Geographies of Religion and Spirituality: Pilgrimage beyond the 'Officially' Sacred

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Pilgrimage occupies a special place in the literature on tourism and mobility, and is fraught with contradictions that make it difficult to define. Along with warfare, it is one of the oldest forms of human mobility and a fundamental precursor to modern tourism (Di Giovine and Elsner 2016:722). Although individually experienced, it is frequently undertaken in groups at specified times of year; the Islamic hajj to Mecca, the Shia pilgrimage to Karbala, Iraq (site of the martyrdom of their recognized successor to the Prophet), and the Kumbha Mela in Allahabad, a festival that entails ritual bathing in the Ganges, all move tens of millions of people at a time, providing economic, political, and social benefits as well as notable social pressures, marginalization of locals, and sometimes economic losses. Since nearly every major religion counts some institutionalized tradition of travel (Cohen 1998, Kaufman 2005, Reader 2014, Terzidou et al. 2017), and indeed, the first widely read English usage of the word "religions" was in a 17th century monograph entitled *Pilgrimage* (Purchas 1613; see Smith 1998: 271-272)*,* many scholars have characterized pilgrimage as a fundamentally religious journey (E. Turner 1987; Rinshede 1992; Vukonic 1996, Coleman and Eade 2004), though more recently others—particularly those employing emic, or bottom-up analyses— point out that the term is often used by travelers to denote important, transformative journeys that may be secular or non-religious in nature as well (Morinis 1992; 1992; Reader & Walter, 1993; Gammon 2004; Dubisch & Winkelman, 2005; Margry, 2008). Self-described pilgrims may make pilgrimages to memorials and other sites of loss, to their imagined homelands and heritage sites, to parks and landforms, and to other places that hold particular importance to the individual.

With such a diversity of forms and qualities, a unifying feature, then, of all of these pilgrimages is that they are "hyper-meaningful" travels to rather hyper-meaningful sites (Di Giovine 2013a)—sites set apart from the profane and everyday world, which hold special importance to visitors, and which often promise some sort of personal or social transformation. In a word, it is travel out of the profane world into that of the sacred. But *what* constitutes the sacred, *when* and *to whom* it is considered sacred, and *who* authorizes the pilgrimage as an acceptable form of engagement with sacrality varies from site to site, culture to culture, pilgrimage to pilgrimage and sometimes even individual to individual (cf. Lincoln 1996:225). In certain cases, pilgrimage is explicitly authorized by a centralized power—a religious hierarchy, political entity, or even a canonical sacred text—yet especially as these

more post-modern, emic perspectives on pilgrimage reveal, at other times pilgrimage remains un-authorized, a popular movement rather than an officially sanctioned one, and subject to less centralized control. Such clashes between popular and "official" pilgrimage may lead to social tensions, moral condemnation, or even death or the physical destruction of the site, such as the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Taliban in Afghanistan, Sufi shrines in Timbuktu, Mali by Ansar Dine, and the tomb of Jonah in Iraq by ISIS (see Di Giovine and Garcia-Fuentes 2016). Understanding how sacredness is implicated in pilgrimage—how it is perceived, how it motivates, and how it is officially sanctioned—is therefore important for grasping the complex dynamics of this important form of mobility.

This special issue examines the multiple ways in which pilgrimage engages with sacredness, delving beyond the officially recognized, and often religiously conceived, pilgrimage sites. While most of the articles in this issue deal in some way with religious or spiritual centers of devotion, they all share a sensitivity towards understanding pilgrimage from the bottom up, that is, outside of institutional power structures and officially recognized practices. Whether addressing massive pilgrimage sites to religious centers of power such as Vatican City, personal literary pilgrimages seeking transcendence at Walden Pond, or gambling journeys filled with rituals and devotional practices aimed at earning meritorious boons in Macau, they all problematize taken-for-granted definitions of pilgrimage, and focus on the way in which the sacred is evoked, engaged with, and negotiated. In this special issue, and in this introduction, the sacred is the operational category of analysis for pilgrimage, and it manifests itself semiotically and performatively, through discourse and practice, inside and outside the realm of religious or temporal authority. Collectively delving "beyond the officially sacred," this special issue examines the interplay of a transcendent sacred for pilgrims and tourists so as to provide a blueprint for how work in the geography of religion and the field of religious tourism may move forward (Brace et al, 2006).

Pilgrimage, Religion, and the Sacred

Sacredness is a notoriously slippery word. While frequently conflated with notions of the religious or the supernatural, it is important to distinguish the two. Religion is a Western category of thought that denotes some sort of organized practice concerning the divine or spiritual; etymologically stemming from the Latin *ligare*, which means to bind (people) together as a book, in earlier times it was employed to discuss the proper (or authorized) enactment of ritual (see Smith 1998: 269). By the colonial era, "religions" became used by Western colonial powers to describe a category of belief systems that appeared to be parallel

(yet subordinate to) the Christian tradition, despite the fact that such categories are not always indigenous (Smith 270, 275-281). Contemporary anthropologists such as Clifford Geertz (1993[1966]) and Talal Asad (1993) emphasize that religion is an anthropological category of analysis, rather than necessarily a lived experience, and one that exposes the power of the analyst to interpret indigenous practices. For this Introduction's purposes, religion thus references an intensely social institution that operates in daily life.

