

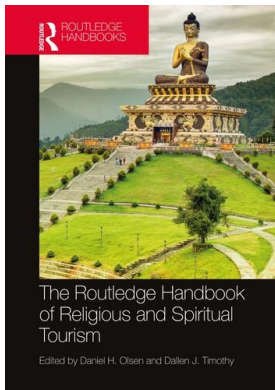
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9

PILGRIMAGE, TOURISM, AND PEACE BUILDING

Ian S. McIntosh

Introduction

Rising international tensions during the Cold War saw peace become one of the driving ideals for global tourism scholars and practitioners in the management of tourism development. Could the tourism industry be an avenue for the de-escalation of tensions or even peace building? *The Declaration on World Tourism* (1980) and the *Tourism Bill of Rights and Tourist Code* (1983), for example, provided guidelines for how tourism could contribute to the development of international understanding and the promotion of friendship and peace. According to Moufakkir and Kelly (2010: xxiii), tourism is an activity capable of not only promoting economic development but also of breaking down political, cultural, and ethnic barriers within and between nations.

However, as Higgins-Desboilles (2006) argues, despite efforts to use tourism as a vehicle for peace-making, especially with the emergence of tourism subfields such as reconciliation tourism, pro-poor tourism, and justice tourism, the industry has not delivered to any significant degree on its promise. While organizations like the International Institute for Peace through Tourism—established in the 1980s by Louis D’Amore—focus on using the global tourism industry to “bring about peace for humanity and for nature,” tangible results have been at best minimal (Hill et al. 1995: 709; see D’Amore 1988, 2009). As Higgins-Desboilles (2006) notes, in the present-day neoliberal era, the discourse of tourism as an “industry” and the extolling of its economic benefits have overshadowed tourism’s potential as a vital social force for the greater common good. Yet as Jafari (1989: 154) notes, tourism—properly designed—has the potential to help bridge the psychological and cultural distance that separates people of diverse races, ethnicities, and religions. Through tourism, he says, people “...can come to appreciate the rich human, cultural and ecological diversity that our world mosaic offers and to evolve a mutual trust and respect for one another and the dignity of all life on earth”.

Taking an interdisciplinary approach to this proposition, this chapter begins with definitions of “positive peace” and then investigates how certain aspects of the tourism industry might contribute to this goal. In determining that pilgrimage has the greatest potential in the sector for delivering the desired results, I revisit the standard definitions of this universal practice and argue that a paradigm shift is required in the way that scholars and practitioners define pilgrimage in order to better comprehend its potential for peace building. While not

all pilgrims are peace-oriented, and not all pilgrimages have a peace dimension, there is evidence arising from intergroup contact theory to show that pilgrims exposed to a wide diversity of cultures and landscapes will return with a greater openness to other ways of being religious in the world and generally more tolerant of others. I also present a critique of the theory of antagonistic tolerance in an analysis of the growing trend toward interfaith pilgrimage on the global stage. Finally, the chapter highlights other examples of pilgrimage and peace building, including the journeys of inspired individuals, political pilgrimages geared toward peace, and the green pilgrimage movement.

What is peace?

The term “peace” can be difficult to define, as it is often associated with words such as justice, love, and happiness. Indeed, people often identify or recognize peace simply by the absence of open conflict (Webel 2007). Standard dictionaries, for example, define peace as a state of tranquility or quiet between two parties after formal negotiations and the signing of a truce or an accord. Johan Galtung (1988), a founder of the discipline of peace studies, defines peace not by the aforementioned absence of strife—which he calls “negative peace”—but by the presence of justice, a concern for human rights, and an assurance of security—or “positive peace”. According to Haessly (2010: 4), the idea of peace is a holistic one, existing in all cultures and languages—*Shanti* (Sanskrit), *Mir* (Russian), *Ping* (Chinese), *Amani* (Swahili), *Hotep* (ancient Egyptian), *Shalom* (Hebrew), and *Salaam* (Arabic). The writings of Lao-Tse, the founder of Taoism, echo these holistic ideas of peace:

If there is to be peace in the world, there must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations, there must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities, there must be peace between neighbors.
If there is to be peace between neighbors, there must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home, there must be peace in the heart.

