Major Pilgrimage Places of the World

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Robert H. Stoddard

Major Pilgrimage Places of the World

I. Introduction

In their quest to learn more details about pilgrimages, geographers have trudged along many sacred trails and have experienced the jostling of numerous religious crowds. Such experiential studies about particular pilgrimage events have contributed greatly to our accumulating knowledge of pilgrimages.1

Along with these detailed accounts of specific pilgrimages, however, we also need to examine this phenomenon from a global perspective. This is not to imply that a broad view of pilgrimages in a variety of settings is necessarily better or more enlightening than a detailed study of a particular pilgrimage event. Nevertheless, research on the general geographic characteristics of pilgrims and pilgrimages is somewhat limited. Major exceptions are the monumental work on Christian pilgrimages undertaken by NOLAN AND NOLAN (1989) who have combined extensive field work with comprehensive analyses, and the comprehensive study by BHARDWAJ (1973) of Hindu pilgrimages in India.

This general lack of worldwide studies of pilgrimages is illustrated by the fact that when this particular study was initiated, no map or comprehensive listing of major pilgrimage places for all religions of the world was available.2 Such a list is past due. Having a standardized list of the major pilgrimages of the world is essential for establishing principles of geographic behavior associated with such religious phenomena.

The primary goals of this study, therefore, are twofold: (1) to map the spatial distribution of the major pilgrimage places in the world and (2) to generalize their locations based on observed relationships.

Prior to the construction of a map of world pilgrimages, it is critical to consider some of the difficulties encountered in this task. Here attention is focused primarily on the definition of “pilgrimage” and on the meaning of “major.”
II. Locations of Major Pilgrimages of the World

1. Definition of Pilgrimage

Before pilgrimage places can be mapped, the phenomenon of pilgrimage itself must be defined. It is obvious to all scholars of pilgrimages that establishing an operational definition is not an easy task. These have been discussed elsewhere; but it is appropriate to summarize a few of the most critical issues here.

A reasonable working definition of a pilgrimage is the following: "a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion." The main elements of this definition include (1) movement, which is expressed as a journey, (2) motivation, which must be religious and (3) destination, which must be a place that is considered sacred. Each of these elements - plus a forth one, which concerns magnitude - may be interpreted in a variety of ways.

Interpretational differences about the element of movement are illustrated by the possible answers to this basic question: How far must participants travel for the occasion to be called a pilgrimage? Or, in a variant form, can a place be regarded as a true pilgrimage place if it attracts only local worshippers? What is the difference between occasional journeys to worship at a local shrine and the seasonal pilgrimages to a regional pilgrimage site?

Likewise, the second element - that of motivation - complicates the distinction between pilgrimage and non-pilgrimage events because travelers are attracted to particular places for a variety of reasons. For example, if the majority of today's visitors to Canterbury (England) are essentially tourists, can this place now be regarded as an authentic pilgrimage site? Furthermore, if a religious motive is regarded by scholars as a necessary element in the definition, how can observers actually know whether those assembled at a famous place have come for primarily religious purposes?

Both the third and forth elements, i.e., the nature of the destination and magnitude of pilgrimage movement, are closely related to the task of measuring the importance of places; therefore, their ambiguities are discussed in the next section.

In short, even the initial task of defining the phenomenon to be mapped and analyzed raises numerous issues that may generate conflicting responses. This means the task of compiling a standardized list of major pilgrimage sites is more than just measuring characteristics of places to determine whether they qualify - it also involves a fairly high level of consensus about the phenomenon itself.

2. Measuring Importance

The task, of course, is more than identifying the many places in the world associated with pilgrimages. It also requires the differentiation between "major" and "non-major" ones. This is no easier than the initial identification. Generally
three approaches have been used by scholars to differentiate the importance of a pilgrimage place. One has been to depend on declarations in holy literature; a second has been to observe the number of pilgrims attracted to a place; and, a third has been to accept the judgment of a panel of experts. Each of these three approaches was followed to some extent in this project.

Statements in holy literature can provide valuable clues to degrees of sanctity. For example, the command in the *Quran* for Moslems to undertake the hajj clearly prioritizes Mecca as a pilgrimage place. Likewise, within Hinduism the four *dhams* and seven *puris* are given a very high ranking; and, indeed, they have constituted the core of all lists of major Hindu holy sites (STODDARD 1966, BHARDWAJ 1973, SCHWARTZBERG 1978).

