

2021 PILNET MEETING

Aix-en-Provence, September 23-25, 2021



The 2021 PILNET MEETING is composed by two international joint events:

1. Sept. 23: The workshop ***“Pilgrimage and the Politics of Presence and Absence: Anthropological Horizons on Sacralizing Locality, Visibility and Invisibility in the Contemporary World”***
2. Sept. 24-25: the workshop ***“Pilgrimages in Times of Pandemics. Crises, Regulations, Innovations”***

The participants of these workshops are welcome to attend these two events, which will take place both online and in face-to-face at the Salle Germaine Tillon, Maison Méditerranéenne des Sciences de l'Homme (MMSH), Aix-en-Provence, France.

Zoom link: [https://univ-amu-](https://univ-amu-fr.zoom.us/j/99465584345?pwd=WnVGWWYzamVwS0lYTDNZREpXUUx3Zz09)

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1. September 23, 2021:

Pilgrimage and the Politics of Presence and Absence: Anthropological Horizons on Sacralizing Locality, Visibility, and Invisibility in the Contemporary World

Simon Coleman and Evgenia Mesaritou

Panel Abstract:

In recent decades, the anthropology of pilgrimage has hugely extended its methodological, ethnographic and theoretical horizons. Moving far beyond assumptions concerning the spatial and ritual isolation of sacred centres, the study of sacralized mobility and place-making has been challenged and enriched by historical developments in and beyond Europe, including the emergence of new forms of European governance post-1989, the proliferation of religious diasporas, and the expansion of neo-liberal regimes that have redefined literal and metaphorical value of belonging. New technologies of representation have had considerable impact, given that social media have transformed experiences—and narrations—of sacred travel, while posing new questions about affinities between the virtual and the spiritual.

Given these developments, pilgrimage studies may be facing a powerful yet productive crisis of 'presence' as scholars extend their understanding of the significance and scope of their sub-field. We ask how pilgrimage reflects and responds to new questions and conflicts over the ontologies and politics of 'gaining presence', 'being' and 'being seen to be' present or absent in sacralized spaces. How is a sense of presence achieved and represented in pilgrimage contexts, both for the benefit of the self and for physically absent others? How do shrines acknowledge and appropriate the presence of other sacred and non-sacred spaces? How are absence and invisibility materialized, enacted and commemorated at sacred sites? Related to these is the issue of our presence in the field, and of what is 'absent' in pilgrimage studies. We welcome ethnographic, methodological and theoretical responses to these questions.

Program (Sept. 23)

Session 1

1.00-1.05pm (France Time GMT+2:00)

Introduction

1.05-1.20pm Anna-Karina Hermkens (Macquarie University)

Creating Presence across Borders: Pilgrimages to Papua New Guinea's Blessed Peter To Rot in Australia

1.20-1.35pm Mario Katić (University of Zadar)

Bosnian Croat Pilgrimages within Post-conflict Landscape of Bosnia and Herzegovina

1.35-1.50pm Nimrod Luz (Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee)

In Absence of Pilgrims Reading the Void in Sacred Sites

1.50-2.05 pm Tatsuma Padoan (University College Cork)

A Semiotics of Presence: Rhythm, Body and Materiality among Mountain Ascetic Pilgrims in Japan

2.05-2.20pm Sá Leitão Souza Alana (Federal University of Pernambuco)

The world pilgrimage to the Temple of Solomon in Brazil

2.20-3.00pm Discussants' Comments & Discussion

Coffee Break

Session 2

3.20-3.35pm Jackie Feldman (Ben Gurion University of the Negev)

Physical Absence/Digital Presence at Sacred Sites of the Shoah

3.35-3.50pm Mirjam Lücking (The Hebrew University of Jerusalem)

Competitive Jerusalem Selfies: Social and Political Implications of Indonesian Pilgrims' Online and Offline Activities

3.50-4.05pm Anna Niedźwiedź (Jagiellonian University)

Invisible pilgrims and unofficial spirituality in nationalized space

4.05-4.20pm Kholoud Al Ajarma (The University of Edinburgh)

Performing Muslim pilgrimage under the dilemmas of policies, politics, and necessity

4.20-5.00pm Discussants' comments & Discussion

September 24:

Pilgrimages in Times of Pandemics Crises, Regulations, Innovations

Dionigi Albera, Mario Katić, and Manoël Pénicaud

Pilgrimages are affected by the coronavirus pandemic at different scales, from local to global levels. This workshop aims at developing collective reflection on this worldwide phenomenon based on ethnographic and/or historical data.

