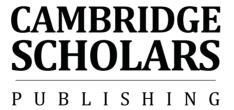# Pilgrimage in the Age of Globalisation

Pilgrimage in the Age of Globalisation:

*Constructions of the Sacred and Secular
in Late Modernity*

Edited by

Nelia Hyndman-Rizk

**CAMBRIDGE
SCHOLARS**

P U B L I S H I N G

"Human society is an antiphysis—in a sense it is against nature; it does not passively submit to the presence of nature but rather takes over the control of nature on its own behalf; this arrogation is not an inward, subjective operation; it is accomplished objectively in practical action"
—Simone De Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*
(New York: Vintage Books, 1989[1952]), 53.

"Should the emancipation and secularization of the modern age, which began with a turning-away, not necessarily from God, but from a god who was the Father of men in heaven, end with an even more fateful repudiation of an Earth who was the Mother of all living creatures under the sky?"
—Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 2.

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PREFACE

JOHN EADE

It is striking how many people go on pilgrimage around the world today and how few academics have taken an interest in this global phenomenon. Until the 1980s pilgrimage was primarily studied by historians in a narrow European context. Engaging with the Turners' pioneering volume *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (1978) anthropologists began to produce detailed ethnographic studies of which Michael Sallnow's *Pilgrims of the Andes* (1987) is an outstanding example. Both Victor Turner and Michael Sallnow died before they could see the fruits of their work as anthropologists broadened the range of substantive and theoretical issues under investigation during the 1990s and beyond. However, what could be loosely called 'pilgrimage studies' still lacks a clear academic identity and there is still little connection between studies undertaken in particular regions of the globe and in different disciplines.

Academic blindness towards pilgrimage has been most striking within sociology and related fields such as cultural and media studies. The main reason for such neglect would appear to be the dominance of the secularisation debate and the assumption that institutional religion was rapidly declining in the face of secular modernity. The rude health of religious activity in the USA was regarded as an exception or as not 'real' religion, while the many millions going on pilgrimage around the world were either ignored or considered to be the domain of anthropologists with their traditional interest in 'disappearing worlds'! Beyond sociology, however, pilgrimage was considered worthy of attention during the 1980s and 1990s primarily in the context of the rapid global expansion of travel and tourism. Dean McCannell's pioneering *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (1976) drew attention to the structural similarities between mediaeval pilgrims and contemporary tourists which pave the way for volumes by Badone and Roseman (2004) and Timothy and Olsen (2006), for example, and the very useful recent publication on religion and tourism by Stausberg (2011). This broadening of the approach towards pilgrimage was also encouraged by studies which looked beyond religious

pilgrimage such as the seminal volume by Reader and Walter – *Pilgrimage in Popular Culture* (1993).

There are signs that sociologists are beginning to seriously question the ways in which the secularisation thesis has been developed and looking more carefully at pilgrimage. This process has been driven by scholars like Jose Casanova (1994) and the revisions undertaken by two secularisation 'high priests' – Peter Berger (1999) and Juergen Habermas (2008) – which have led to recent debates about 'post-secularism' and 'desecularisation' (see Stevenson et al. 2010, Beaumont and Butler 2011). Yet, a key feature of these developments has been their interdisciplinary character with geographers in particular joining in the fray through fascinating non-representational perspectives and explorations of landscape, for example.

This fine volume reveals the impress of these developments. Nelia Hyndman-Rizk engages thoughtfully and constructively with the 'mobility turn' in social sciences and what light this can throw on pilgrimage's distinctiveness as a form of mobility in 'late-modern' conditions. The chapters complement this approach through their explorations of the global and transnational flows of people, ideas and information and how those flows engage with local social, cultural/religious and political structures and processes. The volume also helps us to look beyond particular regions to the connections between regions around the world. Since most of the contributors have been trained in anthropology they engage productively in the analytical models which have shaped the anthropological study of pilgrimage and to which I have had the good fortune to contribute through my collaboration with Michael Sallnow and Simon Coleman.

