



Alex Norman and Carole M. Cusack, eds., *Religion, Pilgrimage, and Tourism*

Abingdon, Oxon, UK: Routledge, 2015. 1,618 pages. 4 volume set.
Hardback \$1,345.00. ISBN 978-1-13-801488-6.

STUDIES OF PILGRIMAGE have been increasing in number ever since the famous work of Victor Turner on the subject. Since his initial journeys into this rich field of study, a number of interesting turns have been taken to expand the study of pilgrimage from simply an exploration of sacred journeys to the motivated movement of people in general. Pilgrimage naturally has always had other dimensions to it, including economic and political ones. Moreover, in the contemporary period, pilgrimages started taking on the characteristics of tourism as well, which signaled a markedly increased amount of commodification and consumption. It is thus commendable that someone has taken the time and patience to compile a reference set of the multifaceted phenomenon under review.

Norman and Cusack have not simply collected a haphazard collection of random articles but have thoughtfully arranged them in such a way as to design an entire seminar around them. Volume one is devoted to methodology, while volume two explores historical studies. Volume three focuses on modern religious pilgrimages and the last one, volume four, is dedicated to secular pilgrimage and spiritual tourism. All in all,

we are treated to seventy essays, some in full form, others in abridged form, that cover the entire globe. There is literally something for everyone in this virtually exhaustive collection, and after a brief general introduction, the editors take turns in providing the reader short introductions to each of the four volumes in the set. These shorter introductions to the individual volumes seem somewhat rushed and unnecessary. It would have been better had the editors focused more on expanding the general introduction into a “state of the art” essay concerning where we currently stand in terms of pilgrimage studies. Such a comprehensive essay would have been extremely valuable to guide future students in the direction of areas that still require further research. Instead, the student must now take it upon herself to identify where precisely the lacunae are to be found.

Volume one predictably begins with the classic essay by Victor Turner on the “center out there” that stimulated so many doctoral dissertations on pilgrimage, then moves on to explore a number of theoretical issues associated with pilgrimage, such as the power of place, personal experience, differences and similarities between tourism and pilgrimage, nature worship and romanticism, and so on. From here, volume two jumps into historical studies that take us from ancient Mesopotamia, Greece, and Rome to pre-colonial India. The second section of volume two focuses solely on medieval European pilgrimage, while the third draws on data from non-Christian pilgrimages during the Middle Ages. The latter includes insightful essays on Peru, India, China, and Japan. The last section of volume two is perhaps the most deficient, including only two chapters on the early modern world, both of which deal with the Indian Ocean and the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca. Volume three divides the chapters into three thematic units: sites and places, pilgrim behaviors, and contested sites and behaviors. To this reviewer’s mind, the third section proves to be the most provocative in its exploration of the kinds of contentions that regularly occur at pilgrimage sites over issues such as ownership and authenticity. Lastly, volume four looks at the politics and history of secular pilgrimages and spiritual tourism, closing with a group of essays dealing with the concept of leisure and identity. The fourth volume closes with a nineteen-page index that seems rather superficial. Given that the set runs over 1,500 pages, one would have hoped that with such a huge endeavor more care would have been taken to generate an exhaustive index that would have truly made this set a valuable reference tool. Due to the exorbitant cost of the set, librarians might be cautious in purchasing it solely for this reason, since most of the essays included in it could easily be found in such sources as JSTOR. The set is part of a series called “Critical Concepts in Religious Studies,” which is all well and good, but to this reader it seems that the effort is motivated more by the acquisition of revenue than by the desire to produce reference works that will stand as definitive sources of information and data in the future. Still, there is virtually something for everyone in these four volumes that incorporate historical, ethnographic, literary, and theoretical studies into a massive work on a topic just as vital today as it was during the Crusades.

Frank J. Korom
Boston University