Yet at its most elemental meaning, the sacred is an oppositional category, denoting that which is opposed to—or exists in spite of, above, or in the midst of—profane, everyday life. The great scholar of comparative religions, Mircea Eliade, argued that sacred sites are *axes mundi*, centers of cosmological perfection that "irrupt", or poke through, the messiness of secular life. Humans, to Eliade, are drawn to recapture such perfection amidst the chaos of profane existence, and often seek to recreate it in the forms of special buildings, shrines, and markers (1987[1957]). As such, these places are often geographically separated from urban centers in which daily life takes its course. Anthropologist Victor Turner (1973) considers the pilgrimage site as a sacred "centre out there", peripheral to the institutional power structures in society; he also considers pilgrimage a ritual inversion of daily life (see Di Giovine 2013a:75). This is important, for it posits a fundamental conflict between pilgrimage—which is often embraced by a society's religious authorities—and those temporal power brokers themselves; if (temporal) power is the ability to transform institutions and motivations, sacredness seems to be a different form of power, transforming people and groups, internally and externally, beyond social structures. Indeed, for Turner, pilgrimage destinations are sites of "anti-structure" (1974a)—ritual spaces in which participants shed the profane trappings of social life that serve to separate one from one another (such as age, race, class, sex), and recognize their own shared humanity through a sensation produced in the liminal stage of a ritual that he calls *communitas* (Turner 1974b; Turner and Turner 1976). Pilgrims' opposition lies not between one another, as it does in the profane world, but between the whole of humanity and the sacred or divine. It is perhaps for this reason that pilgrimages are believed to be practices *par excellence* for experiencing transcendence and supernatural intervention, and pilgrimage centers are often considered unique places to see and be seen by the divine— particularly in traditions such as Hinduism (*darshan*), ancient Greece (*derkomai*), and Shinto (*kanko*) (see Rutherford 2000:139; Graburn 2004:127). Indeed, the divine or its sacred mediators (such as saints or gurus) are often perceived as being present in pilgrimages; they are often imbued in statues, graves, images, or relics, or in natural landforms such as mountains (i.e. Mt. Meru) or waterways (i.e. the Ganges River). Further attesting to their

power above and beyond the control of humans, such elements of material culture are frequently considered to possess healing properties (i.e. Lourdes) or in the case of the Ganges, a liberation from the suffering-filled cycle of reincarnation (*moksha*; *nirvana* in Buddhism) (Di Giovine 2016).

Yet the sacred is variable; it may not be readily or universally recognized, and what is considered sacred to one group may not be considered sacred to others, as the destruction of holy shrines by ISIS reveal. Furthermore, a site may often lose its perceived sacredness to a group over time, through no notable change of its own; Mediterranean caves and rock-hewn shrines to prophesizing Sibyls in the Greco-Roman era lay abandoned and unrecognized by their devotees' descendants today. And in some cases, while a site remains sacred and an object of cult, the official recognition of its sacredness changes; the process of re-dedicating Roman temples to Catholic saints in Late Antiquity and the conversion of Hindu temples such as Angkor Wat into those dedicated to the Buddha and bodhisattvas in medieval Khmer history are notable examples. Variable, changeable, and perspectival (Di Giovine 2013a:80), sacredness seems to be a matter of context, placed in opposition to a person's daily life— something that Arnold van Gennep points out in his notion of the "pivoting of the sacred":

> The presence of the sacred is variable. Sacredness as an attribute is not absolute; it is brought into play by the nature of particular situations. A man at home, in his tribe, lives in the secular realm; he moves into the realm of the sacred when he goes on a journey and finds himself a foreigner near a camp of strangers…thus the "magic circles" pivot, shifting as a person moves from one place in society to another. The categories and concepts which embody them operate in such a way that whoever passes through the various positions of a lifetime one day sees the sacred where before he sees the profane, or vice-versa. Such changes of condition do not occur without disturbing the life of society or the individual. (1960:12-13).

And just as something may lose its perceived sacredness over time, so too can it veritably gain or multiply its sacredness. Sociologist Emile Durkheim points out that a sacred object or site does not lose its power when it is broken apart, but rather each individual fragment has as much power as the whole—thereby exponentially increasing the thing's total sacredness:

> When a sacred being is subdivided, it remains wholly equal to itself in each of its parts. …From the standpoint of religious thought, the part equals the whole; the part has the same powers and same efficacy. A fragment of a relic has the same virtues as the whole relic. (Durkheim 1995:230-231).

This certainly was the case for the proliferation of pieces of saints' relics in Medieval Europe and the creation of stupas bearing the ashes of the Buddha in Asia, but it also translates today into the desire for pilgrims to bring back home pieces of the pilgrimage site. Pilgrims often carry back souvenirs, religious objects, holy water, and pieces of sacred ground; sometimes these are officially sanctioned, through the sale of souvenirs or special vessels to collect the water or dirt (for example, at the Virgin Mary's house in Ephesus, Turkey; or Lourdes, France), and sometimes they are individually practiced (for example, the practice of taking pebbles and stones from battlefields such as Gettysburg, USA). In some cases, pilgrims will touch the sacred object or relic to souvenirs purchased in the site, or religious objects and photographs of family members that they brought from home, so as to capture some of the "contagious magic" (Frazer 1994[1890]:26-59) contained within. In other cases, such as at the end of a Catholic pilgrimage, mundane souvenirs and everyday religious objects purchased at the site—such as statuettes, plaques and rosaries—undergo elaborate rites of *inventio*, whereby the accompanying priest blesses them, transforming them into sacred relics. These are then gifted to family, friends, prayer groups, churches and temples, and those in need of miraculous intervention who were not able to make the journey (Di Giovine 2012; 2016).

Despite the efficacy of mobilizing diverse groups of people, the variability of sacredness is particularly problematic for organized religions and political entities because they are hard to control. On the one hand, the sacred can be multiplied or divided; more sites can "irrupt" into the profane world at any moment, fragments can multiply and circulate, the contagious sacredness can rub off onto other objects. On the other hand, the understood sacredness of the pilgrimage site may pivot; its efficacy is subject not only to theological or religious beliefs, but broader historical, political, social and economic contexts of various individuals and groups. For this reason, centralized authorities have held a notoriously ambivalent stance towards pilgrimage, and either seek to control its power through the authorization process, or stave it off by withholding authorization and even condemning those who make the trip.

The authorization process

Before delving into the ways in which pilgrimage may operate beyond the realms of the "officially sacred," it is important to first understand how pilgrimages are authorized. In its most basic sense, authorization means providing official recognition onto a thing, practice or outcome of an event, thereby granting official permission to do something or allowing access to it. For the purposes of this Introduction, authorization refers to the official recognition of the sacredness of a pilgrimage and its associated sites by institutionalized power brokers, either directly or because society has recognized it as such, thereby granting access to the sacred—often, along the way, seeing to control the production of pilgrimage through its promotion, regulation, and circulation of officially sanctioned myths, rites and imaginaries. There are three ways in which the sacredness of pilgrimages are authorized: through tradition, through canonical text, and through institutional norms.

