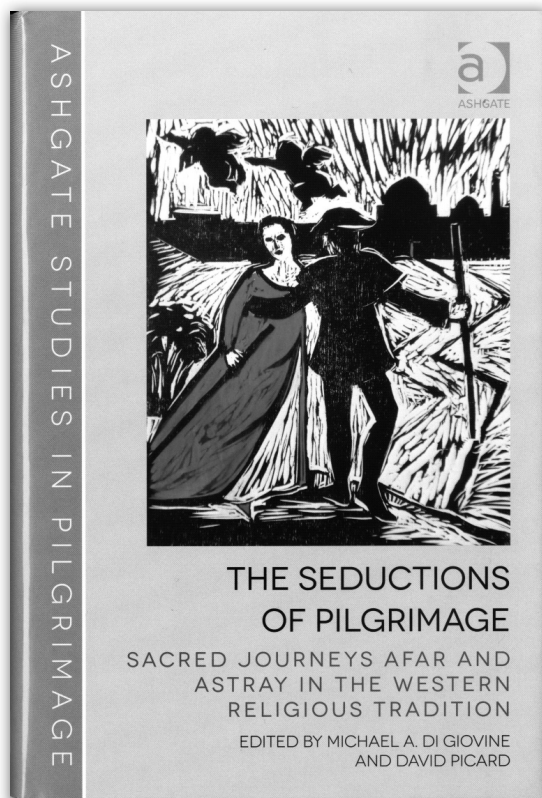


# book review

## The seductions of pilgrimage

Sacred Journeys Afar and Astray in the Western Religious Tradition  
M. A. Di Giovine and D. Picard, eds.



In 2015 the two editors, one from West Chester University (USA) and the other from the University of Lausanne (Switzerland) put together comprehensive proceedings of nine contributions made up from 266 pages about travel motivated by faith. Contributions are preceded by two texts: the preface of J. Elsner and an extensive introduction of both the editors. The publication also contains a detailed index as well. Scientific profiles of authors, mostly from the United States, and other countries (Canada, Israel, Turkey) are anthropological and

socio-cultural, they originate from academic circles, each of them with a rich personal biography and bibliography. A focus of their interest on the faith motivated journey marks the present proceedings as a sort of compendium of thinking about the complex issues in the Western religious tradition. The title of the book illustrates the plastic unquestionable attraction, indeed seduction and glamour of what is now colloquially called religious tourism. As for notable scientific production in recent decades, the evidence of that is the proceedings issued in a series ASHGATE Studies in Pilgrimage in which some original works have already been published.

It is advisable therefore to briefly review the contents of proceedings starting with the basic framework of the two editors while all other contributions are single-authored. In the introduction, editors analyze the tradition of religious travel in theory and practice of three monotheistic (Abrahamic) religions arising from the same source, in which because of the subsequent evolution, a number of similarities and differences were developed.

The motives that drive people to engage in these types of travel, once and today, can be essentially reduced to the pursuit of the beyond, the search for the divine, sacred, intangible and similar. The result is a latent tension, often opposite to everyday life and alienation of modern man pressed by existential problems. In the context of the proceedings/collection of analytical anthropological and sociological essays, the emphasis is placed on the importance and role of positive and even negative factors of seductiveness in pilgrimages, as the oldest form of mass migration in general. The thesis of the densely interwoven network of meaningful, but also emotional selections of those who go on such a journey seeking for identity at numerous pilgrimage itineraries and destinations. They often come into conflict with different attitudes and practices. Strict

theological approach, in fact, denies the tourist aspects of these movements wishing to reduce them to the spiritual dimension. Other authors, however, realizing the necessity of economic and supporting infrastructure in receiving and hosting a growing number of visitors, want to reconcile both sides and merge them into a harmonious whole. They point out, however, the negative phenomena also (such as excessive commercialization) that pilgrimage turn into mere entertainment or the typical tourist trip and stay.

Some authors consider the examples of pilgrimage especially in Christianity, Islam, Judaism, leaving out no recent cultural models of New Age. It is about the role and importance of guides in the Holy Land, inter-religious pilgrimages in Turkey, pilgrimages of Romanies in southern France, the importance of well-known religious center in Italy marked by charismatic Capuchin monk Padre Pio, the famous roads (*caminos*) to the Galician shrine at Santiago de Compostela (Spain) and others. Space expeditions are not omitted, as well as specific positions of the actors involved in the USA. All of these case studies, even those that are associated

with virtual tours using new technologies (Internet), are questioned with regard to the elements of fascination, attractiveness, that is, seductiveness of these destinations.

It can be concluded that it is about determining factors in the system of wider social processes that determine and direct the traditional and modern trends inspired by faith. They are, without doubt, globally and locally on the rise. This is demonstrated by the example of Medjugorje, so far unrecognized, but visited destination for more than three decades, attracting masses of believers and visitors.

Seduction as the key word of this interesting proceedings in the context of the phenomenon of pilgrimage is gaining in importance from the point of dehumanization and alienation of today's man-passenger wishful of deeper and meaningful experiences. The volume includes scientific references of authors and about fifteen illustrations.

#### THE SEDUCTIONS OF PILGRIMAGE

M. A. Di Giovine & D. Picard (eds.)

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