

# Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management

An International Perspective

2nd Edition

Edited by Razaq Raj and Kevin Griffin



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2nd Edition

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Edited by

**Razaq Raj**

*Leeds Beckett University, UK*

and

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# 1

## Introduction to Sacred or Secular Journeys

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### Introduction

The principle behind this new edition is to demonstrate to the reader the intrinsic details that have a crucial role to play within the religious tourism and pilgrimage management process. The connection with other generic disciplines will become evident within the text, leading the reader to a more complete understanding of the key management concepts. The new 2nd edition provides an updated and valuable resource for scholars of religious tourism management from other disciplines, who may not have considered how intricately management is contextualized within and intertwined with the marketing, finance and operation of religious and pilgrimage sites. The 2nd edition lays a foundation for scholars, practitioners and students who do not study management, but who are concerned with the appearance and development of religious tourism and pilgrimage.

In discussing the sacred or secular journey, it is important to begin with an acknowledgement of the work undertaken by the authors who have laid the foundations for our current understanding of this concept. Smith's 1977 (revised in 1989) seminal work *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism* is regarded by many as the touchstone for much tourism material of an anthropological nature and indeed this is particularly true on the topic of sacred journeys, which was introduced to many by Nelson H.H. Graburn's chapter entitled 'Tourism: The Sacred Journey'. Building on a range of classical writing such as Durkheim's early 20th-century work, Graburn presents an engaging discussion which juxtaposes the profane/workaday/stay-at-home life with a touristic/nonordinary/sacred one. This sacred world closely resonates with the Turnerian concept of *communitas* (Turner and Turner, 1978) which relates to spontaneously entering a spiritual and social state, while travelling on a pilgrimage.

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Developing this idea further, Morinis (in 1992) suggested that such spiritual journeys may in fact be an internal experience, rather than an external physical one. Wayne Fife, developing this and applying it to missionaries, suggests that one of the purposes of a spiritual journey is to turn the 'old self' into a 'new self'; thus the core of a spiritual journey is the transforming encounter between the familiar self and the 'other' – thus the 'centre' which is being sought can be considered to be located within.

In the current literature there is relatively limited research exploring the understanding and motivation of religious tourists' patterns of visitation to sacred sites. However, there is common agreement on some issues in the investigation of religious tourism, such as the term 'religious space' referring to both the confined space within a shrine, sanctuary, cathedral, etc. and the religious space pilgrims travel through on their pilgrimages. They also point out that a wide scope of potential areas for future research also exist within the general area of study. This ranges from the need to explore and refine the sacred–profane continuum to the role of guides, interpreters and interpretation at religious sites. In a sense, what emerges is the eclectic nature of the study of religious tourism and pilgrimages, not least because of the complex and changing relationships between visitors and the visited on a global stage; while on the one hand a strengthening of religious devotion is evident, on the other there is the fragmentation of religion into new, quasi-religious and secular movements. The recurring issue here is the management of potentially competing sacred and secular uses of religious sites.

Within ever-changing global political landscapes, religion has retained a significant place as a social movement with complexity of structures and functions that pervades cultures and traditions. It is clear that while there is no single or simple definition of the complex concept of religion, it is a system of recognizable beliefs and practices that acknowledges the existence of a 'super-human' power and enables people to both address and transcend the problems of life (Hinnells, 1984, p. 270).

This book is a timely reassessment of the increasing linkages and inter-connections between shared sacred and secular spaces on a global stage, and explores key learning points from a range of contemporary case studies of religious and pilgrimage activity, related to ancient, sacred and emerging tourist destinations and new forms of pilgrimage, faith systems and quasi-religious activities. It is an eclectic collection of case study-based chapters in which individual authors are invited to express personal, theoretical and empirical research insights on pilgrimage, religion and tourism. Therefore, a key strength of this updated book is the presentation of current and diverse empirical research insights on aspects of religious tourism and pilgrimage. The book is designed to present the reader with both common and disparate elements of these phenomena reflecting the powerful unifying and contradictory elements of this field of study. This chapter initially explores the complex nature of the concepts of religion and tourism and the interaction between the two. It subsequently explores the emerging experience economy, and the implications for how an expanding symbolic economy has the capacity to change the expressions of religious tourism and pilgrimage. The final part highlights the key elements of the various chapters.

## Religion

Religion is an age-old and dynamic concept which embraces a breadth of activity such as ancient, living/current and emerging new religious and quasi-religious movements, also including traditional living religions of primal societies and modern secular alternatives to religion. While there are common elements to the concept of religion which include transcendent deities, heavenly beings, demons and divinations, there are defining elements which characterize distinct religious movements. Furthermore, in articulating the Western conceptualization of non-Western religions, Hinnells (1984) cautions about the potential distorting of non-Western religious concepts, in particular highlighting that cultures such as the Aborigines of Australia and Amerindians have some of the oldest living religions which have been subsumed and influenced by Western religious narratives. Hinnells (1984) also highlights the challenge of giving adequate coverage to the full spectrum of ancient, living and quasi-religions and warns that the emphasis might easily stray towards certain major religions to the exclusion of others.