The first, most diffuse, and possibly the earliest form of pilgrimage is authorization by tradition—that is, that a pilgrimage is recognized to be sacred by an institutional power broker (such as religious leadership or temporal leadership such as governments) because society has recognized it as such. No official decrees are needed, though they are *de facto* sanctioned by authorities. Indeed, these power brokers individually have come from society, are institutionally part of society, and are officially invested through their status to speak for society. They may make no decrees or official proclamations, but rather take the pilgrimage for granted because it seemingly has always been going along. This is particularly the case for those religions in which there are no formal or institutional centers of power, but rather diffuse power structures invested in smaller-scale religious practitioners, such as what occurs in many indigenous belief systems. Most Eastern religions, particularly in the great pilgrimages of Hinduism, also adhere to this; there is no one center of authority, no single religious hierarchy (save, perhaps, the Brahmin caste), and no official determination of dogma beyond a collective adherence to the ancient Vedic texts and shared mythology stemming from the Puranas, *Mahabharata* and *Ramayana*. Even when pilgrimages are officially sanctioned by a power broker, such as the Vatican, individual pilgrims may participate because of tradition, rather than exhortation from a high-up, and often far-removed, authority.

Indeed, social scientists argue that pilgrimage, as a ritual, is a repetitive social practice; "pilgrims literally walk in the footsteps of others" (Di Giovine and Elsner 2016, see Coleman and Elsner 1995)—and this seems to be true even in un-sanctioned pilgrimages to sites of personal importance, such as to one's homeland (Ebron 2000), to a national park (Ross-Bryant 2013), or even to Dollywood, the home of American country music star Dolly

Parton (Morales 2014). It is also important to note pilgrimage's temporary and circular character; a pilgrim is not one who remains at the site indefinitely (in Christianity at least, this transforms them into something else—an expat, a local, or a usurper, depending on locals' perspective of that person; see McKevitt 2000[1991]; Frey 1998, 2004). Rather, pilgrims return with discursive accounts of their journeys, and material culture such as souvenirs and relics, which promulgate other imaginaries (Salazar and Graburn 2014) that, through their circulation, serve to raise awareness informally of the sacredness of the place (see, for example, Kaell 2014). As imaginaries circulate, they coalesce into socially authorized images that enter into collective memory (Halwbachs 1992). For example, after the fall of the Berlin Wall or the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City, numerous images of the event circulated, but over time, they crystallized into only a few iconic images that are collectively remembered (Sonnevend 2016). This serves to perpetuate the sacredness of the site even among those who did not live through the experience, or who were spatially far removed from it.

Indeed, often such imaginaries are embedded in monuments, markers, and other forms of material culture intended to last through time (see Harrison 2013, Nora 1989), and which further shape the ways in which visitors interact with the place. As Eliade (1978[1959]) suggests, the construction of cult sites at sacred spaces seems to be a common way of socially capturing, and replicating through temporal means, that which exists above the profane world. Animistic devotees tie prayer messages to sacred groves in Thailand or cords on sacred rocks as at Ise in Japan; individual families erect markers and temples to peaks of mountains or to landforms resembling the footprint of Buddha throughout Southeast Asia, sometimes as a way of competitively gaining more merit than other families just as they do in performatively bestowing public donations to monasteries during pilgrimage (Pruess 1976:186-187); and monumental cathedrals and temple complexes are built around sites traditionally known as sacred, or invested with sacred objects such as saints' relics or Buddha's ashes. Other cultures, such as the Apache and aboriginal groups, construct not material edifices such as temples and monuments at sacred landforms, but nevertheless imbue them with historically and morally charged names and narratives (Basso 1996).

There is also evidence of this impetus to mark the sacred sites of Jesus even in the New Testament. In the Gospel story of the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8; Luke 9:28-36), Jesus, upon praying at the top of a mountain with three disciples, begins to shine with a bright light, is bodily raised in the air, and, flanked by the appearance of Moses and Elijah, is called "son" by a voice in the sky. When the supernatural event is over, Peter

suggests that they build three tents on the spot (one each for Jesus, Elijah and Moses) marking the sacred space so that others could visit it, presumably as a pilgrimage. Jesus, however, rejects this suggestion (perhaps providing the basis for many Protestant sects to contest formal pilgrimage), but this nevertheless shows that such practices were within the realm of possibility at the time. Indeed, in his classic examination of the rise of saints' cults in Christianity, and, by association, pilgrimage to their cult centers, Peter Brown shows that such devotional practices arose from the pagan funerary practices of the cult of the dead, wherein early Christian followers would periodically, and at regular intervals, visit tombs of martyrs to perfume and take care of their burial grounds. Spurred on by the stories of the lives of saints when Christianity was itself authorized in the Constantinian era (which were later compiled into the sweeping *Acta Sanctorum* compendium) these practices became fully public and massively popular, establishing the form of pilgrimage seen today in the West.

Indeed, the second great authorizing force for pilgrimage are narratives, often solidified into canonical texts. Both Eade and Sallnow (1991:7-9), and Coleman and Elsner (2003), discuss the importance of text on the formation and dissemination of pilgrimage routes throughout time and space. For Eade and Sallnow, pilgrimage results in the synergy of person, place and text; that is, a narrative must be embedded within the place, giving it its sacredness to pilgrims. When the texts are canonical—that is, officially recognized—then it can authorize the pilgrimage itself. In Coleman and Elsner's eyes, the Gospel narrative of Jesus on the road to Emmaus (Mark 16:12-13; Luke 24:13-33) "became the Biblical model for pilgrimage" (2003:3). As two apostles walk through the countryside to the town of Emmaus, they are joined by a stranger who discusses Jesus' crucifixion with them. When they finally arrive at the town, strengthened in their faith in the divinity of Jesus, the stranger reveals himself to be none other than the resurrected Christ. In this, Coleman and Elsner argue, the literal peregrination ("walk through the fields," from which the English term "pilgrimage" comes) with others brings about an interior transformation and solidification of faith; one can see with "divine eyes", to borrow from Krishna in a parallel story in the *Bhagavad Gita* (6(63) 33[11], line 10) (Mitchell 2000), in which he bestows the transformative ability of seeing him as the incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu to the Mahabarata's hero Arjuna after talking through the faith.

