

# Mecca

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In the Muslim tradition, the importance of Mecca cannot be underestimated. Ultimately, Mecca is the towards which all Muslims are directed to pray during their 5 daily prayers. Moreover, it is believed by Muslims that Mecca, and specifically Ka'ba (the first piece of earth ever created according to Muslims) was also the site in which Abraham supposedly built the first mosque. However, if this is not enough, Mecca is also the site of the Hajj; a yearly trek that leads hundreds of thousands of Muslims to Mecca as a ritual that all Muslims are obliged to perform at least once. As the second most widely practiced religion in the world, hundreds of millions of Muslims have made the hajj to Mecca over the decades and centuries. IN addition to the pilgrimage that has thus far been described, there are many Islamic rituals that are associated with Mecca as well. First among these is the act of circling the Ka'ba seven times and kissing its cornerstone. Further, there is a ritual stoning of the devil that takes place during the pilgrimage as well. Finally, almost each and every Muslim that goes to Mecca drinks from the well of Zamzam; a well believed to have mystical properties. Finally, most pilgrims travel to Arafat; a small hill on which Muhammad is believed to have delivered his final sermon to his followers.

Instead of representing rituals only, Mecca is meant to be a place in which Muslims draw upon their traditions and come to a greater and more profound determination of what sets them apart as a unique religious entity. In much the same way that Christians might travel to the Holy Land or to Rome, Muslims consider their pilgrimage to Mecca as a defining element of their faith (Amur 11). Yet, beyond merely religious significance, Mecca is a place in which Muslim families represent a level of solidarity together. Naturally,

there are cases in which single individuals attend Mecca and the Hajj; however, the broad and overarching theme is for entire families to go there together. Although children are welcomed, it is traditionally observed that boys and girls attending their first Hajj should be at least in their early teens; not only so that they will remember it but so that it may have a lasting level of religious symbolism and importance to them.

Further, the orientation of the city itself is very much fixated with the issues that have already been discussed. The entire city is positioned around tourism and the need to accommodate millions of individuals from around the globe and representing different cultural or linguistic differences.

Partially, the Hajj and the supported infrastructure is subsidized; so that individuals from poorer regions can attend without the added strain of being gouged by unreasonably high prices. Nonetheless, the tourism defines the city with strict zones of separation between the more religious aspects and sectors of Mecca and those that are more for entertainment and/or recreation.

#### Work Cited

Amur, Mohammed. " Pilgrims Flock To Mecca." Journal Of Turkish Weekly (2012): 11. Political Science Complete. Web. 23 Apr. 2014.