Sherratt and Hawkins (1972) recognize that there is a balance to be achieved between definitions of religion being too narrow and restrictive, and yet too general and broad. With these considerations in mind they consider the defining elements of religion to include some belief in a supernatural being (or beings) which are 'usually worshipped or venerated because they are transcendental or powerful' and that religion is primarily 'a state of mind which motivates action and belief ... [and has] a ritual and emotional element' (1972, p. 245). They acknowledge that these definitional elements are not a catch-all for every religion (for example, Theravada Buddhism), but their definition has common definitional elements encapsulated by Campbell's comprehensive definition of religion being: 'A state of mind, comprising belief in the reality of a supernatural being or beings, endowed with transcendent power and worth, together with the complex emotive attitudes of worship intrinsically appropriate thereto' (1957, p. 248).

These complex emotive attitudes of worship are highlighted in the Christian tradition (which can also be applied to other religions) by Hinnells (1984, p. 47) as being expressed by five 'Arguments for the Existence of God' based on an ontological, cosmological, teleological, moral and experiential argument. Existentialist philosophical doctrines challenge what they perceive to be the dogmatic restrictiveness of organized religion, with quasi-religious movements, such as dialectical materialism underpinning Marxism, offering competing narratives to dominant religious world views (Hinnells, 1984, p. 108). Consistent with this view, Rosenau highlights that 'Non-institutional religion, new spirituality, is a central focus; [which] is offered as an alternative to modern, organized mainstream [religions]' (1992, p. 149). Included within forms of non-institutional religion are New Age postmodernists who, in rejecting the rigidity of institutionalized religion, embrace the 'mystical and the magical' (1992, p. 152). While the main focus of this book is on the more traditionally defined aspects of religion, this diversity of interpretation as to the changing nature of religion is welcomed and addressed within this text.

The study of religion encompasses a diverse range of academic disciplines, traditionally attracting the attention of historians, orientalist, classicists, archaeologists, sociologists, anthropologists, linguists, art historians, philosophers and theologians (Hinnells, 1984). Increasingly, the study of religion is combined with other emerging academic disciplines to express new insights into the significance of religion within the contemporary socio-cultural milieu (Hinnells, 1984, p. 128). A postmodern discourse of religion would not position the concept within one academic discipline, and would 'question any possibility of rigid disciplinary boundaries' (Rosenau, 1992, p. 6). Within Religionswissenschaft (the science of religion) are a group of disciplines including the phenomenology of religion, which includes a classification of ideas, actions and symbols in a study or method of describing and gaining empathetic understanding of religious phenomena without offering explanation of truth or falsity of religious beliefs (Hinnells, 1984, p. 250). This is contrasted with theological discourses of belief systems and 'revealed truths' which vary according to the different theologies under consideration. This discipline can even include the emergence of 'Death of God' theologies (influenced by Nietzsche) which challenge the utility of the 'language of God' for modern secular man. More mainstream are sociological discourses which include functionalist perspectives applied to the study of the science of religion, based on an understanding and sense that religious functionality creates societal solidarity.

The study of world religions requires one to understand a diverse collection of practices, rituals and ideas which articulate 'professions' of faith, and to paraphrase Sherratt and Hawkins (1972) the intellectualization of 'professions' of faith is more than an understanding of 'abstract philosophical notions'. Their historical categorization of religion traces the origins of world religions to the emergence of rudimentary religion in which 'profession' of faith by ancient primal societies is linked to animism (which they view as belonging to the same epoch as to the early evolution of humans) and the notion that living things are animated by spirits which are distinct from living human beings (1972, p. 10). They argue that while animism is 'without scriptures and oral tradition', like religion it 'is more concerned with unseen forces but, like magic, it deals with an area which cannot be manipulated by ordinary methods'. They go on to claim that 'magic and religion have become intermeshed' (1972, pp. 10–11). Animism's link to the emergence of mainstream religions is evidenced in a common characteristic – the notion of 'soul survival' beyond human death.