While the volume explores Christian pilgrimage it shows a welcome sensitivity to developments beyond the Christian world and beyond institutional religion. It also shows the ways in which these developments are intimately bound up with nation-state institutions which still constrain and shape transnational and translocal flows. These connections between and across national boundaries, as many have already pointed out, can be fraught with tensions and even mortal conflict as well as help to periodically celebrate what human beings share within particular religious and non-religious contexts.

I am sure readers will find this volume not only informative but also intellectually stimulating. It makes a welcome contribution to our understanding of this multi-facetted, complex and global phenomenon.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Introduction

Pilgrimage and the Search for Meaning in Late Modernity

Nelia Hyndman-Rizk

> The ecology and topography of the inner journey is no less real than any other place we encounter out there in the world-at-large (O'Reilly et al. 1997, xviii).

Late modernity is associated with flux, movement and fluidity across physical and social space. Indeed, the metaphysics of the mobile over the sedentary in the era of globalisation associates geographical movement with upward mobility and attachment to place with passivity, downward mobility and a lack of determination over one's fate (Adey 2009, 37). According to Kaufman (2002, 7), fixity versus mobility is the new duality and signifier of inequality, while subjects are ever-changing. Thus Zelinsky (in Adey 2009, 37-38) writes, the American citizen is like a pilgrim who never arrives and is always on their way, while Sollors (1986) theorises that the American citizen is forever in the process of becoming. In liquid modernity, therefore, perpetual motion becomes a mode of being with existential angst both a blessing and burden of freedom (Bauman 2000, 18), while meaningful movement links late modernity with the metaphorical image of the citizen pilgrim (Bauman in Urry 2007, 33).

Late Capitalism

The shift from modernity to late modernity is often linked with the switch in capitalist production from Fordism to Flexible Accumulation (Harvey 1989), whereby corporations transcended the nation state as a site of permanent anchorage and became globalised, also referred to as transcendental capitalism (Hage 2003, 19). Further, the post-industrial countries of the north have undergone a change in the gravity of capitalist activity towards FIRE (finance, insurance, services and real estate), also

referred to as the 'financialisation' of late capitalism (Bellamy and Magdoff 2009).

These structural changes in the global political economy, according to Castell's network society thesis (in Hirst and Harrison 2007, 48), have resulted from the development of a new mode of development based on the accumulation and exchange of information. Consequently, time in late modernity is experienced as speeding up, due to time-space compression (Harvey 1989) from improved transport systems and the process of digital convergence (Jenkins 2008). Digital convergence, according to Flew (2008, 2) "arises in the first instance out of the growing linkages between media, information technology and telecommunications". Convergence, for Jenkins (2008, 2-3), represents a cultural shift towards the individual consumer who is encouraged to seek out new information from disparate media sources, as active participants in the production and circulation of information.

One of the main debates amongst scholars of digitisation is the relationship between technology and social change and the primacy of human action over technology or vice versa in instigating the process of social change (Giddens 1991; Hirst and Harrison 2007; Urry 2007; Flew 2008). The privileging of technology over human agency, in social change theory, is considered to be a form of technological determinism. Alternately, digital convergence can be seen as part of an epochal shift in global capitalism, along with globalisation, towards interactivity, connectivity and virtuality, particularly in the information and service based economy (Flew 2008, 208).

Post-materialism

As capitalism reached the limits of accumulation with the financial crisis of 2008 and the debt crises of 2011, it might be asked, has transcendental capitalism also become post-material? The disenchantment with inequality and the new austerity measures have resulted in a range of social movements starting with the Arab Spring in the East and Occupy Movement in the West (Wallerstein 2011). However, I will suggest these crises point to a deeper, existential crisis of meaning in late modernity.

The secularisation thesis (Laermans, Wilson et al. 1998; Swatos and Olson 2000; Dobbelaere 2002) posits that post-modern[1] life elevates the material over the spiritual, the profane over the sacred and through technological advancement humanity no longer needs God (Arendt 1958, 2; Bruce 2002). Indeed, late-modernity is defined by the abandonment of positivism, grand narratives and eclecticism (Bruce 2002, 230) which, for

Kaufman (2002, 7), represents the end of "mutual engagement". Thus, doubt and angst are central to the condition of late modernity as a post-traditional social order, according to Giddens (1991, 3). If certainty has been replaced with doubt, tradition with the process of becoming and we no longer need God, then what is our purpose?