Coleman and Elsner (2003) also argue that early travel accounts such as the 4th century *Itinerarium Burdigalense* (Elsner 2000) and the c. 7th century *Itinerarium Egeriae* (Sivan 1988) established a set pilgrimage route of the Holy Land based on a fusion of New Testament sacred geography and post-Constantinian geopolitics (Elsner 2000:181). Likewise,

Indian pilgrimage routes retrace the journeys of Rama and Gautama Buddha. And just as narratives of Jesus and the miraculous encounters of Holy Land pilgrimages were disseminated throughout Europe not only textually, but also orally and visually, so too is the Ramayana re-presented orally (in the form of songs, prayers, dance and shadow puppet performances) and visually (in the form of bas reliefs, paintings, sculptures, and talismans) across the Hindu, Buddhist, Jain and Muslim cultures of Southeast Asia and Oceania. In so doing, the narrative's sacred geography is re-interpreted and re-inscribed onto local sites, in accordance with the group's own cosmological understandings. Natural and built sites, such as Mount Phousi in Laos or Angkor Wat in Cambodia—both metonyms for the mythical Mt. Meru, the *axis mundi* of the world—become pilgrimage sites in their own right just as the Holy House in Loreto, Italy or Walsingham in the United Kingdom—both metonyms for the birthplace of Jesus (cf. Coleman 2004)—are objects of pilgrimage in Europe (Di Giovine 2013a:78-79).

But perhaps the most salient is the hajj—the annual movement of people to Mecca, in Saudi Arabia. Of all major pilgrimages, the hajj is not only one of the largest in the world, but also the only to be authorized in scripture as one of the five pillars of the faith. Indeed, there is nothing in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, or in the Hindu Vedas, for example, that says that pilgrimage is obligatory. Yet the Surah Al-Baqarah 2:196-203 of the Koran suggests that all able-bodied men and women are to embark on a pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their life. And they are not only supposed to be transformed interiorly but also socially. Upon their return, successful pilgrims are called *haji*s, and are afforded a level of respect in the society that was higher than when they left; it is therefore a clear rite of passage—a socially approved ritual intended to manage status change. Yet the special nature of the hajj is also emphasized through its barring of most other types of pilgrimages, particularly to revered sites associated with holy people; recently hardline Islamicists have destroyed local sites of pilgrimages such as Sufi saints' tombs in Timbuktu, Mali and shrines to Old Testament prophets such as the temple of Jonah in Iraq.

Oftentimes the theological justification of pilgrimage will be embedded itself in authorized texts, which dialectically will work to reformulate notions of sacredness and rituals that are prescribed to follow. The solidification of pilgrimage in sacred texts that are canonically approved also serves to conflate the popular notion of sacredness with the temporal reality of religion. For example, St. Augustine of Hippo—one of the doctors of the Catholic church and one of its greatest thinkers—argues in his classic, *City of God* (1958), that all people are on a "pilgrimage" from the earthly City of Man (*civitas terrena*) to the

heavenly city of God (*civitas Dei*). This peregrination, this collective movement by individuals striving to leave behind the profane world in search of the sacred, he called the *civitas Dei supra terram*—the city of God on earth, or the "pilgrim Church on Earth," as the contemporary Catholic Mass calls itself in its own liturgy.

But just as pilgrimage was condoned by Christian thinkers such a St. Augustine, it was also lambasted by those who contested the supremacy of the Catholic Church and/or who were who were trying to reform it—leading perhaps to the reformulation of prescribed understandings of pilgrimage and possibly the removal of authorization. Writing at about the same time St. Augustine, the fourth century St. Gregory of Nyssa condemned pilgrimage as morally problematic; he feared that the journey did not provide interior transformation towards the spiritual as St. Augustine had argued, but rather that it was a dangerously seductive on that would lead people astray to cause "moral mischief" (2007:117-119; see Elsner 2015:i). While St. Gregory ultimately did not win out, his type of thinking was later embraced by Martin Luther, who, contesting the primacy and the moral excesses of the early Renaissance Church, called pilgrimage to Rome a "satanic seduction" that drew men away from their familial obligations at home and work towards earthly temptations, only to enrich the Vatican elite (Luther 1962: 443-444; see Di Giovine & Picard 2015:27-28).

Thus, the third and possibly the most recognizable form of bestowing official recognition of the sacredness of pilgrimage is normative authorization. Normative authorization is that form of authorization given by a temporal power such as religious or political leadership, and frequently enshrined in decrees, laws, or its own canonical texts such as the Catholic Catechism. To effectively convert popular sentiment into an authorized or officially recognized form of sanctity, a ritual process is needed to transform the site's status, to formally recognize it as such—much like a rite of passage is used to transform one's status in society. This frequently entails the verification of the sanctity of the pilgrimage, the proclamation of official sanctioning of pilgrimage, the establishment of an official shrine, and the drawing up of norms, procedures, and regulations for its appropriate operation. This process is perhaps most pronounced in the Catholic Church, which, throughout the ages, has exerted increasing canonical control over the authorization of sacredness, particularly in the realm of saints (and, by extension, their pilgrimage sites). Indeed, from late Antiquity to the 13th century, saint's cults were intensely local in character and comparatively few were officially canonized by the Vatican (Delooz 1983:194); the first papal canonization occurred only in 993 (1983:191). Rather, "each town, village, diocese or religious order had its own favorite cult-object" (Goodich 1983:170), and local bishops "at his people's insistence, would

raise or transfer the relics, thus marking his official approval" (Delooz 1983:191). Just because they were local did not mean that they were not visited *en masse*, however; the great pilgrimage centers to St. Martin at Tours, St. Michael at Monte Sant'Angelo, and Santiago de Compostela saw an immense movement of pilgrims in this period. But Goodich argues that the Vatican began to claim control over canonization in the 13th century as heretic groups such as the Cathars and the Valdesians threatened the power of the Church; one of the "most effective means of harnessing popular energy to the papal cause was a vast proliferation of saints' cults," which were able to move pilgrims and affectively spread devotion to Rome (Goodich 1983:169). Thus, with the exception of the few members of religious orders and bishops who were canonized (1983:170), the majority of officially canonized saints in the Middle Ages had a popular following first, and then underwent a triple process: popular opinion first determined the sanctity of the personage; as word spreads and narratives become clarified, a cult would then form which could mobilize "campaigns" waged by local bishops; finally, the official Vatican canonization hearings would take place (Delooz 1983:199). Once the Vatican has officially sanctioned the devotional cult, pilgrimage shrines and even Papal basilicas could be constructed, providing a greater impetus to visit. Today, the process of canonization, as well as the creation of associated pilgrimage sites, follows a similar juridical procedure; such a ritual process transforms the status of a site from a locus of popular devotion to one of authorized sanctity.