(Ni 1979)

Following Galtung’s lead, the idea of negative and positive peace allows us to consider the distinction between individual journeys designed for personal benefit, including inner peace, and those journeys that are associated with more universal or collective benefits. When we focus our attention on this latter dimension, Indian theologian Deenabandhu Manchala sets the bar very high. He says that the traveler with justice and peace in mind must begin by confessing his or her complicity with structures, cultures, and systems that cause, nurture, and legitimize injustice and human aggression. More specifically, the onus is upon all those involved in the tourism and pilgrimage industries to commit to

...effecting transformation of structures and cultures that deny life and keep many in endless cycles of oppression and exploitation, poverty and misery [in particular the]... victims of racism, casteism, and patriarchy...and many others who remain nameless and faceless, existing only as categories.

(Manchala 2014: 141)

While this may seem an insurmountable barrier, tourism and pilgrimage have major roles to play in the peace-building process, for in what other fields of human activity are peoples coming together in goodwill and where there is the potential for positive interaction and dialogue? Probing more deeply into this issue, Inayatullah (1995) calls for nothing less than

a full societal transformation as a basic prerequisite for peace building. If “positive peace” is the desired outcome of sacred and secular journeys, there are many important things to consider, including how tourism affects the distribution of wealth, creates sustainable economic growth, reduces structural or systemic violence, and fosters the idea of cultural pluralism (Inayatullah 1995: 413).

Tourists as ambassadors of peace?

Tourism, as a dominant form of and reason for human mobility, is heavily involved in the facilitation of cross-cultural interaction. With approximately 1.4 billion international arrivals on the global stage in 2018 (UNWTO 2019), there are innumerable opportunities for person-to-person encounters. However, the outcome of these encounters is unclear, and it is unknown whether such first-hand experiences help to create any alternative sets of relationships that might gradually overcome cultural stereotypes or prevent conflict (Kim & Crompton 1990; te Kloetze 2014; Pratt & Liu 2016). Indeed, the very opposite may occur. Travel may lead to conflict both directly and indirectly. Conflict can occur when tourism stakeholders, for example, disagree over the details or the scale of a particular tourism project (Bramwell & Lane 2000; Uddhammar 2006; Dredge 2010). The ownership, representation, interpretation, and commodification of heritage sites can also be a source of rising tensions (Boniface & Robinson 1999; Olsen 2003; Porter & Salazar 2005; Walton 2005; Winter 2007; Poria & Ashworth 2009; Yang, Ryan & Zhang 2013; Olsen and Emmett 2020). Conflict can also occur between tourists and local residents when the negative impacts of tourism are seen to outweigh the positive impacts, when there is no prior informed consent to a project or when it is perceived that there is too much tourism at a destination (*i.e.*, overtourism) (Dodds & Butler 2019; Milano, Cheer & Novelli 2019).

On the other hand, tourism can lead to peaceful outcomes when managed in a way that it becomes a “social force” for peace building (Higgins-Desboilles 2006). As Haessly (2010: 14) argues, tourism can contribute to positive peace only when everyone involved in the industry (*i.e.*, politicians, tourists, employees, providers) commits to the following guidelines of

- honoring spiritual traditions;
- acknowledging and protecting diverse cultural spaces and traditions
- reducing poverty and engaging local communities in the development of tourism;
- eliminating the conditions that lead to conflict and violence, and engage in conflict resolution;
- promoting sustainable development;
- promoting ecotourism; and
- promoting and preserving a culture of peace by supporting business and organizations that engage in socially and environmentally responsible business practices.

Tourism providers therefore need to ask themselves whether the experiences they are offering are building bridges of trust and understanding between different ethnic, racial, or cultural groups, fostering respect for human rights, and also promoting a vision of a just and equitable world (Moufakkir & Kelly 2010).