The struggle for/against nature has long been the subject of existential debate. For Jackson (2005, xxviii) the core of the human struggle is for a viable and meaningful life. Indeed, the reasons for life are more important than mere life, according to De Beauvoir (1989, 65) or the repetition of it (immanence). The key to the "whole mystery", De Beauvoir (1989, 64-65) theorises, is that humans strive to escape the givens of human existence through accumulating transcendence over nature through action and self-realisation in projects. However, for Sartre (2003, 649) these "projects of man" are ultimately absurd and, therefore meaningless, because they are ultimately unrealisable, (i.e. the human desire to become God).

In this formulation humanity is an antiphysis, defined against nature, according to De Beauvoir (1989, 53). Indeed, nature is both solace and prison, a duality against which humanity strives to both escape and return. In the *Human Condition* Arendt (1958, 6) ponders this puzzle and characterises modern world alienation as a "two fold flight from the earth into the universe and into the self". In the first movement, humanity seeks to transcend nature, while the second movement is inward towards the self. The resulting conundrum, according to Arendt (1958, 2), is that humanity has negated both God the father and earth the mother. But the search for *the self* (Giddens 1991) has emerged as the unifying trope and new God of late-modernity. Thus, for Giddens (1991, 3) the self has to be "reflexively made…amid a puzzling diversity of options and possibilities". I propose, therefore, that the endless search for the self has led to the intensification of many forms of movement: symbolic, physical, technological, spiritual and inward, which might together be termed mobilities.

Mobility and pilgrimage

Mobilities, according to Adey (1997, 34), can be defined as the pursuit of meaningful movement, which is principally a lived relation to "oneself, to others and the world" (Adey 2009,xvii). Kaufman (2002, 1), alternatively, conceptualises the new mobility paradigm through the heuristic of *motility,* which he defines as "the way in which an actor appropriates the field of possible action in the area of mobility and uses it to develop personal projects". In both theorisations mobility is considered

to transcend physical movement as its defining characteristic and to be personalised as a project of becoming.

This work will specifically consider the phenomenon of pilgrimage, as a form of mobility in late modernity. I will argue, however, that pilgrimage privileges a distinctively spiritual conceptualisation of mobility, which emphasises inner transformation over physical mobility linked with purely quotidian pursuits of material advancement. Thus, it will be argued that pilgrimage unifies the inner and physical journey into a holistic project of self-realisation through motion.

A common narrative, in the sacred travel literature, is that the process of inner transformation must first be instigated through a shock to the system, which inflicts a metaphorical wound to the body and derives from the hardship of the physical journey as Fontaine explains in the *Road Within* (O'Reilly et al 1997, 22):

> Journeys to strange lands produce more than culture shock. Though often very important, culture represents just part of the new ecology usually encountered in those lands. Our previous vision of reality may become vulnerable-spirits may enter our consciousness. Journeys to strange lands become encounters with ourselves.

Culture shock is likened here to a change of consciousness, whereby the pilgrim's perception of the world order is turned on its head. O'Reilly et al (1997, xvii-xviii) go on to argue that the inner journey, like the physical journey, has its own topography and ecology of hardship, which is central to the transformative potential of pilgrimage to bring about "self-knowledge".

Coleman and Eade (2004, 2) similarly emphasise motion over place in theorisations of sacred travel. Indeed, they identify three forms of motion central to pilgrimage: embodied, imagined and metaphorical (Coleman and Eade 2004, 3). In their book, *Reframing Pilgrimage: Cultures in Motion,* they shift the study of pilgrimage towards movement, away from the traditional anthropological focus on ritual and process. This work similarly situates the study of pilgrimage within the new mobilities turn in the social sciences (Urry 2007).

Pilgrimage became a significant focus of analysis for anthropology after the publication of *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture* (Turner and Turner 1978), which developed the key concepts of liminality, communitas, structure and anti-structure as integral features of pilgrimage. This conceptualisation was critiqued, however, for being 'transhistorical' and scholars then sought to situate the particularity of pilgrimage within

historical and political contexts (Eade and Sallnow 1991; Eade 1992; Dubisch 1995; Swatos and Tomasi 2002; Coleman and Eade 2004).