To understand how this works, it is helpful to examine four alternative approaches that the Catholic Church has taken to either co-opt or contest pilgrimage to popularly conceived sacred sites in the 20th century. The first is the popular pilgrimage site to Fatima, Portugal, where, in 1917, three poor shepherd children encountered the Virgin Mary six times—each time the Virgin provided messages and secrets that spoke to the turbulence of the era. Word quickly spread and thousands flocked to witness the apparitions; as a result of such popular spiritual charisma, the conservative Provincial Administrator briefly arrested the children in an attempt to suppress the pilgrimage. When the visions ceased, the Bishop in charge of the area declared the apparitions credible, and they were authorized by the Vatican. The main seer then entered into a convent. William Christian sees this as the co-option and neutralization of popular sacredness in favor of centralized control, pointing out that a common procedure for authorizing apparitions is to first institutionalize it by building a shrine at the site to encourage pilgrimage, followed by "encouraging the seers to retire, usually in convents. In short, the Church co-opts the movement. Once an apparition has been

endorsed the seer becomes, in a certain sense, a hindrance to the Church" (1973:108) because otherwise she could continue to provide a popular draw of her own.

The immensely popular shrine to St. Padre Pio of Pietrelcina developed differently. Starting in 1918, the Capuchin friar Padre Pio experienced the stigmata—bleeding wounds of Christ on his hands, feet and side—for fifty years of his lifetime; seen as a "living saint," his tiny monastery in the remote village of San Giovanni Rotondo quickly became a nexus of pilgrimage. The Vatican twice suppressed pilgrimage to Pio; in the 1960s Pope John XIII, who was leading the Second Vatican Council (Vatican II) that would reform the Church to be more popular itself, felt that Pio was a "straw idol" sent from the devil to seduce people away from the institutional and authorized center of the faith (Luzzatto 2011:270-271). Yet after John XIII's death, popular outcry turned the tide, and Pio was canonized in 2002 by Pope John Paul II, who was himself a devotee. At the turn of the millennium, the Vatican completed an ultramodern Basilica and crypt, designed by internationally renowned architect Renzo Piano and adorned with golden mosaics; by 2009 his shrine saw between six and eight million pilgrims and is counted as one of the largest and most heavily visited Catholic shrines in Europe (Di Giovine 2015, Mesaritou, 2012). And in the ultimate act of co-option, in 2016 Pope Francis extraordinarily brought Pio's body to the Vatican, where it was paraded through the streets of Rome (the first time in centuries the city saw such a procession), before lying in state in St. Peter's Basilica to formally open Francis' official Jubilee Year of Mercy.

During the same era that Pio's cult was suppressed, local Catholic hierarchies had for decades attempted to dissuade pilgrimage to Garabandal, Spain and Medjugorje, Bosnia, where in both cases, young, impoverished and under-educated children claimed to have seen apparitions of the Virgin Mary. Starting in 1961, three children in the town of San Sebastián de Garabandal were visited by St. Michael the Archangel and then the Virgin Mary, who bestowed prophesies, messages condemning some of the changes in the Church, and provided supernatural powers to the children. When the visions ceased after four years, the Bishop of Santander, who held jurisdiction over the site, issued a *non constat*—that is, that he did not consent to pilgrimage, as he supposedly could not materially verify the account despite its similarity to Fatima and the presence of documentary video footage of the seers in ecstasy. The Church, still under John XXIII, upheld the Bishop's ruling; it condemned the apparitions (despite reportedly Padre Pio and Mother Teresa believing in them) and withheld authorization of the cult; it did not build a Basilica and did not promote it. While Christian (1973) points out that such de-authorizing of pilgrimage in small villages effectively renders it at best local phenomenon, and at worst kills it off, thanks to media reports and the

formation of prayer groups, international visitors continue to flock to the site despite its non-authentication.

Similarly, in 1981, six local children in the village of Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, began seeing and talking with the Virgin Mary, who, like other apparitions during the Cold War, condemned Communism and warfare, and provided prophesies. Like Garabandal, the Catholic Church has not authorized the cult, though between 3,000-5,000 pilgrims per day flock to the remote town to meet the seers and observe their almost daily ecstasies—this occurred even during the height of the Balkan War (Vukonić 1992:81). While the 1960s Church under John XXIII seemed to view the charismatic Padre Pio and the Garabandal visionaries as a threat to undermine its own popularizing reforms, in the case of 21st century Medjugorje, however, the fight is one internal to Church politics: the diocesan priests under the Bishop of Mostar, who run the parishes in the area, vehemently oppose the apparitions, which have occurred uninterrupted since 1981. This conflicts with the powerful Franciscan order that operate in the town who actively promote it. Because of this struggle within rather co-equal institutions in the Church hierarchy, the Church has not taken an official stance on the pilgrimage; its justification makes recourse to the procedural: that since the apparitions are on-going (now for roughly 30 years), true scientific verification cannot be conducted, although periodically a Vatican Commission is called to appease international devotees' pressure (see, for example, Vatican Radio 2004). In all three of these cases, it is clear that these popular movements pose a threat to traditional power centers, and the Church makes juridical recourse to either officially co-opt or attempt to stave off, pilgrimage (Christian 1973:108-109).

Politics and Authorization of the Nation-State

Indeed, regardless of the religious nature of the journey, normative authorization is clearly political, and group pilgrimages also may be promoted by the secular polity to reinforce nationalism or a sense of civic pride. The annual pilgrimage to Delphi among ancient Athenians (*theorea*), as well as pilgrimages enacted by states ruled by god-kings such as the ancient Khmer in South and Southeast Asia (Tambiah 1977, 2013), are notable examples. In modern times, Israel, Saudi Arabia and Iran all sponsor religious pilgrimages for nationalistic purposes. For example, Arbae'en—the Shia Muslim pilgrimage to the Iraqi town of Karbala, where Hussein, the recognized founder of Shia Islam, was murdered in the seventh century—has become one of the largest pilgrimages in the world (Al Modarresi 2014). It is not a pan-Islamic pilgrimage, but rather one that memorializes the period in which religio-political

divisions in the Middle Eastern world were solidified. While Arbae'en pilgrims undertake the journey for many of the same motives other pilgrims do, the total act itself emphasizes the political power of Shiism, and under the Iraqi dictatorship of Saddam Hussein, a Sunni, the pilgrimage was suppressed. However, after his fall, some 4 million Iranians and over 20 million Iraqis began making the annual pilgrimage to Karbala (Travel and Tourism in Iraq, 2014), facing increasing danger from the fundamentalist Sunni militant group ISIS, who, after taking control of the area, began attacking pilgrims until the powerful Iranian state secured its citizens' safe passage under threat of warfare (BBC 2014).

