

Jenni Kuuliala and Jussi Rantala, eds., *Travel, Pilgrimage and Social Interaction from Antiquity to the Middle Ages; Studies in Medieval History and Culture* (London & New York: Routledge, 2020) ebook, 328 pp., RRP USD 51.79, ISBN 9781032087290



Review

Emerging from a conference convened in 2015 at the University of Tampere on travel and pilgrimage from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, this volume pertains primarily to the social and cultural contexts of travel. The essays contained herein consider questions of the travellers' motivations, the practicalities of their journeys, and the networks intrinsic to their undertakings. The volume's ambitious chronological and geographical scope covers the eras from mid-Republican Rome through to the late Middle Ages in western Europe. The editors' aim is to provide a venue for comparative studies between eras and cultures where they have identified a lacuna in scholarship.

As this journal is for specialists in the field of medieval and early modern studies, this review will simply note for the sake of reader interest that after the first chapter, which offers an introduction to the volume, chapters two through six focus on travel and pilgrimage in the Republican and Imperial periods of Roman history and fall outside *Cerae's* scope. Chapter seven by Jussi Rantala and Ville Vuolanto examines the *Hellados Periegesis*, one of the most important sources for pre-Christian sacred travel. While most of the chapter contains the authors' analysis of whether

those involved in the cults featured in his work can rightly be designated as ‘pilgrims’ and their scrutinization of Pausanias’ choices as to whom he decided to include and exclude in his descriptions of local customs, the chapter does conclude with an interesting juxtaposition of pilgrimage in Pausanias’s work with medieval pilgrimage found in western Europe. While pre-Christian and Christian European pilgrimage both systematize the types of pilgrimage (e.g., ‘local’ ‘intra-regional’ and international/Panhellenic’ as explicated in Pausanias compared to ‘minor’, ‘major’, and ‘oversees’ [sic] as found in the medieval period — pp. 194, 196); pre-Christian pilgrimages, the authors argue, were happy occasions. This stands in contrast to pilgrimage in a medieval context which was often used for penance and as a reflection of the soul’s displacement while on earth. Chapter eight, by Eva-Maria Butz and Alfons Zettler, examines Christian graffiti from Antiquity to the medieval period. The authors study six collections of Christian graffiti from sites in present-day Switzerland, Italy, and Germany, which date from the third to the eleventh centuries. Perhaps their most interesting comment relevant to the volume’s theme is the conspicuous lack of graffiti at important religious sites that can be unquestionably attributed to religious pilgrims, countering suggestions by previous scholars who believed that the graffiti must have been by pilgrims.

An ambitious chapter nine by Klaus Herbers discusses *peregrinatio ad loca sancta* using Santiago de Compostela as his focal point. Herbers traces the evolving concept of pilgrimages to place Santiago de Compostela as a rival of Jerusalem and Rome. He shows how initiatives such as the composition of the *Liber Sancti Jacobi*

served to bolster the site's prestige. Chapter ten by Christian Laes offers an illuminating study of immobility in Merovingian miracle stories wherein people were cured of their disabilities, highlighting the diversity of their experiences and, interestingly, the inclusion of those with disabilities into their communities as an expected feature of daily life. In chapter eleven, M. Cecilia Gaposchkin's informative study considers both the conservation and evolution of religious travel. Her research demonstrates that travel-associated liturgical rituals, which commenced in the eighth century, can be traced through to their adapted forms found by those going on crusades centuries later.

Sara Ellis Nilsson's excellent contribution in chapter twelve turns the reader's attention northward to Scandinavia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries to assesses the hagiographical accounts of five saints from Sweden and Denmark, showing how the act of travel itself accentuates the motif of transience while often simultaneously underscoring the saint's sanctity. In chapter thirteen, Fabienne Meiers highlights the centrality of the horse for land-based travel in an impressive chronological scope commencing in Imperial Rome and culminating in the late medieval period. Taking readers to the Holy Land, chapter fourteen by Stefan Schröder provides a case study of the Dominican pilgrim Felix Fabri's (d. 1502) journey, in particular Fabri's role as an eyewitness and its importance in authenticating Fabri's claims that he had, indeed, been where he claimed to have been. More complex than that, though, Schröder argues that Fabri's narrative had both a missionary incentive and a didactic function for his Christian audience. The volume's final chapter, by Lauri Uusitalo, explores the

transatlantic travels to Spain by sixteenth-century Pasto cacique don Pedro de Henao, whose visit to the royal court offers a fascinating glimpse into the process of colonialization of his region of the northern Andes, and the attendant issues the tension between the Old and New Worlds engendered for Spain's colonies.

There is much to commend in this volume, which contains many fine essays. However, two missed opportunities are worth noting. Collected volumes, such as this, can prove a challenge to edit, especially with such an expansive chronological scope as the one under review contains. Unless editors are careful to make the individual chapters interact with each other, what can result is a collection of loosely related essays that, while valuable, have only the most tenuous of through lines uniting them. While the edited volume covered 'travel, pilgrimage and social interaction', it was sometimes hard to detect a more focused unifying thread that tied the collection together into a more cohesive whole. The essays were organized chronologically, but perhaps arranging them thematically or geographically might have allowed for more coherence as a collection.

Second, I feel compelled to note the regrettable absence of any serious treatment of Britain and Ireland. In a book with such a capacious chronological scope focused on the major European pilgrimage traditions, we would reasonably expect to see a discussion of British and/or Irish pilgrimage where religious travel played a key and even a defining role in the expression of Christian devotion for centuries. The Irish penchant for *peregrinatio*, for instance, led the ninth-century abbot of Reichenau, Walahfrid Strabo, to quip in his *Vita sancti Galli*, '[Scotti] quibus consuetudo

peregrinandi iam paene in naturam conversa est'. British and Irish pilgrims, exiles, and missionaries were trailblazing and profoundly influential in shaping the Continent, but with the exception of two brief mentions in the opening of chapters focused on Spain and Scandinavia, Ireland and Britain do not feature in any meaningful way in the volume. This omission is unfortunately not without precedent. The volume *Exile in the Middle Ages: Selected Proceedings from the International Medieval Congress*, published in 2004, excludes Ireland entirely. While it is understandable that volumes based on conference proceedings are somewhat bound by the contributions of those attending the conference, it is not unreasonable when such a significant lacuna is apparent that the editors seek contributions from those who were not in attendance to provide balance to the volume.

However, these two final comments are not intended to detract from a volume that is, on the whole, a worthwhile collection of essays that both offer illuminating studies of the multifaceted social and religious dimensions of travel while simultaneously providing some promising avenues to pursue for further research.

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