As the field developed, the role of gender in pilgrimage was considered in the classic book *In a Different Place: Pilgrimage, Gender, and Politics at a Greek Island Shrine* (Dubisch 1995), although the early contribution to this field by Mernissi (1977) should not be overlooked. From here the anthropology of pilgrimage evolved to consider tourism and travel as part of the secularisation of pilgrimage in 'late modernity' (Eade 1992; Reader and Walter 1993; Tomasi 1998; Tomasi 2002; Rocha 2006) and as a symbol of resistance to "modernity, technology, and consumer society (Eade and Sallnow 1991,xvii). The study of medical and spiritual tourism as forms of pilgrimage (Rocha 2006) can be seen as an extension of this field. The framework of pilgrimage has also been applied to the study of migration and return visits to the 'ancestral village' (Baldassar 2001; Hyndman-Rizk 2008; 2011) as a form of spiritual renewal and as a rite of passage for the second generation, but one which is characterised by liminality, rivalry and disorientation.

Outline of book

This edited collection brings together a series of ethnographic studies on the theme of pilgrimage delivered at the Australian Anthropological Society Annual Conference at Macquarie University in December 2009. The book is divided into the three parts. The first part, Pilgrimage: Global, Pagan and Mobile, examines three case studies of pilgrimage in Brazil, Malta and in Austro-Hungarian Vienna. The first chapter, *Becoming a Global Village: the Impact of the John of God Pilgrimage in Abadiânia*, set in central Brazil, examines the enormous influx of foreign pilgrims in the past ten years. As John of God, the local medium-healer, became famous overseas through internet sites, tour guides, books and DVDs about him, the sleepy and poor town has struggled to cater for new tastes and needs. Most of the literature on globalisation analyses how, in their articulation to each other, global cities acquire distinct characteristics as spaces of intersecting transnational flows which make them more like each other than they are like the nation-states that contain them (Saskia 1991; Hannerz 1996). Rocha argues that global cities are not the only places profoundly transformed by globalisation, but smaller towns may also participate in this process and become centres of international flows. This chapter shows that the economic hot housing of Abadiânia is a consequence of it being drawn into a global network of sites of pilgrimage.

As a consequence, it resembles more of a global village than a little town in central Brazil.

The second chapter, *The Circle is Open but Unbroken: Neo-Pagan Pilgrimage in the Age of Globalisation*, examines the contemporary Goddess Spirituality movement and Neolithic temples of Malta. Rountree's research began in the early 1990s, after watching Donna Read's 1989 film *Goddess Remembered*, which opened with a Maltese Neolithic figurine, commonly known as "The Sleeping Lady" and the narrator spoke: "The spiritual journey of earth's peoples began with the idea of a Goddess, universally called "the Great Mother"'. Thus, the spiritual journeys of modern Goddess followers frequently take them on pilgrimages to Malta's Neolithic temples, journeys some describe as a "homecoming" to that Great Mother and to what they see as the roots of their modern religious path.

The third chapter, *The Pilgrim Church in Vienna: Mobile Memories at the 1912 International Eucharistic Congress*, explores how embodied and constructed memory distinguishes between how individuals and social groups negotiate memories, on the one hand, and the top-down forms of institutionalised commemoration practiced by cultural and political guardians of official memory. 'Re-framing' memory as individual, social, cultural and political, according to Thorpe, overcomes the false dichotomy between individual and collective memory in the study of memory and history. Thorpe applies the concept of exterior and interior landscapes of pilgrimage to the distinction between constructed and embodied memory. She argues the guardians of the Church, nation and public opinion inscribed a particular religious, national or political memory onto the exterior landscape through which pilgrims passed, but the interior journey made by a pilgrim could also dislocate an individual memory and reconnect it to a shared site of memory. This migratory process of (dis)embodying and constructing memory can, according to Thorpe, be seen notably in the performing of such devotional practices as the Eucharist, or the prayer for intercession to a saint, in which the pilgrim journeys from and to a place of memory.