However, dependence on holy literature has limitations. Some places enumerated in ancient times have been mythical. Others have obviously changed in importance. Some popular pilgrimage places today were never mentioned in ancient scriptures, while others that were cited in early texts no longer attract many pilgrims. Obviously the currently popular Medjugorje and Fátima were not mentioned in early religious literature; in contrast, Cologne and Kushinagara are no longer patronized as major pilgrimage centers.

Furthermore, it is almost impossible to integrate the lists from various religions. For example, although Hindu texts may differentiate the dozen most sacred sites from those of lesser importance, there is no standard by which this dividing line can be compared with a ranking of Christian pilgrimage places. The contrasting role of pilgrimages in various religions makes integrating the “major” places of each very difficult.

A second method for defining “major” is by counting the number of pilgrims attracted to each place. If, for example, more than four million pilgrims visit Lourdes annually (RINSCHENDE 1986, p. 22), then probably most people would regard this as a major pilgrimage place. Such a quantitative technique has the potential advantages of being objective, applicable across religious lines, and up-to-date.

However, such a quantitative definition of “major” has several limitations. A major barrier to its use is the lack of data. Although there may be local estimates obtained at several pilgrimage places, there are no universally collected figures on pilgrimages. Even if such were acquired and made available, they would undoubtedly vary in their methods of defining and counting pilgrims. For example, the accounts of companies running religious tours differ from the records kept by religious guides (such as *pundas*) at pilgrimage sites.

Another limitation involves the interpretation of magnitude as it relates to timing. How do we compare the relatively constant but small stream of pilgrims to Jerusalem with the huge Kumbh mela at Ujjain every twelve years? In other words, does the quantitative measurement of “major” depend on the number of pilgrims at peak times, even if they are infrequent? Or is importance based on
the total number that accumulates over a specified period of time?

Another potential disadvantage with using pilgrim counts to define what is "ma­
jor" involves the contrasting population size of various religions. Based on total
population of adherents, there is a higher probability of a million Christians,
Moslems, or Hindus participating in a pilgrimage event than a million Sikhs or
Australian aborigines.

A third method of measuring the importance of pilgrimage places is by accumu­
lating the opinions of experts. This is not mutually exclusive of the other two
methods because probably most experts rank places according to past reputa­
tion and current popularity. To be effective, a high level of agreement by several
scholars who are from different parts of the world and who are knowledgeable
about various religious backgrounds should be attempted.

The set of places presented here is based on the following procedure. First, an
initial list was generated by combining the fragmentary inventories in several
English-language encyclopedias with the suggestion of several scholars who spe­
cialize in the geography of pilgrimages. Second, the resulting list of 54 places
was presented for critical comment by participants at an international conference
focusing on religious behavior. 4

Third, pilgrimage scholars from England, India, Japan, West Germany, and the
United States were asked to rank each of the 54 places in one of three categories:
first or top, second and third level of importance. 5 Furthermore, respondents
were requested to add other pilgrimage places to the list if such were more
important than any places in the existing set of 54. No criteria were suggested
for ranking the importance of pilgrimage places, other than being regarded as "a
major pilgrimage place today." Respondents were also asked to indicate their
levels of familiarity with each pilgrimage place, so that the results could be
weighted according to the degree of knowledge associated with each ranking.

The weakness of this procedure is its dependence on the subjective percep­
tions of a small group of scholars (in this case, 14) from a limited part of the
world. Nevertheless, as briefly summarized above, no alternative techniques for
"objectively" measuring the importance of pilgrimage places are more feasible.
Furthermore, the results are probably no more subjective than maps that show
the world distributions of other complex phenomena (e.g., arable land, culture
regions).

3. Set of Major Pilgrimage Places

All the pilgrimage scholars judged four pilgrimage places as top rank: Jerusalem,
Lourdes, Mecca, and Varanasi.

Respondent agreement and/or site familiarity declined somewhat for 29 other
places, but there was enough consensus to include them into a final set of 33
major pilgrimage places. 6
Excluded from the final list of 33 places were five (Adam’s Peak, Esquipulas, Meshed, Quebec City, and Rangoon) that were ranked as “top” by only a few experts. The remaining 16 in the original set of 54 were not regarded as first-rank by any of the panel members (or, at most, by only one scholar).