Yet as Pratt and Liu (2016) argue, tourism is more often than not a beneficiary of peace rather than a driver of justice and reconciliation. Tourism is certainly an integral part of two-track diplomacy, which consists of the official government channels between countries and the informal or unofficial personal encounters between citizens of those countries (Kim &

Crompton 1990). A powerful example of this is in Sri Lanka following the end of the civil war (McIntosh & Paramananda 2020) where increasing numbers of Tamils and Sinhalese are exploring their country, often for the first time in a generation. This presents the population with an opportunity for breaking down stereotypes by engaging in “natural dialogue” (Farra Haddad 2020). With an easing of the former surveillance and security measures, and with passes no longer required for Tamils in the north and east, movement about the country has accelerated. Intergroup contact theory (Vezzali 2016) predicts that this interaction will have the potential to bridge the psychological and cultural distances that separate people of diverse ethnicities, religions, and stages of social and economic development. As American writer and humorist Mark Twain (1869: 650) once remarked, travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness. Closed societies, by contrast, are prone to suspicion and hostility and are conducive to nurturing fear and conflict. From this perspective, perhaps the greatest role that the tourism industry can play in peace building in Sri Lanka is simply providing opportunities for the parties in conflict to come together in a neutral territory to interact as they please without interference.

While the empirical evidence for tourism as a force for peace is either lacking or under review (Becken & Carmigani 2016), one can rightfully ask if certain forms of tourism have a greater potential for peace building than others. To this end, LeSueur (2018) has suggested a conceptual framework that can assist in determining the tourism markets that might be the best fit. Based on the dichotomistic relationship between Hardship on one side of the horizontal axis and Ease and Comfort on the other side, and Isolation and Immersion on different ends of the vertical axis, LeSeuer, in a somewhat oversimplified manner, labels the quadrants *Comfort and Rest*, *Adventure Tourism*, *Cultural Tourism*, and *Pilgrimage or Religious Tourism*. Each of these types of tourism niche markets/experiences can add value to a tourism destination through economically supporting local and mid-size enterprises, protecting the natural and built environment, providing employment to indigenous or other minority groups, and fostering pride in local and national cultures. However, pilgrimage or religious tourism is the category that might best help to achieve peace-related activities and outcomes.

Revisiting the role of pilgrimage

Definitions matter, in that the way that we define a phenomenon will strongly influence and create culturally prescribed ways in which people view, understand, and react to its specific qualities and properties (McIntosh, Farra Haddad & Munro 2020). For the purposes of this chapter, understanding what constitutes pilgrimage is culturally contingent. While the term is used in a cross-cultural comparative manner in Western and non-Western modes of religious travel, it is based on Western conceptions of religious mobility. As such, attention needs to be paid to how the term is understood and utilized in non-Western cultural contexts (Albera & Eade 2015; Eade & Albera 2016). What are viewed as essential truths from one standpoint may be incomprehensible in other social and cultural contexts (McIntosh, Farra Haddad & Munro 2020).

Many scholars have offered their personal definitions of pilgrimage. For example, for Margry (2008: 17) says that pilgrimage is a journey “to a place that is regarded as more sacred or salutary than the environment of everyday life, to seek a transcendental encounter with a specific cult object for the purpose of acquiring spiritual, emotional or physical healing or benefit.” Adding more nuance, Haberman (1993: 7) states that during a pilgrimage,

Pilgrims take to the road in search of some object, often quite vague, which promises to provide something to fill the painful holes in their lives. This object of yearning is

difficult to pin down; it is experienced as that which is missing, some unnamed object lost long ago; it is that haunting lack which engenders the incessant flight from one thing to another. The promise of fulfillment, of wholeness, of perfection, of completion lures us out onto the road to begin a quest.

These definitions of what pilgrimage is, and what pilgrims desire to achieve, suggest that the practice is primarily an individual quest, wherein people travel within a culturally prescribed mode of travel to find individual meaning and reward. However, this individualistic approach raises an important question: Can a profoundly individual act of devotion have consequences beyond these specific desired personal outcomes? Pilgrimage, when considered as a transformative journey focused on the individual or solitary traveler, severely limits consideration of any broader, societal impacts that may come from the pilgrimage experience. As McIntosh, Farra Haddad, and Munro (2020) argue, emphasizing the role and experiences of the individual, while paying scant attention to the social and cultural context of the pilgrimage, blinds us to this deeper dimension.

