This collection of seventeen studies centres on the phenomenon of pilgrimage as part of ancient religious life, pagan as well as Jewish and Christian. Although different in their specific contents they lead to one and the same conclusion, viz. that the phenomenon of ancient pilgrimage eludes a clear definition. Morinis’ appellation “a journey undertaken . . . in quest of a place or a state that the pilgrim believes to embody a valued ideal” leaves the factor religion aside. More appropriate is Elsner’s expression “a ritual-centred visuality”: the pilgrim is a viewer who enters a sacred space . . . in which the god dwells; but here the idea of going on a journey is missing. The subtitle of the volume “Seeing the Gods” reminds us of the term theôria, (wrongly) seen as a compound of theos (‘god’) and horan (‘to see’). In point of fact, the pilgrimages of the Greek poleis to the festivals of other city-states or to the great panhellenic festivals in Olympia, Delphi and elsewhere were theôrai; the delegates were called theôroi. As for the understanding of this theôria as ‘sacred sightseeing’, Scott Scullion in “‘Pilgrimage’ and Greek Religion: Sacred and Secular in the Pagan polis” (ch. 4) remarks: “There appears to me to be far more of sightseeing in festivals than of sacredness in sightseeing”. The Greeks in their behaviour did not tend to link the sacred and the secular. They were no great pilgrims and their official intercity journeys had only a whiff of religiosity. In his study “The Construction of Religious Space in Pausanias” (ch. 10) William Hutton hesitates about the great second-century traveller Pausanias: was he a pilgrim or a sightseeing tourist? Here the “valued ideal” of Morinis’ definition is the ideal of Hellenism. Thus “Pausanias and many of his contemporaries, both the religious and the non-religious, cooperate in an indissoluble fashion” to embody the veneration of the apex of Greek culture. In this reviewer’s mind, however, a hint of religious feeling is undeniable. A few decades before Pausanias the great polymath Plutarch had shown himself more sensitive to a touch of religiosity. In his ‘On the Pythian Oracles’ he wrote, as pointed out by Marco Galli in “Pilgrimage as Elite habitus: Educated Pilgrims in Sacred Landscape During the Second Sophistic” (ch. 9), on the role of memory and its interaction with religious tradition: “Memory emerges as a fundamental support for pilgrimage; and cultural patrimony (paideia)—that baggage of notions, traditions and habits (which memory preserves)—acts as a “dynamic channel of communication” between the devotees.

The substance of the term theôria is one of the prevailing topics of the collection. In her study “Mapping out communitas. Performances of theoria in their Sacred and Political Context” (ch. 1) Barbara Kowalzig concludes: “Ritual and the community it creates lie at the basis of a healthy operation of Greek theoria... In the polis-world... there is interaction between communities based on a—real or
invented—consensus expressed in the worship of a common god.” Fred Naiden in “Hiketai and theôroi at Epidauros” (ch. 2) stresses the difference between a theôros and a hiketês, the first being a ‘watcher’, a disinterested observer, the latter a suppliant, a personally concerned caller. They may come to the same place, pay a visit to the same shrine, act both as theôroi, but in order to be a hiketês as well the intent is needed of making a personal request of the god in place. Michael Arnush in his “Pilgrimage to the Oracle of Apollo at Delphi: Patterns of Public and Private Consultation” (ch. 3) tackles the problem of the decline in the fourth century of the political influence the Delphi oracle once possessed. Both public delegations and private consultants used to take the advice of the oracle on the one day in the year it could be consulted. Public consultation was for matters of war and peace most of the time. Private consultation sought advice on private affairs: marriages, business, travel. While the consulting of the oracle for public matters diminished because of political events, private consultation continued to flourish well into the Roman period. Ian Rutherford in “Down-stream to the Cat-Goddess: Herodotus on Egyptian Pilgrimage” (ch. 5) examines different Egyptian festivals of his time, especially the one of the goddess Boubastis, sometimes identified with Isis, at whose sanctuary mummified cats were interred.

To philosophical minds the idea of ‘watching’, evoked by the term theôria, was appealing. Andrea Wilson Nightingale, in her study “The Philosopher at the Festival: Plato’s Transformation of Traditional theoria” (ch. 6), writes: “The fourth-century philosophers took over the cultural practice of theoria and transformed it for their own purposes”. Plato for instance has an eye for both private and civic theôria, depending on whether the theôros goes to a festival for his own affairs or for those of the city he represents. In his Symposium the philosopher as a private theôros is likened to an Eleusinian mustês and shown to be on his own personal way to the eternal Form of Beauty. In his Republic he depicts Socrates as a civic theôros, who, on his return from a public festival at Piraeus, takes part in a discussion on the nature of justice. George Williamson in “Mucianus and a Touch of the Miraculous: Pilgrimage and Tourism in Roman Asia Minor” (ch. 8) quotes Pliny, who in his Historia Naturalis 13.88 speaks with some disdain of the consul (or consularis) Mucianus, who pretended to have read, while on duty in Lycia, a letter, written by Sarpedon at the time of the siege of Troy. Williamson argues that the journeys of a Roman governor, like those of Mucianus, cannot be placed in the category of secular travel: they were not mere tourism, but had a religious background. Mucianus seems to have written a journal des voyages, a chronicle of his visits to the sanctuaries of his administration. Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis in her study “The Body in Space: Visual Dynamics in Graeco-Roman Healing Pilgrimage” (ch. 7) unravels the mysteries of the Asklepieion at Pergamon in the course of the second century of the Christian era. Worshippers looking for recovery from their illnesses