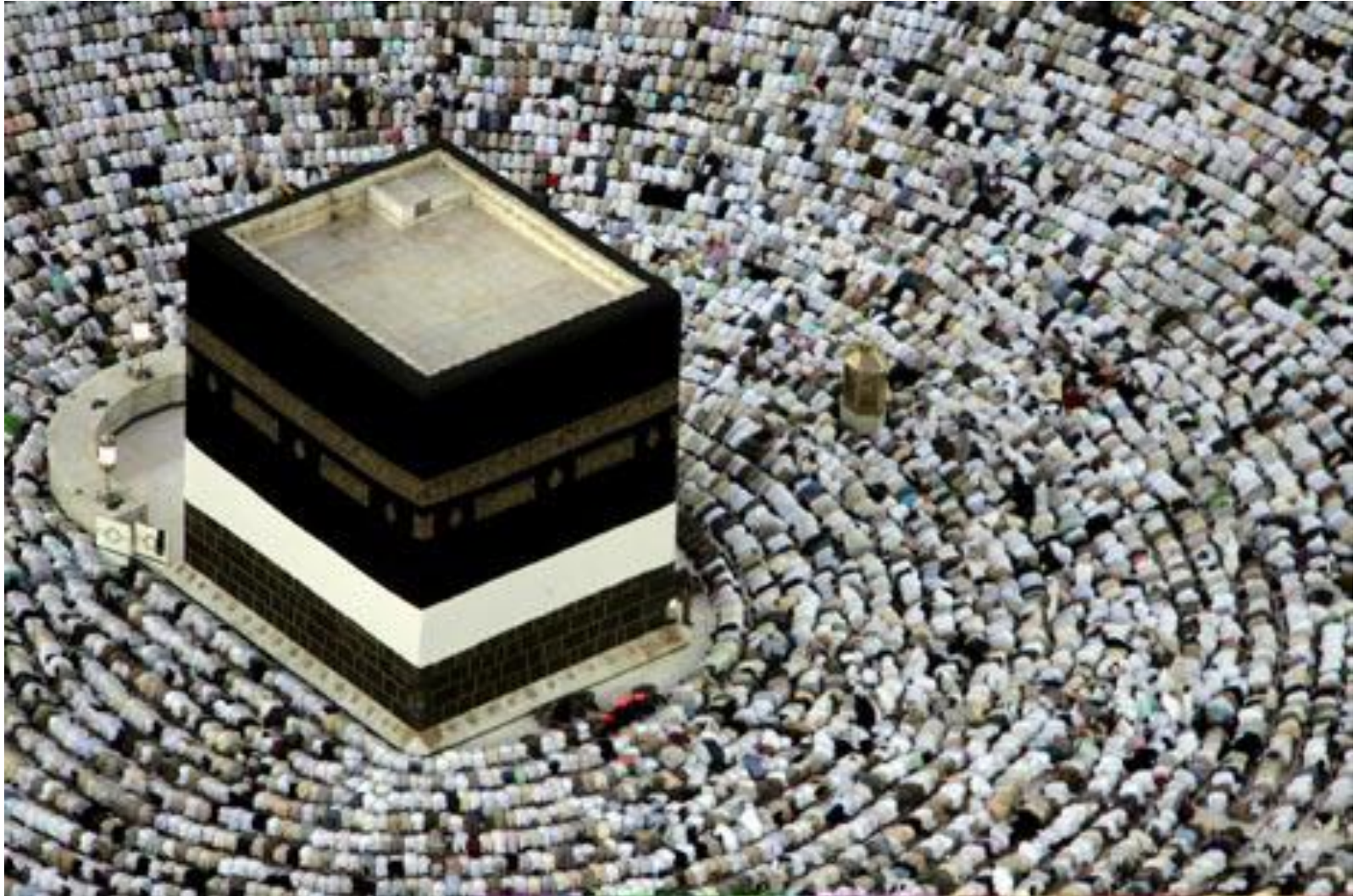


• term for this: Prostration

Mecca



The Kaaba (Ka'bah)



Case Study - Glastonbury



Glastonbury is

- a small, rural market town in Somerset
- population c. 8000

But it is also

- the Isle of Avalon
- a purported ancient Druid centre of learning
- a purported centre of ancient Goddess worship



- Glastonbury also is supposed to have been visited by Joseph of Arimathea, together with the young Jesus

Hence Blake's 'Jerusalem'

And did those feet in ancient time,
Walk upon Englands mountains green;
And was the holy Lamb of God,
On Englands pleasant pastures seen!

And did the Countenance Divine,
Shine forth upon our clouded hills?
And was Jerusalem builded here,
Among these dark Satanic Mills?

Bring me my Bow of burning gold;
Bring me my Arrows of desire;
Bring me my Spear; O clouds unfold;
Bring me my Chariot of fire!

I will not cease from Mental Fight,
Nor shall my Sword sleep in my hand;
Till we have built Jerusalem,
In Englands green & pleasant Land

Would to God that all the Lords people
were Prophets Numbers XI. ch. 10.

- the epicentre of the New Age in Britain
- a nexus of leylines
- an alien contact point
- claimed by Wicca, Druidry and Christianity

evidenced by the shops



And Temples/Cathedrals



Glastonbury hosts pilgrimages

- Christian
- Pagan
- New Age
- Buddhist
- tourists?

Marion Bowman's 9 trends in contemporary spirituality

- the importance of the individual 'spiritual quest'
- 'mix-and-match' spirituality
- remythologizing
- Healing
- the pursuit of a 'Golden Age' and/or 'Noble Savagery'
- the revival of traditional customs
- the search for hidden wisdom
- perceptions of past lives, reincarnation, interconnectedness
- the importance of sacred landscapes, topophilia, pilgrimage

Topophilia

- the belief that certain locations are inherently powerful and exude a heightened sense of place

Glastonbury Tor



For Some

- Glastonbury is a point of pilgrimage because it is thought to be the ancient seat of Christianity in Britain
- 'Evidenced' by Joseph and the Holy Thorn

For others

- The Tor is the sacred destination
- Said to have a spiral maze carved into its sides (actually medieval ridge and furrow)

Glastonbury has two springs

- the 'red spring' and the 'white'
- lends itself to mythic interpretation





Glastonbury Zodiac



Two ancient oaks - Gog and Magog



So

- Glastonbury is felt by many to be inherently sacred because of the landscape
- but also because of things that have happened there
- Legends, myths, 'heirophany'

To recap - Glastonbury's pilgrimage destinations

- the ruined Abbey
- the Glastonbury Thorn
- the red and white springs (Chalice Well gardens)
- Gog and Magog
- the Tor
- the town (shops and centres of Alternative Spirituality - eg Goddess Temple)

Belief in sacred landscape

- 'that landscape communicates its sacred character directly to those willing to see and understand'