As such, there needs to be a paradigm shift in how one understands pilgrimage, particularly when it comes to its social and cultural ramifications. Pilgrims and pilgrimage practices are embedded not just within religions but also within sociocultural, political, and economic systems. While individuals may be seeking personal and spiritual growth, healing, or specific blessings through the act of pilgrimage, the societies in which these pilgrimages are embedded have their own specific interests, needs, and agendas and these are always in flux. When only focusing on the narrow lens of individuality, it is difficult to understand the potential impacts at any other level.

There are many instances where pilgrimages are based on accomplishing or celebrating broader community-oriented goals. For example, the Dhammayietra “pilgrimage of truth” initiated by Buddhist Monk Maha Ghosnananda in Cambodia during the last stages of the Khmer Rouge oppression, was framed in terms of rebuilding the country after the devastation of the Pol Pot years, with each step considered both a prayer and a stage in bridge-building (Poethig 2002). Likewise, in the great Wari pilgrimage in Maharashtra in India, the major beneficiary is society itself, with each pilgrimage act performed by hundreds of thousands of devotees reinforcing the sacred values that lie at the heart of their pilgrimage such as social justice, equality, and dignity. Likewise, Palka (2014) describes how Mayan pilgrimage was an integral part of ancient Mayan culture, being centered around community economic and religious goals. Pilgrimage, he argues, not only reinforced social and political roles and Mayan identity but also perpetuated devotion to the gods in return for protection and prosperity. Important for maintaining cosmic balance and world order, pilgrimage had a significance that lay well beyond the level of individuals.

If the role of pilgrimage is to be considered in relation peace building, classic definitions therefore need to acknowledge the aspirations that a community has for itself and the role that sacred journeys play in fulfilling these aspirations. As Cohen (1979) and Vukonić (1996) have argued, this journey within a journey needs viewing from a macro perspective if it is to make any sense at all. Just as definitions of tourism tend to have two distinct aspects—the traveler’s experience and the industry itself—definitions of pilgrimages should look beyond individual motives and outcomes and more to its role as part of living communities with their own plans and special interests. In the light of such a repositioning, scholars will then be in a better position to both appreciate and document the potential impact of religious and spiritual journeys as they either challenge or endorse the status quo in any given setting.

Paradox I: pilgrimage and peace building

According to Vukonić (1996: 127; see Timothy & Iverson 2006), pilgrims participating in the Hajj or the pilgrimage to Mecca seek the forgiveness of their sins, the attainment of wealth and prosperity, and/or good health. In the author's research, Hajj pilgrims have also stressed that the Hajj promotes a message of peace—or at the very least the building blocks of peace—like justice, reconciliation, tolerance, and compassion. As one pilgrim said to me: “The goal is peace within, peace with other Muslims, peace with non-Muslims, and peace with the environment.” (McIntosh 2017). However, Social Identity Theory (SIT), which focuses on how individual identity is formed in part from belonging to such social groups (Stets & Burke 2000; Hornsey 2008), suggests that participation in mass rituals such as the Hajj will inevitably lead to an intensification of in-group identification to the exclusion of other groups.

Paradoxically, however, research shows that the very opposite occurs during the Hajj. In their study of Pakistani pilgrims to Mecca, Clingingsmith, Khwaja, and Kremer (2009) investigated changes in in-group orientation by comparing the viewpoints of successful and unsuccessful applicants for the Hajj lottery used by the Pakistan government to allocate pilgrim visas. What they found was that those who participated in the Hajj did exhibit an intensification in in-group global Islamic practices such as prayer and fasting. However, they also found that their Hajj experience led to an increased belief in equality and harmony among ethnic groups and Islamic sects, and that they developed more favorable attitudes toward women, including their inclusion in education and employment. Most interestingly, Hajj participants also showed an increased belief in the necessity of working toward peace and equality and being in harmony with adherents of other monotheistic religions. Alexseev and Zhemukhov (2017) completed a similar study with Muslim Circassians from southern Russia who had participated in the Hajj and found that the pilgrimage to Mecca re-personalizes the pilgrims toward greater openness for engaging in public life and accepting religious, ethnic, and national diversity.

