

## Pilgrimage

A Very Short Introduction

By Ian Reader

### Questions for discussion

- What is a pilgrimage? Can we talk about 'pilgrimage' as a universal phenomenon?
- What sorts of places have become pilgrimage sites and why? Are there significant differences in pilgrimage forms and types depending on culture, country and religious traditions?
- What phenomena and elements do you consider too important for the development of a pilgrimage site? If you wanted to invent a successful pilgrimage site what features would you want it to have?
- Why do people go on pilgrimages? What are they seeking? Are there differences depending on places and pilgrimages?
- Is the notion that pilgrimage is a symbolic spiritual journey as well as a physical one, important to pilgrims?
- What is the role of death and images of death in pilgrimage contexts?
- How important are miracles - and stories of miracle - in pilgrimage?
- Is distance an important factor in pilgrimage? What about piety and asceticism?
- Do the means of making a pilgrimage and getting to a pilgrimage place matter? Is it the journey to a place or the being there that is most important? Or does it vary from pilgrimage to pilgrimage?
- Are geographical features and landscape important for pilgrimages?
- How do the activities and life stories of religious leaders and founders influence the development of pilgrimage practices?
- Why do some pilgrimages attract huge followings, and others not?
- What are the links between pilgrimage, entertainment and tourism?
- Why do pilgrims go shopping when on pilgrimage and what are the meanings and significance of the things they buy?
- Is pilgrimage connected to the desire to escape from normal routines and surroundings?
- Can visits to places with no formal religious associations (such as Graceland and the Vietnam Wall) be described as 'pilgrimages'? Or does pilgrimage have to be associated with religious institutions?
- Can labyrinths and miniature versions and small-scale replications of pilgrimage sites and routes be considered as pilgrimages?
- What effects have modern developments (e.g. transport systems) had on pilgrimage in the contemporary world?
- What are the connections between politics, nationalism and pilgrimage? Do such forces make pilgrimage places into sites of conflict?

### **Other Books by the Author:**

*Pilgrimage in the Marketplace* (Routledge, 2014)

*Making Pilgrimages: Meaning and Practice in Shikoku* (University of Hawaii Press, 2005)

*Practically Religious: Worldly Benefits and the Common Religion of Japan.* (University of Hawaii Press, 1998) co-authored with George J. Tanabe

*Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (Palgrave, 1993) co-edited with Tony Walter.

*Religion in Contemporary Japan* (Macmillan and University of Hawaii Press, 1991)

### **Further reading**

Peter Jan Margry (ed.) *Shrines and Pilgrimage in the Modern World: New Itineraries into the Sacred.* (Amsterdam University Press, 2008)

Simon Coleman and John Eade (ed.) *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion* (Routledge, 2004)

Anne Grodzins Gold *Fruitful Journeys: The Ways of Rajasthani Pilgrims.* (University of California Press, 1989)

Nancy Frey *Pilgrim Stories: On and Off the Road to Santiago.* (University of California Press, 1998)