The second part of the book, Pilgrimage: War and the Contested State examines the role of pilgrimage in political struggles and its link with war zones, nationalism and state formation. In the fourth chapter, *Journeys of Resistance: Marian Pilgrimages during the Bougainville Crisis,* Hermkens explores how meaningful forms of movement shape moral geographies, which are linked with non place centred journeys of Mary. Moral geography, a term used by Lawrence Taylor in relation to pilgrimages along the U.S./Mexican border, implies "the cultural practices of ascribing

symbolic significance and moral valence to particular landscapes" (Taylor 2007, 384). In order to show how the two pilgrimages of Mary in Bougainville shape such moral geographies, Hermkens focuses on the categories of movement, landscape, and narratives.

Guedri Giacalone in chapter five, *The Lebanese-Brazilian Checkpoint: Reconstruction of Identity in Post 2006*, shows that although Lebanon does not physically border Brazil, the ties between the two countries are deeply intertwined. Guedri Giacalone focuses on the effects of war on Lebanese-Brazilians in 2006. She accounts for different groups of Lebanese-Brazilians: those that stayed in 2006 during the war, those that returned home to Lebanon after being away for decades and a new wave of first generation Brazilians that migrated to the land of the cedars following the war.

Maud, in chapter six *Sacred Tourism and the State: Paradoxes of Cross-border Religious Patronage in Southern Thailand*, analyses the role of ethnic Chinese religious patrons from Malaysia and Singapore in the religious life of the southern Thai borderland. Their patronage, he argues, has significant material affects on religious institutions in southern Thailand. Furthermore, their religious involvements and investments are not confined to Chinese religious forms but also impact upon the institutions of Theravada Buddhism, ideologically constructed as Thailand's *de facto* national religion. It is this close connection between Buddhism and the nation state, and the impacts of religious tourism on this relationship, which is the focus of the chapter. Thus, rather than dealing with the motivations of religious tourists themselves, a subject which has already been dealt with in previous studies of cross-border religious interactions in southern Thailand (Askew 2002, 2006, 2008; Askew and Cohen 2004), Maud focuses on the role played by religious tourism in the production of national space.

The third part of the book, Pilgrimage: Migration and Return, examines the contradictions between the sacred and profane and the reproduction of loss and exile during return visits to the Mediterranean region. In chapter seven, *Pilgrimage to Pontos,* Liddle examines Pontian émigré's journeys of return to the land of their ancestors in the former Pontos region of northern Turkey. The pilgrimage, she argues, is a way of making a declaration that the evidence that their parents or grandparents gave them about Pontos is validated. The form of testimony made in these pilgrimages is not given in words but is demonstrated by the presence of Pontians in the land and through the practices they engage in whilst there at places of religious significance.

In chapter eight, *"Going to the Saint": Journeys to a Healing Monastery in Greece,* Rosso Buckton writes about the trials and tribulations, liminality and profound inner change that occur to a particular subset of pilgrims travelling to a monastery in the west of Greece when seeking spiritual cures for demonic possession. A person possessed by demons, she explains, may travel to this monastery to undergo forms of religious purification and through participation in religious rituals emerge redeemed as they are reincorporated into a believing Orthodox community. However, the monastery does not only serve the needs of the possessed but during the celebrations of its Saint's days also becomes the focus for the islanders to celebrate their island identity as locals mix with those returning from other parts of Greece and indeed from the Greek Diaspora in celebrations of religious and Greek national identity. The experiences of these pilgrims remind us, Rosso Buckton argues, of the multiplicity of meanings attached both to the pilgrimage experience and the sacred site itself (Eade and Sallnow 1991).