The research noted above opens the way for further studies on other mass rituals. For example, the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Lourdes in France annually attracts over five million visitors. One notable event on the annual Lourdes calendar is a sacred ceremony for former war combatants from up to 40 countries who come together in a spirit of forgiveness (Warriors to Lourdes 2020). What lessons for peace building can be drawn from their experience of what appears to be a profound healing and renewed faith that can be replicated elsewhere? Does their forgiveness and acceptance of others extend to other religions?

The Arba'een pilgrimage in Iraq, which has strong human rights and justice focus, is another important potential case study of mass ritual and peace building. Does participation in this walking pilgrimage, and being in the presence of millions of devotees from across the Shi'a world, promote greater openness and respect for other faith and cultural groups?

Likewise, the Camino de Santiago attracts more than 250,000 pilgrims each year with as many nonreligious and spiritual pilgrims as Catholic pilgrims. Does this life-changing sacred journey, famous for promoting camaraderie among the walkers, also promote tolerance and understanding across social, cultural, and religious boundaries post-pilgrimage?

Paradox II: antagonistic tolerance?

There is, however, another paradox within discussions of pilgrimage and peace building. Hayden et al. (2016) note that there are instances where there appears to be a real spirit of acceptance and cooperation between faith groups in varied settings which have witnessed

centuries of conquest and domination. However, when something occurs to upset the status quo, these same groups may turn upon one another with an unparalleled fury. The powerful influence for peace building of interfaith cooperation is completely undermined.

In examining the old Balkan city of Sarajevo, Hayden et al. suggest that just because there is a mosque, a synagogue, a Catholic church and an Orthodox church located in close proximity does not mean that interfaith cooperation is or has ever been a cherished value in that city. Even though some Muslims attend certain Christian pilgrimages and Christians repair old mosques that were former sites of pilgrimage, “antagonistic tolerance” or “competitive sharing” underlies the relationships between the faiths. According to this theory, interactions between religious groups will be generally peaceful but when circumstances change the balance of power between these groups, allowing one to encroach upon the rights or domain of the other, all tolerance is forsaken and violence erupts (Hayden et al. 2016).

For Hayden et al., antagonistic tolerance is the fulcrum upon which all religious relations revolve. Such antagonism is overridden only when a disinterested power, like the Ottomans under Mehmed 2 or the Communists of former Yugoslavia under Tito, or in cases of extreme poverty like in India where differences in faith had no bearing of your chances of survival, that peaceful relations between religious groups might occur for any extended period of time.

The problem with Hayden et al.’s focus on “antagonistic tolerance” is that it unjustifiably places the gaze squarely in the negative realm, where fear and distrust are the defining features of the relationships between different faith groups. In today’s plural and multi-faith communities, however, there seems to be a renewed urgency for people of faith to publicly affirm and celebrate their shared values (Cornille 2013). There is ample evidence today, for example, of how crossing religious borders in a public and highly visible way is the norm rather than an exception, such as in Ethiopia and Lebanon where for centuries cooperative social activities have united communities (Dagnachew 2020; Farra Haddad 2020a, 2020b). Indeed, even in locations where there is a real potential for conflict between faith groups, there is often an undercurrent of deep respect that has the potential to alter the trajectory of relations. In Egypt, for example, each year hundreds of thousands of Muslims join with Christians at the Virgin Mary apparition sites in Egypt, such as Zaitoun. Despite the very real threats to their person by hardliners, Islam has the deepest regard for the Virgin Mary and the shared human need for spirituality, mysticism, and beauty sees many Muslims and Christians engaged in worship side by side (McIntosh 2017). In interfaith pilgrimages across India, both a Muslim and a Dalit (“Untouchable”) can freely participate in the Hindu Wari “pilgrimage of joy”, as can non-Muslims in the Sufi pilgrimage to Ajmer. While terrorist bombing has occurred in Ajmer, pilgrim participants continue this collaborative practice because they are focused on the positive realm of unity and harmony rather than the negative realm of antagonistic tolerance (McIntosh 2017).