This conflation of religious and political motives also manifests itself in what sociologists have called "civic religion"— the implicit, seemingly religious values of a nation, as expressed through mythologies, symbols such as monuments and icons, and public rituals (such as holidays) held at sacred days and at sacred places (Bellah 1967). For example, Iran also sponsors state pilgrimages to the tombs of the (secular) martyrs—that is, tombs of soldiers killed in the Iran-Iraq war. The process mirrors that of religious pilgrimage, and indeed it invests these soldiers' tombs with an aura of sanctity. Likewise, travel to the September 11th memorial in New York City or to the tomb of Ho Chi Minh in Hanoi take on an air of sanctity and are specifically ordained, organized, and officiated by secular governmental authorities as a part of civic religion; they utilize the pre-existing aura and understandings of pilgrimage to foster similar sentiments towards nationalism. Taken to the extreme, when national pilgrimages are intended to supplant religion all together, they serve to foster what the Italian scholar of Fascism, Emilio Gentile, has dubbed "political religion". Gentile defines "political religion" as

> a particular form of political sacralization that is manifested in the epoch of modernity and occurs when the political dimension, after having won its own institutional autonomy vis-a-vis traditional religion, acquires its own religious dimension, in the sense that it assumes its own sacred character, such that it ultimately claims for itself the prerogative to define the meaning and fundamental objective of human existence, at least on this earth, for the individual and the collectivity (Gentile 2001:11-12; authors' translation).

While Fascism (or Soviet socialism, which also promoted highly politicized and meaningful travel to massive monument-cum-shrines in the Eastern bloc (see Vukov 2018)) sought to supplant religiosity so as to neutralize popular attraction to the religious sacred, temporal

powers may also seek to undermine the power of religious authorities by authorizing alternative pilgrimages, rituals, and public merit-making, such as what occurs in modern-day Myanmar (Schober 2005:118) or in the official Chinese Catholic Church (known as the Chinese Catholic Patriotic Association) (Reardon 2015:38). .

Pilgrimage and Popular Religiosity amid a Changing World

Despite the authorized nature of some pilgrimages, these journeys are fundamentally popular in nature (Badone 1990), and those who undergo the pilgrimage may espouse radically different understandings of the meaning, merits, and values of these processes. That is, pilgrimage is not simply something that is established and remains consistent; it is not simply embedded in texts and edicts. Rather, like all rituals, it is a performance (Turner 1969) that pilgrims—with their own agency (Edensor 1998)—enact to work out social tensions (Eade and Sallnow 2000[1991]) or communicate their changing models of the universe and their place in it (Geertz 2000[1973]: 99-101). This is problematic for many religious authorities, particularly in the Abrahamic tradition, where often bureaucratic religious authorities such as the Vatican struggle to walk a fine line between promoting these manifestations of popular religious sentiment while at the same time controlling and co-opting them, particularly if they do not conform to the institution's historical or theological worldview.

Manifestations of popular religion are difficult to control. Indeed, religious spaces facilitate not only historical and traditional rituals and practices, but also social activities such as festivals, games, feasts, travel, sports as well as weddings and funerals (Chick, 1991). Turner and Turner (1978) emphasize that religion has been moved into the leisure sphere, and more subject to individuals' leisure time, while Graburn (1989) views touristic time as non-ordinary, and thus similar to sacred time in religious settings. The decrease in organized religions in the West reveals that visitations to places once regarded as holy, sacred or connected to some religious tradition have evolved into secular destinations (Jirásek, 2014). Many pilgrimage sites also have become secularized through phenomenon of modern tourism (Di Giovine & Picard, 2015). This has led to, for example, 'contemporary' pilgrimages incorporating a whole range of culturally motivated journeys, from the Camino de Santiago to the Machu Picchu trail (Scriven, 2014).

There is also increased visitation to pilgrimage sites among "spiritual tourists" (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Spiritual tourists, through exploring pilgrimage sites, and engaging in reflective activities, pursue their own sense of meaning, purpose and identity, and similar to pilgrim motivates, seek to "resolve problems in their reflective assessments, everyday

experience, and personal outlook on life" (Norman & Pokorny, 2017, p. 205). Undertaking a pilgrimage is an out-of-the-ordinary experience, leading to spiritual and personal renewal and revitalization (Morinis, 1992). The activity remains an aid to cope with, and understand illness, misfortune and the loss of loved ones (Dahlberg, 2000; Notermans, 2007). Yet in line with spiritual tourists' pursuits, pilgrimage sites continue to reverberate with relevance for pilgrims seeking meaning, healing, comfort and forgiveness (Dubisch, 1995). The pilgrimage journey is also existential, with the pilgrim working towards a supernatural encounter or authentic experience (Scriven, 2014).

Thus, the distinction between pilgrims and secular tourists has diminished as many scholars argue, as Turner and Turner have, that "a pilgrim is half a tourist if a tourist is half a pilgrim" (1978:20). Badone and Roseman (2004) call pilgrimage and tourism "intersecting journeys" while Smith (1992) likens the two to parallel lanes in a road between which travelers constantly change. D'Agostino and Vespasiano (2000:5) argue that pilgrims cannot easily be separated out from secular tourists in this 'post-traditional' age wherein "sacrality is often divorced from pure religion." Vukonić (1996:162) argues that tourism parallels religion as tourism, like religion, provides "a space for the contemplative and the creative, a unity of thought and action," and "an opportunity for human beings to recognize and cultivate their spiritual needs." MacCannell (1976) notes, as religion contains symbolic rituals, tourism itself is a social ritual that people often undertake at regular intervals, or to mark a particular juncture in their lives. Graburn (1983:13) argues, "Ritual does not have to pertain to religion" and what is held sacred by society, as one's fundamental structure of beliefs about the world should matter more to people.