In the last chapter of the book, *Return to Hadchit: The Virtual, Spiritual and Temporal Dimensions of Pilgrimage to a Lebanese Mountain Village,* Hyndman-Rizk uses anthropological approaches to pilgrimage (Turner and Turner 1978; Eade and Sallnow 1991; Dubisch 1995; Baldassar 2001; Coleman and Eade 2004; Coleman and Eade 2004; Cannell 2006) to frame the analysis of the return visit to Hadchit, as a right of passage and personal journey, imbued with religious and symbolic meaning. The chapter shows how Hadchit has been constituted as a sacred space by the diaspora, which contrasts with the depiction of the host-nation as being profane. Central to this construction is the very fragility of the homeland itself and the im/possibility of return to it (Naficy 1993). Consequently, the homeland has been fetishised (Hage 1989; Naficy 1993) and converted into a Holy Land, which is other worldly and timeless. It is in this context that return visits, whether actual or virtual, are experienced and imagined as a pilgrimage through time and space to the object of spiritual renewal, the home village, the place of roots, ancestry and soil. The conceptualisation of Hadchit as the unchanging ancestral village, perched in the dramatic landscape of the Holy Valley, the *Wadi Qadisha*, is central to the construction of it as a lost homeland.

Conclusion

This collection brings together a series of grounded ethnographic studies, which reflect on the nature of the sacred, secular and mobile in late modernity. The collection builds on the anthropology of pilgrimage,

but specifically considers pilgrimage within the framework of the new mobilities turn in the social sciences (Urry 2007). While mobilities are defined as the pursuit of meaningful movement, pilgrimage can be understood as a specifically spiritual conceptualisation of mobility, which emphasises the pursuit of self-realisation through the process of journeying. However, as the studies in this collection show the journey is not always linear and sometimes is inward. Furthermore, the pilgrim does not always arrive at their intended destination and the sacred may instead become profane. But in order for the pilgrim to *find themselves*, according to Don Juan, in the *Journey to Ixtlan,* they first must lose themselves:

> Little by little you must create a fog around yourself; you must erase everything around you until nothing can be taken for granted …you must begin to erase yourself (Castaneda 1972, 31).

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Notes

[1] Scholars debate the extent to which post-modernity can be considered separate from and/or an extension of late-modernity or high modernity (Giddens 1991, 3).

PART I:

PILGRIMAGE:
GLOBAL, PAGAN AND MOBILE

CHAPTER ONE

BECOMING A GLOBAL VILLAGE: THE IMPACT OF THE JOHN OF GOD PILGRIMAGE IN ABADIÂNIA

CRISTINA ROCHA

I first visited Abadiânia, a little town in central Brazil home to a Brazilian faith healer, in 2004. In my first morning in town, I walked the short distance from my *pousada* (guesthouse) to Casa de Dom Inácio (House of St Ignatius), the healing centre headed by the faith healer João de Deus (John of God). While I was walking and enjoying the soft early morning sun, I glanced over my shoulder and was startled by the sight of a crowd of people dressed all in white (as recommended by the healing centre) pouring from other *pousadas* and walking the same dirt road toward the Casa. As they passed by, I could hear languages from all over the world: German, French, English, Russian, but I heard no Portuguese. On our way to the Casa, we passed by an Internet café advertising broadband connection, a juice bar (with the latest detox juices, organic dishes and a menu written in English and a shop for crystals, Spiritist books and candles. I was later to find out that many of these businesses were owned by foreigners who had arrived as patients or healers and ended up staying. We also walked past little Brazilian children too poor to wear anything but a pair of old shorts, stray dogs, carts and horses, and unpainted cement block houses. The contrast was shocking: on the one hand we were in a poor village in central Brazil; on the other hand there was a mix of New Age chatter, organic food, and high technology typical of cosmopolitan cities. It was as if two very different worlds had collided.

I have been visiting Abadiânia almost every year since 2004. Every year new businesses and technology arrive in town and in the healing centre carried by foreigners and locals. The latest additions to the town are a travel agency, several restaurants and Internet shops, and a rental car business. All of them advertise in English on their shop front. In the Casa itself, fans were taken down and air conditioning was installed, a new flat

screen TV showing the healer performing surgeries was placed on the wall in the main hall, and new, more comfortable seats were placed in the meditation rooms.

The town of Abadiânia seemed to have embodied the compression of time and space known as globalisation. Indeed, as Néstor García Canclini argued in *Hybrid Cultures*, modernisation does not end traditional forms of production, beliefs and goods, but creates hybrid cultures that encompass a complex, multi-temporal articulation of traditions and modernities (1995, 47). This chapter is based on ethnographic research conducted in Brazil since 2004 and interviews with pilgrims, local authorities, guesthouse owners, and local residents of Abadiânia.