Peace pilgrimages

Although more research is needed to determine the effectiveness of pilgrimage as a tool for peace building, there are many examples that can be showcased where pilgrimage does seem to lead to more peaceful relations between religious and ethnic groups. Peace pilgrimages, some of which have been described above, can be divided into four categories. The first category is pilgrimages led by inspired individuals that focus specifically on peace-related goals. Perhaps the best-known example is Mildred Lisette Norman (1908–1981), a non-denominational spiritual teacher, mystic, pacifist, vegetarian activist, and peace activist who,

after a spiritual awakening in 1952, continuously walked across the United States speaking about nonviolence. Adopting the name “Peace Pilgrim”, Norman took a vow to remain a wanderer until humankind learned the way of peace (Tamashiro 2018). Another example is the “Reconciliation Walk” created by U.S. pastor Lynn Green, who had a deep desire to confront the legacy of the Christian Crusades. In March 1996, he led over 3,000 people from many different denominations and nations from Cologne in Germany to Jerusalem to provide an opportunity for Christians to apologize face-to-face to Muslims and Jews for the crimes of the Crusaders. The three-year, two-thousand-mile pilgrimage across Europe and the Balkans ended in Jerusalem in July 1999, the nine-hundredth anniversary of the sacking of Jerusalem (Weyeneth 2001; Megoran 2010; McIntosh 2018). A third example is the “Journey of the Magi” to Bethlehem, organized by Robin and Nancy Wainwright, members of the Holy Land Trust, who led an international group of pilgrims in a re-creation of the journey of the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem. Their goal was to arrive on December 25 2000 to commemorate the birth of Jesus and to build ties of friendship and cooperation between Christians and Muslims. Although the Second Palestinian Intifada made progress through the West Bank difficult, the group arrived on the evening of the anniversary of Jesus’ birth, with the Wainwrights leading a thousand-strong procession of Palestinians to Manger Square and Bethlehem’s Church of the Nativity (Dyer 2013; McIntosh 2018).

The second category includes those journeys with a distinctly political nature and where the focus is peace, social justice, and reconciliation. One noteworthy example is the annual Selma to Montgomery pilgrimage that recreates the 1960s civil rights march of Dr. Martin Luther King (Raiford & Romano 2006). Another example is the 2000 “People’s Walk for Reconciliation” in Australia where more than 300,000 non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians crossed the Sydney Harbour Bridge together in support of Indigenous rights and reconciliation (Edmonds 2016). There is also a yearly social justice-oriented pilgrimage in memory of Monsignor Oscar Romero, a liberation theologian assassinated while delivering mass in 1980 because he was an outspoken critic of the El Salvadorian government and the human rights abuses carried out by its military. In 2015, Romero was declared a martyr and canonized (Brett 2017), and today, pilgrims visit the monument to “memory and truth” in downtown San Salvador, a wall with over 30,000 names (including Romero’s) of those who disappeared or were murdered during the repression of the 1970s or during the civil war that followed from 1980 to 1992 (Villatoro 2016).

Olsen (2017) also gives the example of the “From Ocean to Ocean International Campaign in Defense of Life”. This pilgrimage was instituted to both promote a pro-life/anti-abortion message and to strengthen the pro-life convictions and faith of church members and the local populace in the locations through which the pilgrimage procession traveled. Starting in 2012 in eastern Russia, pilgrims participating in this pilgrimage carried a painting of the Black Madonna of Czestochowa across Europe to North America and then into Mexico. While the pilgrimage itself was not designed to be political in nature, with pilgrims avoiding engagement with political figures, this pilgrimage might be considered by some as political in nature because of the politics surrounding pro-life messaging.

The third type of peace pilgrimage is interfaith pilgrimage, where members of two or more faiths engage in pilgrimage activities together, including shared rituals and experiences. These pilgrimages can be considered a part of the interfaith “dialogue of life” and the “dialogue of religious experience” (Belaj & Zvonko 2014), wherein shared experiences and rituals lead to greater inter-faith dialogue and understanding (Knitter 2013). While some examples of interfaith pilgrimages were mentioned earlier in this chapter, there are several other examples of interfaith pilgrimages given here. In Nigeria, a syncretic religion,

Chrislam, has emerged where adherents hold both the Bible and the Koran as holy texts. One of their unique practices is engaging in spiritual running, or “running deliverance,” where members liken their pilgrimage to the biblical story of Joshua’s army circling Jericho or the Muslim practice of circumambulating the Kaaba (McIntosh 2017). In Lebanon, Christians and Muslims both participate in shared pilgrimages and visit the shrines of the other faith (Farra Haddad 2020a, 2020b). Christians in the Mindanao region of the Philippines, likewise, undertake a Solidarity Ramadan in alliance with their Muslim brothers and sisters in a profound display of interfaith unity (McIntosh 2017).