As such, traditional definitions of 'pilgrimage,' 'spirituality' or 'religious tourism' have been fragmented as they become linked to secular overtones (Sharpley, 2009; Willson 2016). The on-going discussion about categorizing 'pilgrims' and/or 'tourists,' is still challenging despite frequent attempts at typologies, taxonomies and definitions (Afferni, Ferrario & Mangano, 2011; Collins-Kreiner & Gatrell, 2006; Di Giovine, 2013a; Poira, Butler & Airey, 2003; Sharpley, 2009). Further complicating this is that not all pilgrimages are of a religious nature; as mentioned above, this problem of blurred boundaries between officially sacred space and secular space is not simply relegated to scholars, but is implicated in complex discourses and practices of travelers, hosts and multiple stakeholders. While many people at such sites are motivated by devotion, others may be motivated by curiosity or interest in their more secular value as historical, artistic, or cultural heritage sites. Likewise, a highly valued heritage site may be seen as sacred and treated as a place of pilgrimage by

some (see Di Giovine and Garcia-Fuentes 2016). On the other hand, a large number of sites are shared by tourists and touristic infrastructure and processes, which can create conflict and tension among different groups of people and stakeholders. Pilgrims often share the physical infrastructures and service providers as secular travelers and "pilgrimage trails and destinations have been given new life through modern, secular tourism" (Di Giovine 2011:249). As such, pilgrims and tourists exist on a continuum of sacredness and secularity (Smith 1992), and the distinction between tourism/pilgrimage, tourist/pilgrim, and secular/sacred has become rather complex. Pilgrims, for example, may often be quick to note that their sacred journey seems to somehow exist "above and beyond" profane tourism, yet will consciously or unconsciously become mired in mundane concerns with touristic infrastructures such as hotel rooms, transportation, and food – often prompting members of the group to remind themselves that "this is pilgrimage, not tourism" (Di Giovine 2013b:10-11). While tourism as we know it is a modern phenomenon, the tensions that exist between secular interests and sacred travel are not.

About the Special Issue

Thus, this special issue seeks to explore discourses on how the multiple groups experience, interpret, co-exist and perform sacred space. Beyond the 'officially sacred,' the contributions explore how sacred spaces have meaning for tourists, pilgrims and local residents, and discusses the complexities of issues around pilgrimage and tourism among various stakeholders so as to provide a future interdisciplinary research agenda (Brace et al, 2006).

Simon Coleman in his paper, "From the liminal to the lateral: urban religion in English cathedrals" adds a significant contribution by addressing the notion of ritual "laterality" as a highly productive means of characterizing encounters between contemporary visitors and heritage sites of religious significance. With such a concern for the ways in which sacredness delves beyond the authorized, his use of this category avoids a clear separation or hierarchy of value between sacred and profane realms of action, or between religious believers and tourists. He stresses the need for a more nuanced theoretical vocabulary than is currently in play in order to describe the ways in which informants engage with liturgy whilst examining the ritual forms made available to visitors, including regular services, informal acts of piety such as the lighting of candles, and varieties of pilgrimage. Drawing on both ritual theory and urban anthropology, he juxtaposes a more conventional depiction of ritual as involving entry into set-apart and liminal frames of action with the observation that many visitors engage in more 'lateral' forms of participation, where sacred

and secular, official and non-official, blend in complex ways. He concludes that ritual behavior in cathedrals points to wider trends in the encounters between diverse urban publics and ostensibly sacred spaces.

Approaching Walden Pond—the site of Thoreau's transcendentalist *tour de force*—as a sacred space, Joy W. Ackerman in "Meaning-making in the course of action: affordance theory at the pilgrim/tourist nexus" proposes an ecological approach to the pilgrim/tourist nexus, taking as its starting point the inter-relationship between site and visitor, drawing on affordance theory to explore visitor action, interaction, and meaning-making. She notes that research at the nexus of tourism and pilgrimage is often limited by approaches that seek to categorize and differentiate visitors on the basis of intention, ideology, or identity. One implication of this divide is that research on sites of such visitation is also subject to binary interpretation, as sacred or secular. Walden Pond is not recognized by any official authority as sacred, though it seems to be established as such for those who read Thoreau's evocative *Walden*, which often is given a place in the contemporary Great Books canon. Yet what is sacred for some may be differently conceived for others, and many travel to Walden Pond simply to enjoy a nice day out in the park. She thus reviews the potential of affordance theory for interpreting visitor interactions at sites with multiple and overlapping uses, including pilgrimage and tourism. The theory of affordances is suggested as an opportunity to approach research and interpretation of sacred sites with a focus on the agency of place, the locus of meaning-making and the pilgrim/tourist nexus.

By exploring various stakeholders' conflicts and influence on a newly revitalized pilgrim route, Hogne Øian in "Pilgrim routes as contested spaces in Norway" discusses how a recently reinvented pilgrim route in Norway represents a contested space. In an increasingly secular Norway, these pilgrimage routes are being revitalized by the government for tourism development purposes, though they still hold religious meaning for some. Among various stakeholders involved in the development and the management of the pilgrimage site, as well as stakeholders who take an interest in the material and symbolic benefits drawing from the site, there are disagreements on what kind of heritage should be represented: is the site of value because it is sacred, because it is historical, because it is beautiful? Differing approaches are represented by those who want to promote religious motivations, traditionalist outdoor recreation interests and stakeholders who primarily want to develop and market the pilgrim route in a touristic context. While distinctions between categories such as pilgrims and tourists, or vacationers and religious travelers are becoming blurred, Øian finds that opposing and partly intersecting discourses among stakeholders result in these kinds of

distinctions becoming apparent and real. This implies that travelers along the pilgrim routes are not left to themselves with their experiences and practices. While some stakeholders take an interest in what pilgrims are doing, in the sense that they want to profit from it, others are concerned about questions of who is a pilgrim is and whom should a pilgrimage serve.

