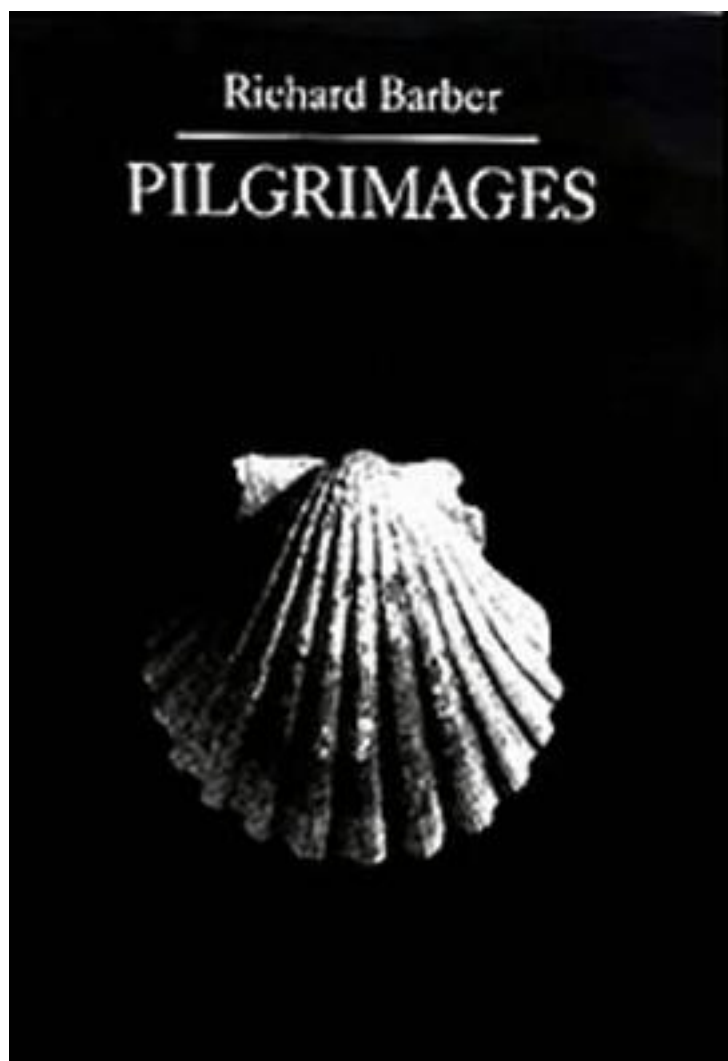


# Pilgrimages



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著者:Barber, Richard

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Pilgrimage, the journey to a distant sacred goal, is found in all the great religions of the world. It is a journey both outwards, to new, strange, dangerous places, and inwards to spiritual improvement, whether through increased self-knowledge or through the braving of physical dangers. It can also encompass penance for past sins and the search for physical benefits through the medium of a god or saint. The pilgrim may pursue spiritual ecstasy in seeking out the cradle of a particular religion, or look for a miracle to resolve a purely material state. Throughout the world the idea of pilgrimage is understood and accepted as a natural activity. Pilgrims move invisibly in huge numbers among the tourists of today, indistinguishable from them except in purpose. The pilgrimage to Mecca can attract almost two million travellers a year, while the vast tide of men and women that flows to the Ganges at Prayaga for the great festival held every 12 years numbers over 15 million - more than the entire population of one of the world's greatest cities. This is the first book to offer a survey of the great pilgrimage traditions. It outlines the history and nature of the different ideas and rites of pilgrimage, and brings together some of the common themes which emerge in the process. These reveal a surprising consistency of practice, often down to small details, among pilgrims of widely differing beliefs and times.

作者介绍:

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