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Review of: Pilgrimage in the Christian Balkan World: The Path to Touch the Sacred and Holy, edited by Dorina Dragnea, Emmanouil Ger. Varvounis, Evelyn Reuter, Petko Hristov and Susan Sorek

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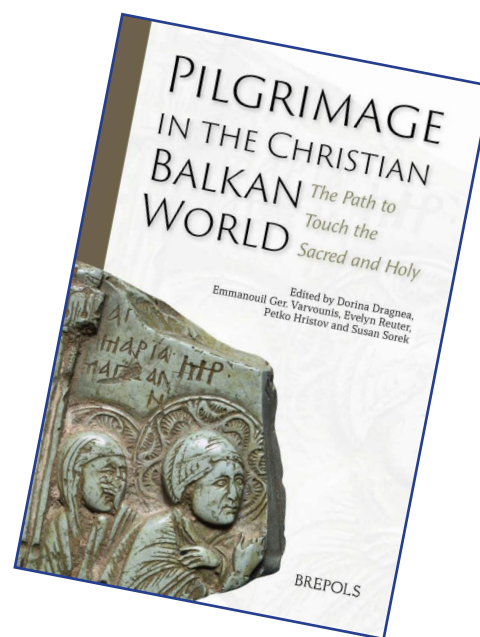
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Dragnea, D., Varvounis, E.G., Reuter, E., Hristov, P. & Sorek, S. (2023) *Pilgrimage in the Christian Balkan World: the path to touch the sacred and holy*, Brepols Publishers, Belgium, 300 pages, \$72 (Hardcover), ISBN: 978-2503603087



In the 20th century, after the nineteen nineties, the Balkan countries renounced the communist and socialist political regime and on their new dedicated journey of touching the holy they entered a era filled with both old and new pilgrimage contents that are now articulated and managed in a different and modern way.

This book, *Pilgrimage in the Christian Balkan World: the Path to Touch the Sacred and Holy*, edited by Dorina Dragnea, Emmanouil Ger. Varvounis, Evelyn Reuter, Petko Hristov and Susan Sorek is produced in conjunction with the Association for the History of the Balkans, and explores the ethnic and confessional patterns of pilgrimage in the Balkan region to Christian holy sites. These sites and pilgrimage routes have been rediscovered since the rejection of communist and socialist political regimes in the 1990s.

The book contains a collection of fourteen separate studies related to pilgrimage and ritual practices to various shrines and monasteries in this region. The

chapters focus more specifically on the customs of pilgrimage within Eastern Orthodoxy. The interactions between the history of the Church and religion with the traditions of the people in the local environment, their identities, and the performance of local cultural practices and traditions, are emphasised throughout the book. The chapter authors point out that the motivation for going to holy places varies from seeking and receiving divine help (e.g., healing and the practical effects of pilgrimage) to leisure time and religious tourism. This book is timely, considering the recent increase in Christian trips to these sites, as believers and religious travelers seek to touch the sacred and holy. In addition, this will be a useful book for researchers who are interested in the Balkans in terms of its modern history and the economic and cultural impacts of pilgrimage as well as Christian behaviour in the region.

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