Scholars have noted interfaith pilgrimages at Mary’s House in Ephesus, Turkey (Gallagher 2016; Öter & Çetinkaya 2016), a Marian shrine on the outskirts of Nîmes in southern France (Albera 2012), and at multiple religious sites in Ethiopia (Dagnachew 2020). Noteworthy is the Sri Pada, Sri Lanka pilgrimage (Scott 1995; McIntosh & Paramananda 2020), and certain one-off interfaith pilgrimages, such as the eight-month “Interfaith Pilgrimage for Peace and Life” organized by Japanese Buddhists in 1995 where participants traveled from Auschwitz to Hiroshima (Deats 1995; Schiel 1996).

The final category is green pilgrimages, which focus on the ecological problems of religious pilgrimages and the use of pilgrimage to promote broader global ecological sustainability and understanding (Ivakhiv 2016). While religious faiths have various views of the relationship between humans and the natural environment, pilgrimages continue to cause damage to sensitive environments, including groves, rivers, lakes, mountains, and (Olsen 2020). To this end, in 2011 the Green Pilgrimage Network (GPN) was founded in Assisi, Italy with the aim of encouraging pilgrimage travel in a way that minimizes the environmental impacts of pilgrims and the development of pilgrimage cities and communities that are more environmentally sustainable (Palmer & Hilliard 2011). To accomplish this, the GPN suggests that pilgrims and pilgrimage organizers need to commit to several guidelines and principles, including choosing sustainable tourist agencies, minimizing water use, utilizing “green” religious buildings, energy and infrastructure, safeguarding the natural landscape, wildlife and parks, and bringing greener ideas home with them, among others. The GPN also encourages pilgrimage sites and cities to focus on projects that improve energy efficiency, greener food, biodiversity, environmental awareness and education, and recycling, food, and waste management systems (Palmer & Hilliard 2011).

Conclusion

While pilgrimage is often viewed as a journey to help overcome a personal deficiency, with rituals specifically designed to fulfill an obligation, repay a debt, undertake penance, deal with a loss, or purify oneself in the presence of God, the more positive dimension of pilgrimage recognizes its potential for broader societal transformation and healing writ large. In this chapter, the focus has been on the purposes and impacts of pilgrimage beyond the needs and interests of the individual pilgrim to the needs and interests of the greater society. This is a precondition for better understanding the peace building potential of sacred journeys.

Pilgrimage at its core is as much a group activity as it is an individual one, but attempts to understand and measure the peace building dimension of mass rituals are hampered by definitions that focus on the aforementioned individual motives and desired outcomes. While not all pilgrimages are peace-focused, nor are all religious and spiritual tourists always driven by peaceful motives, it is evident that the practice of pilgrimage can have significant impacts on increasing tolerance and respect for diversity. In a world filled with conflict over race,

religion, political ideologies, and finite resources, pilgrimage can help to address deep-seated conflicts, historical injustices, and social inequalities.

The most significant ways in which pilgrimage is currently having impacts on peace is through the growing interfaith movement and through the mobilization of pilgrims who share specific views regarding peace, justice, and reconciliation, often in troubled political climates. The “green pilgrimage” movement has also provided an opportunity for pilgrims to consider the impacts of their sacred journeys and to think globally.

A common feature of pilgrimages that facilitate peace is the way in which they embody a wish or hope for the future. The seemingly paradoxical case of the Hajj, with its vision of a united human family, best illustrates this point. As Haessly (2010: 5) argues, for peace to flourish, pilgrims must embrace such a shared vision and articulate it to others. Pilgrimage scholar George Greenia has described pilgrimage as the least violent human gatherings that humans have so far designed for themselves (McIntosh 2017: 8). It is clear that pilgrimages have a role to play in breaking down barriers between people and dispelling stereotypes. Not as clear is the full extent of its potential contribution to world peace. As such, further research is warranted and should be prioritized.

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