We propose some research axes:

Diachronic perspectives. Pilgrimages and pandemics share a long and common history. Several scholarly studies have shown that pilgrims' circulations and gatherings have often been vectors of virus propagation (from medieval plagues to Spanish flu or 2002–2004 SARS). Therefore, and paradoxically, sacred places – believed to be centres of cure and healing – can also become potential hubs for viral contamination. Nowadays the emergence of Covid-19 (SARS-CoV-2) has refocused attention on the relationship between pilgrimages and epidemics. Are we witnessing a simple resurgence of phenomena known in the past but partly forgotten, or are there specificities in the current crisis?

Politics, regulations, resistances. A notable consequence of pandemics is the deep impact on pilgrimage economies and religious tourism. How are institutions responding to lowered incomes? At the political level, what regulations, restrictions and specific devices do they implement? How do religious institutions manage the articulation between pragmatism and theological principles? The role of states is also crucial (lockdowns, limited gauges, closed borders...). Another dimension relates to believers or pilgrims who claim the right to transgress sanitary rules.

Ritualization, choreography of void. This point concerns the pilgrimage in itself and the transformations caused by the virus. Pilgrimage centres are generally based on a semantic of plenitude (affluence, crowd, effervescence...) but in times of epidemics or pandemics, they become empty spaces, perhaps more propitious to contemplation. With Covid-19, one can even observe the voluntary "staging" of emptiness and the choreography of void. To what extent do pandemics affect the grammar of pilgrimage by accentuating individualistic involvement and modifying the balance between the travel and the gathering at the shrine? Furthermore, what new rituals are initiated, and how is rituality altered under lockdown? For example, how do masks and social distancing change the pilgrim *habitus*?

Participations and subjectivities. In our digital era and in the absence of crowds, what technological innovations are proposed to encourage remote people participation? How do pilgrimage centres operate through mediatisation and virtualisation, for instance, through ceremonies on TV or social networks. Another issue concerns the balance between risk and trust, i.e. between the physical and spiritual benefits, and the risk of becoming contaminated.

Methodological aspects. How to carry out ethnographic research at empty sacred spaces in times of pandemic times, especially when we cannot enter shrines because of lockdown? To what extent does the health context change our approach of fieldwork and imply adjustments in research strategy (tools, devices, digital networks...)?

Program (Sept. 24)

10:00am (France Time GMT+2:00) - Introduction

Dionigi Albera (Idemec, CNRS, Aix-Marseille University)

Mario Katić (University of Zadar)

Manoël Pénicaud (Idemec, CNRS, Aix-Marseille University)

10:10 - Key note:

John Eade (Roehampton University)

“Reframing Pilgrimage: Beyond ‘Traditional’ Modes of Pilgrimage?”

10:40 Session 1: Global Perspectives – the Mecca Pilgrimage

10:40 Muhamed Riyaz Chenganakkattil (Indian Institute of Technology, PhD candidate)

“On the Exceptional Hajj: Pandemic, Regulation, and Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca”

11:00 Subkhani Kusuma Dewi (Western Sydney University)

“Research on Pilgrimage in Times of a Pandemic: A Remote Ethnography of Non-Mobile Pilgrims in Indonesia”

11:20 Discussion

11:40 - Session 2: Local Perspectives – Rural-Urban Comparisons

11:40 Séverine Gabry (Idemec, CNRS, Aix-Marseille)

“Disséminer la piété dans la ville. Pèlerinages musulmans égyptiens et amplification sonore à l’heure du Covid-19”

12:00 Samuel Verley (PHD candidate, EPHE)

“Celebrating Xizir in Times of Pandemics: Changes in the Imagined Temporalities of a Local Ritual among the Alevis of Dersim (Turkey)”

12:20 Discussion

12:40 Lunch

14:00 Lene Faust (University of Bern)

“In the Absence of the Saint: Negotiating Boundaries and Emptiness within the Devotion of the Patron Saint of Catania in Times of Pandemic Crisis”

14:20 Irina Stahl (Institute of Sociology, Romanian Academy),

“Pilgrimages in Times of Pandemic in Bucharest (Romania)”

14:40 Adriana Pojatina (University of Zadar, PhD candidate)

“Maritime Pilgrimage to Gospa od Sniga (Madonna of the Snow) in Times of Pandemic”

15:00 Discussion

15:30 – 17:30 Session 3: Open Round Table: What’s next? The future of pilgrimage

Dionigi Albera (Idemec, CNRS)

Simon Coleman (Toronto University)

John Eade (University of Roehampton)

Mario Katic (University of Zadar)

Evgenia Mesaritou (University of Toronto)

Anna Niedźwiedz (Jagiellonian University, Krakow)
Manoël Pénicaud (Idemec, CNRS)
And other participants.

September 25:

Excursion to Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde and Notre-Dame de la Major, Marseille.
Lunch close to the Vieux-Port, Marseille
Visit of the Mucem, Marseille