Following Glick-Schiller and Çaglar (2009), I argue that global cities are not the only places profoundly transformed by globalisation, but small towns may also participate in this process and become centres of international flows. Most of the literature on globalisation analyses how, in their articulation to each other, global cities acquire distinct characteristics as spaces of intersecting transnational flows which make them more like each other than they are like the nation-states that contain them (Sassen 1996; Hannerz 1996). In this chapter, I show that the economic hot housing of Abadiânia is a consequence of it being drawn into a global network of sites of pilgrimage. As a consequence, it resembles more of a global village than a little town in central Brazil.

João de Deus/John of God

João de Deus was born in a small village in central Brazil in 1942. From a very early age he started prophesying. However, only when he left home at 16 to look for work, did he have his first vision. According to books by his followers as well as interviews, while he bathed in the river, Santa Rita de Cassia (an important saint in the Brazilian Catholic pantheon) appeared to him and told him to go to a Spiritist religious centre in another town. Upon arriving there he fainted. When he woke up he was told that he had healed many people while channelling King Solomon. This was the first entity (spirit) he channelled, all deployed to 30 he presently takes on in his body in a state of trance. Following the instruction of his spiritual guides, he eventually settled in Abadiânia, a village 100km southwest of Brasília (Cumming and Leffler 2007, 1-5; Pellegrino-Estrich 2001, 42-3; Póvoa 1994, 45-47). João asserts that he is the medium of the spirits of deceased doctors, surgeons, healers, saints and people who were remarkable in their lifetimes. He says he takes on these entities in a trance and does not remember his acts when he becomes

conscious again. John of God is part of a small but significant group of medium healers who use kitchen knives, scissors, and scalpels to operate on people while in trance.[1]

In the past decade, João de Deus has become "John of God," as he has been attracting a large number of followers overseas. John of God has been conducting healing events in many countries such as the US (annually), Greece, Germany, Austria, New Zealand, Peru and Austria. A large number of people attended each of these events, and many more have been to his healing centre in Abadiânia. They are guides, healers and the ill, who wish either to improve their healing powers or to obtain treatment. DVDs, websites of tour guides, documentaries for TV and home videos showing John of God operating on people have been uploaded to You Tube. Several books explain his miraculous cures. In November 2010 he was the topic of discussion on the Oprah TV show. In a section of the programme titled "Do You Believe in Miracles?" Oprah interviewed several people who had taken the pilgrimage to the Casa. One of these people was the editor-in-chief of her *O, The Oprah Magazine*, who also wrote a piece in the magazine on her own healing experiences there (Casey, 2010). This latest development will surely have an effect on the number of people going to see the healer.

Abadiânia as a Centre for International Pilgrimage

Abadiânia is a small town of some 12,000 inhabitants located around 100 km southwest of Brasilia, the national capital. It is a poor town. A census study conducted in 2006 found that most income is generated by the service industry and some by the agriculture (corn, rice and soybeans) and cattle industries and the GDP per capita of the municipality was R$ 4,000 a year (AUS$ 3,000).[2] In 2003 the Brazilian National Institute of Statistics (IBGE) found that 39% of the town's population was under the poverty line. A clear sign of poverty and few opportunities of employment was that many of the locals I talked to had family and friends working as undocumented and documented migrants in the US and Europe. The state of Goiás, where the town is located, is indeed famous for the intense flow of migrants heading overseas. However, since the Global Economic Crisis hit, many have returned and some have taken jobs in and around the healing centre as taxi drivers, waiters and cleaners.

The motorway from Brasília (BR-060) cuts the town in two and marks a sharp divide between the two sides. The town proper, with its town hall, bank, post office, and churches is on one side. It resembles any small town in rural Brazil. There are the horses, bicycles, trucks and few 4-WD/SUVs

of the town elite. There are general stores, some children playing on the street, and shops run out of cement block garages. The scorching midday sun makes the streets empty and imparts a sleepy feeling to this scenery.