It should be noted that the scale of “place” is somewhat vague. For example, in the vicinity of both Jerusalem and Mecca there are numerous holy places that are visited by pilgrims. Whether each trip to one or more of these clustered places should be counted as a distinct pilgrimage event involves the scale of areal generalization. This issue also overlaps with the definitional one, discussed above, which questions the length of movement that is required to qualify as a “pilgrimage.” In some cases (e.g., Badrinath & Kedarnath), pilgrimages to the sites are distinct and involve quite different routes; but at the scale of the world map shown here, they are considered as a single location.

The set of major pilgrimage places, as identified by this process, consists of 33 locations (Table 1 and Fig. 1). Like any ordered data, the separation between the least important place in this set (i.e., the 33rd one) and the most important one excluded (i.e., theoretically the 34th one) is not unanimously accepted. Nevertheless, among the pilgrimage experts consulted, there is considerable agreement that this set closely approximates the major pilgrimage places in the world today. Although no criteria were established for defining the members of this set, it is probably correct to conclude that most of the places are visited annually by more than 2 million pilgrims, several of whom have travelled long distances and/or across international boundaries.

III. Spatial Relationships

1. Preliminary Comments

Given this distribution of major pilgrimage places, the geographic question that arises next concerns the reasons for those locations. To pilgrims who believe that specific sites are located where they are because of divine action, this may seem like an irrelevant, and even irreverent, question. Here, however, the approach is one of exploring spatial relationships with other phenomena in hopes of better understanding the overall pattern of pilgrimage places in the world.

The examination here is at the world scale so that relationships apply more to locational situations than to site features. Although an analysis of site-specific data might provide some interesting associations, that is not the task undertaken for this report. Consequently, the sizes of areal units used to measure associations are quite large. For continuous phenomena, the minimum areal unit utilized was no smaller than a circle with diameter of 200 to 300 kilometers (Table 1). For other variables, areal classes were continents and their largest subdivisions (Table 2).
Table 1: Characteristics of major pilgrimage places

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Pilgrimage Place</th>
<th>Pop. Density</th>
<th>Climate Type</th>
<th>Latitude</th>
<th>Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Allahabad</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amritsar</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayodya</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Badrinath &amp; Kedarnath</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Czestochowa</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>50-60</td>
<td>Eastern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dwarka</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emei Shan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fatima</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guadalupe</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>Latin America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gaya &amp; Bodh Gaya</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardwar &amp; Rishikes</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ise</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jerusalem &amp; vicinity</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanchipuram</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandy</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerbela</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lhasa</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loreto</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lourdes</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mecca &amp; vicinity</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Montreal</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>North America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Puri</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rameswaram</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>0-10</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rome</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Southern Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Santiago</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>40-50</td>
<td>Western Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shikoku Is.</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tai Shan</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tirupati</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>10-20</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ujjain</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Varanasi (Benares)</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vrindaban &amp; Mathura</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>20-30</td>
<td>South Asia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wutai Shan</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>30-40</td>
<td>East Asia</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Major pilgrimage places and socio-economic data, by world regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Abbr.</th>
<th>No. Pilgrim. Places</th>
<th>Pop. (m.)</th>
<th>Pop. Density</th>
<th>GNP per Capita</th>
<th>Urban (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>(A)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>601</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>710</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southwest Asia</td>
<td>(SWA)</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>3130</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>(SA)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1112</td>
<td>164</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southeast Asia</td>
<td>(SEA)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>690</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>(EA)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1275</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>1490</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Eur.</td>
<td>(NE)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>9200</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Eur.</td>
<td>(WE)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>10270</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Eur.</td>
<td>(EE)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>2120</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Eur.</td>
<td>(SE)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>4630</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>(L)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>421</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>1700</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North America</td>
<td>(N)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>270</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>16150</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oceania</td>
<td>(O)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8320</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U.S.S.R.</td>
<td>(U)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>7400</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Fig. 2: Number of pilgrimage in latitudinal zones
2. Latitude

An initial observation about the worldwide distribution of pilgrimage places is that major pilgrimage places of the world tend to be limited latitudinally. A major exclusion is the entire Southern Hemisphere (Fig. 2). Furthermore, only one site (Czestochowa) is poleward of 50 degrees, and it is less than 1 degree more than 50. Conversely, only two (Rameswaram and Kandy) are less than 10 degrees latitude and three (Guadalupe, Kanchipuram, and Tirupati) are within the 10 to 20 degree latitudinal band. In summary, most are between 20 and 50 degrees north latitude.

One possible reason for this spatial pattern relates to the proximity of these sites to regions having high population. That is, with the exception of southern India, the major regions of dense population - East Asia, South Asia, and Western Europe - are in this latitudinal belt. This possibility of being associated with dense population is pursued in greater detail below.