Concerning local people's perspectives, Yang Mu, Sanjay K. Nepal and Po-Hsin Lai in "Tourism and sacred landscape in Sagarmatha (Mt. Everest) National Park, Nepal" explore how local residents' interpretations of sacred landscapes are influenced by tourism development, and explore whether tourism plays a role in influencing and reproducing sacred landscape and place-based spiritual values. Results of interviews conducted within the ethnic Sherpa community indicate that the Sherpas consider their homeland as a *beyul* (a sacred, hidden valley), and its landscapes (i.e. mountains, forests and lakes) as the abode of local deities. Tourism's influence on local spiritual values is evident and reflected in changes in mountain deity worship, a shift in the human-environment relationship, and alterations in religious routines and practices. Although Sherpas still regard *Khumbu* as a sacred place and are actively involved in maintaining their spiritual values and cultural identity, the religious influence of *beyul* is slowly diminishing as reliance on tourism grows.

While locals at Khumbu may struggle with keeping their spiritual connection to Khumbu while working in the secular tourism sector, Andrea Corsale and Shaul Krakover in '*Cultural tourism between local and transnational identities: Jewish heritage in Syracuse, Italy*' explore management issues related to innovating a new religious focus on a rather secular heritage site: Syracuse, one of the most notable examples of Greek influence in Italy. In particular, to strengthen and diversify its international cultural tourism destination status, site managers of the cosmopolitan city have innovated Jewish heritage routes. Yet by focusing on the complex identity of minority groups, they note that diverse views, approaches, perceptions and representations may lead to disagreement and conflicts even within apparently compact ethnic or religious communities. They discuss the issues related to dissonant heritage management strategies and the related authorized heritage discourse, in terms of unbalanced power relations and diverging narratives. Presenting a variety of reactions, perceptions and suggestions by various stakeholder groups, the paper not only contributes to an understanding of the variability of the sacred, and the ways in which it is authorized differently by religious and secular institutions, but it also contributes to the management literature by revealing the complexity of niche heritage tourism processes in a multi-ethnic site.

Focusing on indigenous pilgrimage, Jessica Christie in "Wak'a/Shrine Making and Pilgrimage Tourism in Copacabana, Bolivia" discusses landscape constructions through the eyes of political and religious authorities as well as through those of the common pilgrims in an emic, bottom-up perspective. Her data from ethnographic interviews and participant observation among the indigenous Aymara pilgrims demonstrate how the past is redefined in the present as local heritage in a landscape perceived as both Andean as well as Christian. Most visitors identify as pilgrim-tourists and many walk to five spatially distinct but thematically related *wak'* where the past coalesces with the present and the secular with the divine in passionate and colorful performances intended to gain well-being for their families. These are sacred sites to the Aymara that the Church has, throughout the ages, attempted to co-opt and Catholicize, as it has done elsewhere in Latin America. Yet the Catholic Church has limited spatial control over these sacred places, and there is the growing practice of making new *wak'a*s in Andean terms to the Virgin Mary at selected landscape features as a form of popular heritage. Christie's keen ethnographic analysis shows that the local Aymara are not passive colonial victims, as they have been sometimes portrayed; they exercise their own agency as they selectively adopt from their conquerors in the hope of alleviating their poverty.

By reframing and reconceptualizing gambling tourism as a type of Chinese pilgrimage, Michael O' Regan, Jayeon Choe and Michael A. Di Giovine explore Chinese gambling tourists' movements, rituals and behaviors along post-structuralist lines, so as to generate new insights into what can and cannot be considered pilgrimage. While gambling trips seem a far cry from pilgrimage, the authors demonstrate how the idiom of pilgrimage provides an important lens for understanding individual and communal practices among outbound Chinese gambling tourists and brings to light the hyper-meaningfulness, shared values, ritualization, play, risk, and liminal conditions that characterize the processes of their entanglements and the centrality of commercial and political interests. In particular, the analysis indicates the need to explore the significance of cultural, spiritual, economic and social dimensions of Chinese outbound tourism, as well as the unique discourses of power and control affecting their movement and practices. The authors account for manifestations of culture, governmentality and intentional ritualization as well as contribute an alternative construction of pilgrimage beyond Eurocentric accounts, which in turn, aims to stimulate a discussion on what constitutes sacredness and pilgrimage.

Even the most authorized of sacred spaces have multiple and different meanings among individual pilgrims, particularly when they come from different cultures, with their

own norms, values and worldviews. This is particularly the case for Vatican City, where the Vatican Museum alone counts some 20 million visitors per year. Thus, Bona Kim and Seongseop (Sam) Kim in "Hierarchical value map of religious tourists visiting the Vatican City/Rome" construct a hierarchical value map, which is a psychological structure to understand how religious tourists perceive the sites they visit in terms of site attributes, the benefits religious tourists seek, and their own personal values. The sample comprised foreign tourists who visited Catholic religious sites with religious tourism as their primary purpose. Using means-end chain theory, a hierarchical value map of selected religious tourists was created. A typology comprising three prominent sets of values was discovered: religious and pious values, spiritual values, and values associated with tourism and responsibility. The most salient attribute–consequence–value (A–C–V) linkage was as follows: 'the opportunity to explore the traditions and history of religious sites' (A)—'had a genuinely religious experience' (C)—'learned about the history of my religion' (C)—'enhancement of faith and spirituality' (V). In the end, like others in this issue, this contribution highlights the variability of the sacred, the interplay of popular and authorized religious sentiment, and the complexities of defining, measuring, and managing pilgrims and tourists. It also shows how, at even the most centralized and authorized of pilgrimage sites, control over meaning, practice and intent may be elusive.

Addressing long-authorized pilgrimage centers, the interplay of local and indigenous worldviews, the role of ritual, merit and play, the transformation of pilgrimage itineraries into heritage sites and the innovation of pilgrimage routes to diversify historical areas, this special issue problematizes the role of religion in pilgrimage and complexifies the ways in which spirituality is invoked, shared and negotiated. The multidisciplinary group of contributors explore the varieties of ways that authorization and contestation shape pilgrimages; examining cases from a variety of geographic locations and populations, they show that, while many of the impetuses for sanctioning, innovating, or condemning pilgrimage stem from social concerns such as economic development, touristic needs, or identity politics, each site is unique and complex. Taken together, it is hoped that readers can grasp the profound nature of geographies of religion and sacrality, and the ways in which power by the sacred is often exerted above and beyond that of the temporal. Given the array of purposes that pilgrimage serves, this collection shows that the sacred is not just for pilgrims, but shapes the experiences of tourists, travelers, local residents and others who come into contact with it.

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