

Dr. Ian McIntosh, Director of International Partnerships at Indiana University's Indianapolis campus (IUPUI), presented a program on "Pilgrimage Diplomacy and International Relations." Dr. McIntosh spoke of the transformative power of pilgrimage for the individual as well as its potential social value as a mechanism for peaceful diplomacy and improved relations between countries. Attached below is a link to a recording of the program which you can watch or share with others whom you think might be interested: <https://www.youtube.com>

Below are photos of Sri Pada or Adam's Peak in Sri Lanka, the greatest interfaith pilgrimage site on earth.



- Pilgrimages are by far the most peaceful mass rituals that humankind has yet advised for itself. However, most definitions of this universal phenomenon obscure this and other significant roles that pilgrimage plays in society.
- Pilgrimages are some of the most ancient practices of humankind and are associated with a great variety of religious, spiritual and secular traditions. Sacred sites to which pilgrims travel can be found all over the world.
- Pre-pandemic, the number of visits to sacred places was increasing; more than 500 million people were embarking annually on traditional pilgrimages to Saudi Arabia, Iraq, India, Israel-Palestine, France, Spain, Japan and so on.
- In the face of such a meteoric rise over the last few decades, the practice of pilgrimage has come under growing scrutiny. Can anyone say what pilgrimage, in its essence, truly is? Recent scholarship has linked pilgrimage not just with personal healing but also with the healing of societies -- and not just local economies (think hostels, food and souvenir stalls) but with the global economy. The economic impact of so many people seeking higher things through sacred journeys is in the billions of dollars.
- As part of this new wave of scholarship, Dr. Ian McIntosh looks at pilgrimage and conflict resolution, peace building and reconciliation. In his presentation, Dr. McIntosh looked beyond the personal quest in search of spiritual blessing or sacred roots to pilgrimage's role in international diplomacy with case studies from Saudi Arabia and Iran, Pakistan and India, Mongolia and China, among others. And he explored the idea of the "Pilgrim Paradox" as a potential avenue for diplomacy and relationship-building in troubled regions like Xinjiang province in Western China.

· Ian McIntosh has published three co-edited volumes on these topics, and most recently released Pilgrimage: Walking to Peace, Walking for Change: <https://www.xlibris.com/en/bookstore/bookdetails/808377-pilgrimage>

· Here are additional links to Dr. McIntosh's published articles and books that you may wish to view.

“Xuanzang and Bodhidharma”:

<https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1165&context=ijrtp>

“Political Pilgrimage During China's Cultural Revolution”:

<https://arrow.tudublin.ie/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1209&context=ijrtp>

Peace Journeys: New Directions in Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Studies:

<https://www.amazon.com/Peace-Journeys-Haddad-Munro-McIntosh/dp/1527555488>

And here is the link to Dr. McIntosh's 2017 documentary film “Waves of Fortune” about China and the Maritime Silk Road which won an Emmy award for WFYI public television station:

<https://www.wfyi.org/programs/waves-of-fortune/television/waves-of-fortune-chinas-maritime-silk-road>

And finally, here are links to two Facebook Group focused on pilgrims and pilgrimage:

[Sacred Journeys Facebook Group](#)

[Indianapolis Spiritual Trail](#)

Larry Cimino

President,

Indiana Council on World Affairs

<https://www.indianaworld.org>