A second partial explanation for this pattern concerns the climatic conditions of pilgrimage places. Although some sites are climatically harsh during part of the year, none is located in high latitude zones having adverse weather.

3. Climate

To explore this climatic factor further, pilgrimage places were categorized according to the major climatic types defined by Köppen (Fig. 3). It has been noted by several pilgrimage scholars that pilgrim flows to sacred sites vary seasonally. Such temporal variations suggest that climatic differences may play a part in pilgrimage behavior. Consequently, climates that are not extremely cold, hot, or wet may be preferred by pilgrims - and thus be among the more important pilgrimage places.

Over half (18 of the 33) of the places are located in areas experiencing subtropical (C-type) climates. This preponderance of sites within regions of subtropical climates does, indeed, indicate a tendency for pilgrimage places to be located where moderate climatic conditions prevail. This conclusion, however, must be tempered in two ways. One, the scale of investigation used here may mask local climatic conditions. For example, although Badrinath and Kedarnath are situated within the broad Cw climatic region, these two pilgrimage places are sited in high mountain environments and thus the sites themselves should not be classified as subtropical. And second the reverse is not necessarily true: although a pilgrimage place may have a high probability of being within a subtropical region, it does not follow that most places experiencing C-type climates are pilgrimage sites.
Proximity to a large population is one variable that has entered into many discussions concerned with the location of pilgrimage sites. The rationale for a positive relationship is based on the close geographic association existing between population and numerous other "service centers". It is logical, therefore, to expect that religious nodes will display the same kind of spatial proximity to fields of supporters. On the other hand, pilgrimage behavior may differ from other forms of movement to nodal centers. In fact, it is known that many pilgrims regard places that are more isolated as more sacred than those close to centers of profane activity (STODDARD 1966, STIRRAT 1979).

Fig. 3: Number of pilgrimage places within climate types

4. Population
The relationship between population and pilgrimage places is examined here in three ways. The first is based on an approximation of the population density around each pilgrimage place. Population densities, which were estimated from a world map, were categorized initially into five classes, including one of essentially uninhabited areas. No place was associated with uninhabited areas and only a few in the category defined as 1 - 10 persons per square kilometer, so these classes were subsequently combined with the next most dense category to form the class termed “Low”. A frequency graph reveals that many pilgrimage places are located in areas of highest population density (Fig. 4). In other words, 15 of the 33 pilgrimage sites are within areal units (each of which is no larger than 1000 square kilometers) having a population density exceeding 100 persons per square kilometer.

Fig. 4: Number of pilgrimage places within classes of population density
Fig. 5: Population size and pilgrimage places
Second, the number of pilgrimage places per region was plotted against the total population of those regions (Fig. 5). The trend of points on this scattergram suggests that, at this scale of areal grouping, there does appear to be a direct correlation. The highly populated regions of South Asia and East Asia have many pilgrimage places while sparsely populated Oceania and Northern Europe have none. The relationship is not strong, however, as revealed by the positions of points representing Southeast Asia and Africa.

The third way of looking at the potential role of population patterns is by comparing the population densities of world regions and the number of pilgrimage places (Fig. 6). The trend of points on this graph also indicates a direct relationship between these two phenomena. Since the results of this analysis agree with those of the previous two, it is safe to conclude that, at this geographic scale, the distributions of pilgrimage places and areas of high population do, indeed, tend to co-vary.

5. Urban Areas

The relationship between the location of pilgrimage places and areas of high population density can be examined at a different scale by looking at major cities as centers of extremely high population density. A tentative comparison is accomplished by visually examining the distribution of major metropolises of the world (Fig. 7) with the pattern of pilgrimage places (Fig. 1). Based on this rough approximation, it appears that the two phenomena do not coincide spatially. Some urbanized areas of the world, such as in the United States and Australia, lack major pilgrimage places. In other areas, especially those with large rural populations as well as huge cities, the patterns are more similar.

If the urban percentages are plotted with number of pilgrimage places according to world regions, the same conclusion emerges (Figure 8). This scatter diagram indicates a slight inverse relationship, especially when comparing North America and Western Europe with South Asia. Although the graphed positions of Southeast Asia and Africa suggest that the relationship is not high, it can be concluded that there is a tendency for pilgrimage places to occur in rural areas.