Casa de Dom Inácio is located on the other side of town. Until a decade ago, this side of town constituted its periphery. This was where those could not afford to live in town resided. However, because John of God has been attracting a large number of pilgrims, things have changed considerably. In the 90s, Brazilian pilgrims made up the bulk of the religious tourism. José Paroleiro, the town council spokesperson, told me in an interview that as people from the southern and north-eastern states started arriving, "the habits and culture of the locals started changing" (Pers. Comm., Abadiânia, 22 May, 2007). In the past decade, however, this change has been of a much greater scale. With the intensive arrival of international pilgrims, the town proper has become an appendage of the periphery, which in turn started to be called "The United States" by the locals. Prices of food, guesthouses, taxi rides and land are in American dollars and tastes follow suit.

On "The United States" side, streets are lined by 32 *pousadas* (guesthouses), rental houses, and houses obviously built by foreigners because of their style, colours and materials. There are also several craft shops displaying their wares (hammocks, "hippie" clothes, hats, flip flops, and jewellery), internet shops, two cafes, restaurants, a travel agency, a car rental shop, and a book store. One establishment offers massage, a restaurant with organic food, and a swimming pool surrounded by crystals. Most foreigners get together after a day at the Casa in the juice bar/café owned by an Irish man. Here, there is a bulletin board for people to contact each other, rent or sell bicycles and houses with prices in US dollars. All messages are in English. In fact, all businesses in this part of town advertise in English, and *pousadas* always have one person speaking the language. There is a strong feeling of being in an alternative community which could be anywhere in the world.

It is noteworthy that tastes are also changing in Abadiânia. One day while chatting with the manager of a *pousada* I enquired about the changes Abadiânia was undergoing. She replied by telling me about changes in her own tastes:

> I learned to eat different foods here because the foreign guests ask for them. Food I had never eaten before: avocado in the salad! Fruit in savoury dishes?[3] I learned to eat more vegetables. In Abadiânia we only ate rice, beans and meat. Nobody ate beetroot, carrots, and these things. Nobody knew brown rice, oatmeal, and granola. I still find it weird having cake after the meal, as if it were desert. We rarely had cake before and it was

only at birthday parties. And the tea! At home tea was for when you were sick, as medicine. The foreigners drink tea all the time! (Pers. Comm., Abadiânia, 05 March, 2007).

Another Brazilian woman who owns a *pousada* told me that she had lived for a long time in the US and knew what the foreigners liked. But she had a hard time convincing her cooks to make new dishes and to use different spices. She said she had to be on their backs all the time so that the menu would reflect the foreigners' tastes.

Indeed, the town council spokesperson told me,

> There has been a radical change in behaviour, culture, food, dress and even language spoken…. The guesthouses had to adapt. The food is more "natural," they serve fruit juices, vegetables, and fruit…. Today we have snack bars, restaurants, craft shops, butchers, supermarkets, all this to cater for the demand. Our taxi drivers speak English. They speak basic English, but they are able to pick people up from and take them back to the International airport in Brasilia. They have to communicate with the Spanish, English, Canadian, Chinese, Japanese people that come here. There has been a change in behaviour too, we study more; we read more (Pers. Comm., Abadiânia, 22 May, 2007).

This stands in sharp contrast with the findings of PhD research conducted in Abadiânia in the late 1980s. Robert Albrecht writes about his impressions when he first arrived in town from New York:

> My first expeditions to locate the commercial centre of town were unsuccessful due to the fact that, even asking for directions; I would walk past the shops without ever realising it. …At the lunch counter in the local bus station, cab drivers sit idly in stools drinking beer and waiting for a passenger. …The actual centre of town, which surrounds the main plaza, is more or less vacant and ill defined for the lack of economic activity. The highway functions as the location of Abadiânia's commercial centre complete with outdoor and indoor markets, small shops, gas stations and garages, lottery ticket vendors, pool halls and bars, bordellos and luncheonettes (Albrecht 1991: 73-74).

Today, the businesses on the motorway are still there, but on the healer's side of town beer is not allowed, and there is no taxi driver idle (and there are thirty seven of them!). When they are not taking people to and from the airport, they are taking them to the Casa, to the sacred water fall nearby, and on tours on the days the Casa is closed. They also help foreign business owners by taking them shopping in larger towns nearby,