Introduction

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The construct of transformation has emerged as a prominent theme in academic discourse and spans such domains as education, applied mechanics, and leadership. Based on the accepted notion that processes and living organisms are in an ongoing state of development, it is unsurprising that the concept of transformation would find resonance within literature on the pilgrimage phenomenon. From the earliest systematic approaches to the study of pilgrimage, Victor Turner identified the sense of or actual liminal state pilgrims move through during a pilgrimage journey. Inherent to the conceptualization of a liminal state is the acknowledgement that one is neither in one state nor another, but that the individual will eventually evolve from one state to another. This implication of movement as a process from one point to another can also be characterized as transformation, with the entirety of the process delineated as transformational.

Such transformational processes can include the movement from sickness to wellness, from grief to closure and from fractured to integrated. That the pilgrimage journey itself can be construed as a transformational quest was noted by Winkleman and Dubisch, who stated ‘Life-transforming experiences are at the core of both “traditional” and more contemporary forms of pilgrimage’. Such life transforming experiences are highlighted within the following chapters. The chapter contributors vary in disciplinary perspectives, yet all have explored the pilgrimage phenomenon through the lens of transformation.

1 Categorization of Chapter Themes

Beyond the general focus on transformation, we engaged in a categorization process and identified three thematic categories of transformation. These categories included one that identifies the ongoing evolution of pilgrimage discourse, which we labelled transformation of pilgrimage perspectives. The second thematic category is identity, self and wellbeing transformation, and the third thematic category is historical and communal transformation. Each of the chapters within the volume are positioned within one of the three transformation categories; however, many chapters overlap among the three categories.

A Thematic Category 1: Transformation of Pilgrimage Perspectives

Historically, pilgrimage was conceptualised predominantly as a journey to a sacred destination as an act of religious devotion or obligation. However, within the past thirty years, the definitions and conceptualisations of pilgrimage have emerged as varied—they are constructed by the individual pilgrim as well as by those writing about the phenomenon. Pilgrimage is viewed as a subjective experience with recognition that the journey can be either religious or secular, with a focus on the personal meaning created by the pilgrim.6

In light of the acknowledgement that pilgrimage is a ‘constructed experience’, we find it appropriate to begin this volume with three perspectives on the general pilgrimage phenomenon. These three perspectives move beyond the familiar constructs of liminality and communitas and into frameworks that offer new analytic paradigms. In du Plooy’s chapter, pilgrimage journeys are considered as substantive, non-substantive or ontogenetic and the author integrates literature from religious studies and anthropology. Further exploring what constitutes a pilgrimage journey, Egler explores the notion that pilgrimage is a religiously educative process. Lastly, Warfield explores the notion that pilgrimage is a psychological universal and that, because of the universality of the phenomenon, there may be shared experiences and narratives that could lead to a transformation of humanity as a whole.

B Thematic Category 2: Identity, Self and Wellbeing Transformation

Identity, self and wellbeing transformation is a transformational process that occurs within the self or between the self and the external world. The chapters within this section explore opportunities for self-transformation, particularly

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