6. GNP per Capita

The observation that pilgrimage places are related to large rural populations can be extended to mean societies that are predominantly agrarian. Numerous characteristics (besides the percentage of urban population) reflect agrarian conditions, one of the most commonly measured being GNP per capita. Based on the relationship noted above, therefore, we would expect to see an inverse relationship between number of pilgrimage places and the regional GNP per capita.
The scattergram of pilgrimage places and GNP per capita at the regional scale does, in fact, reveal a partial relationship (Figure 9). The richest regions, such as North America, Northern Europe, Western Europe, Oceania, and the USSR, have few or no pilgrimage places. Conversely, some of the poorest regions, especially South Asia and East Asia have several pilgrimage places. This graph suggests the relationship is not strong, though, as evidenced by the plotted positions of Southeast Asia and Africa.

Fig. 6: Population density and pilgrimage places
Fig. 8: Urban population and pilgrimage places
IV. Conclusions

There have been very few attempts to study spatial and environmental characteristics of pilgrimage places at a global scale. This paper is an attempt to initiate discussions about the geographical characteristics of pilgrimage places as a global set.

In spite of the difficulties in defining the phenomenon and in separating major from non-major ones, a set of 33 major pilgrimage places has been presented. Undisputably, some of the specific entries in the list can be challenged; but nevertheless, it can serve as a base for future modifications and refinements.

Fig. 9: National Wealth and Pilgrimage Places
In addition, this list provided an opportunity to commence an exploration of potential relationships between these places and other variables. Admittedly, some of the methods of measurement and the techniques of comparison used here are imprecise. Furthermore, only a few geographic scales have been examined. Within these constraints, however, a few generalities have emerged, namely, that major pilgrimage places are located in areas of low latitude, moderate climate, and large rural populations having low incomes. These generalities should be regarded as only a first step in understanding the geographic principles of pilgrimage locations. Further analysis is necessary to determine their applicability at other scales, the functional relationships that give rise to these spatial associations, and additional regularities in the distributions of major pilgrimage sites. Such information would build upon these initial generalities about the geography of pilgrimage behavior in the world today.

Summary

The goals of this paper are twofold: (1) to map the spatial distribution of the major pilgrimage places in the world and (2) to discern a pattern in their locations. The list of major pilgrimage places presented here results from the definition of pilgrimage (a journey to a sacred place as an act of religious devotion) and the differentiation between major and non-major ones. On the basis of information obtained from a panel of pilgrimage scholars, a total of 33 places were judged to be major (Table 1 and Fig. 1). The distribution of these places is associated with (1) latitude (Fig. 2), (2) climate (Fig. 3), (3) population density (Fig. 4, 5 and 6), non-urban settings (Fig. 7 and 8), and national income (Fig. 9). Although the methods of measurement and techniques of comparison used were imprecise and only a few geographic scales were examined, a few generalities emerge. Major pilgrimage places are located in areas of low latitude, moderate climate and large rural populations having low incomes.

Zusammenfassung

Die bedeutenden Pilgerzentren der Erde

Ziel des vorliegenden Beitrages ist die kartographische Erfassung der räumlichen Verteilung von bedeutenden Pilgerzentren der Erde sowie den Entwurf eines Musters ihrer räumlichen Verbreitung vorzustellen.

Die hier vorgestellte Liste von bedeutenden Pilgerzentren ist eng verbunden mit der Definition der Pilgerreise (die Reise zu einem heiligen Ort als ein Vorgang religiöser Hingabe) und der Differenzierung zwischen wichtigen und weniger
wichtigen Pilgerzentren. Auf der Grundlage von Informationen, die aus Befragung von mit der Pilgerthematik befassten Fachleuten resultierten, wurden 33 bedeutende Pilgerzentren ausgewählt.


Notes

1The in-depth accounts by RINSCHERDE (1986 and 1988) illustrate well this body of pilgrimage literature.

2The map that accompanies the paper “Pilgrimage - A World Wide Phenomenon” by BHARDWAJ and RINSCHERDE first appeared in print in May, 1988.

3STODDARD 1988 and forthcoming.


5Scholars from China, Israel, and Malaysia also returned responses; but their replies were less comprehensive than the other fourteen, so their rankings were used primarily to supplement the tabulations based on the more complete returns.

6The three places in China are somewhat of an exception in terms of the frequency of support. Most pilgrimage scholars were less familiar with the rapidly changing conditions in China; so more weight was given in the tabulation to the responses of the few China experts among the panel.

Bibliography