In cataloguing the emergence in the Near East and the West of the religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, Sherratt and Hawkins (1972) described the association of these religions with polytheist beliefs in many gods and the monotheist belief in one God. The major religions of India and Southern Asia are Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism and Sikhism and the religions of the Far East are Confucianism, Taoism, Shinto and Mahayana Buddhism. Sherratt and Hawkins (1972) highlighted the emergence of modern religious groups including Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons in the 19th century. Their categorization of religions include *theistic religions*, which cover religions of the Near East and the West 'where the object of ultimate concern is a transcendental being e.g. Islam, Christianity and Judaism', and *non-theistic religions* of India

and Southern Asia ‘where the object of ultimate concern is an all-pervading power or “higher principle”’ (1972, p. 246). They also argue that movements such as Communism, which has ritual elements and characteristics of other religions, form part of a categorization of *secular or quasi-religions* (1972, p. 248).

## Tourism

There are inherent complexities within the phenomenon of tourism, because of its ‘conceptual weakness and fuzziness’ and the fact that it is a multifaceted and multidimensional phenomenon (Cooper *et al.*, 1993, p. 4). It has unclear origins, but is commonly associated with religious pilgrimages and the ‘Grand Tour’ and various other significant movements of people from their usual place of residence to some other destination (Lavery, 1987; Holloway, 1989; Towner, 1994). Burns and Holden (1995) described tourism as both ‘enigmatic and bizarre, enigmatic in as much as there remains aspects of it difficult to define, and bizarre in that it sets out to make theoretical sense of people having fun’ (1995, p. 1). Mill and Morrison’s view is that: ‘Tourism is a difficult phenomenon to describe, all tourism involves travel, yet all travel is not tourism’ (1985, p. xvii). Burkhart and Medlik concur, adding that ‘much of this movement is international in character and much of it is a leisure activity’ (1981, p. v). Krippendorf (1987), in considering tourism, views the obsession with travel as a feature of postmodern societies, which is consistent with Urry’s view that ‘people are much of the time tourists whether they like it or not’ (1990, p. 82).

Tourism as a global industry is a generator of large numbers of international arrivals, with 1087 million recorded in 2013, and with prospects of international arrivals rising to 1.8 billion by the year 2030 (Kester, 2014). Despite its susceptibility to global acts of terrorism and war, famine and disease, it continues to be viewed as a growth industry. The ubiquitous nature of tourism as a global phenomenon is not without its problems, with Krippendorf identifying that the 1960s signalled the ‘beginning of universal and unrestrained tourism development euphoria’ (1987, p. 68). Turner and Ash (1975) recognized that the early global growth of tourism’s celebrated economic benefits also created unwelcome socio-cultural and environmental problems. Mathieson and Wall (1982), in their analysis of the impacts of tourism, position the tourism industry as a powerful agent globally for economic growth in both developing and developed countries, but with associated negative environmental and socio-cultural externalities. Reflecting on these negative impacts of tourism, and their impact on activities such as pilgrimage, Burns and Holden recognize that:

what started as pilgrimage, as education for elite, or amusement for the masses has been transferred into a global consumer product in much the same way that Pepsi-Cola, Benetton, McDonalds etc. have all become standardised, rationalised global phenomena.

(Burns and Holden 1995, p. 9)

In line with its global credentials Poon (1993, p. 32) recognizes the 'Fordist' characteristics of mass tourism as a standardized packaging of tourist products, which are consumed without social, environmental and cultural concerns. Similarly, Shaw and Williams recognize that mass tourism is:

now deeply embedded in the organization of life in the more developed world. Over time the objects of what Urry terms the tourism gaze, have changed: winter sports have been added to coastal holidays, and the field of mass tourism has become increasingly internationalized.

(Shaw and Williams 1994, p. 175)

Wheeller (1993) and Towner (1994) offer counter-views to the vilification of mass tourism and warn against framing it in a negative and oversimplified manner, with the crude caricaturing of tourism as a major environmental predator. Towner in particular views this onslaught on mass tourism as an elitist and value-laden response: 'Spas "declined" when the upper classes forsook them for more exclusive destinations, seaside resorts "waned" when their social tone altered. No matter that the actual number of visitors increased; they were the wrong sort of visitors' (1994, p. 724).

In addition to examinations such as those outlined above, many tourism academics have focused on the motivations and behaviours of the tourists themselves. 'Cognitive-normative models' as developed by Plog (1974) and later by Cohen (1979), instead of simply discussing the interaction of the tourist and the environment, try to illustrate the motivations behind travel. Plog (1974) constructed a very useful 'psychographic continuum' of tourists, ranging from psychocentric, to midcentric and allocentric travellers. Allocentrics were viewed as the most adventurous tourists, in search of remote locations, while midcentrics seek 'limited adventure' and psychocentrics choose destinations characterized by familiarity and security. Cohen (1979) modified Plog's typology, identifying five distinct modes of travel: recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental and existential, with these broad categories clearly applying equally well to both 'modern pilgrims' and tourists in search of 'pleasure'.

These models highlight that in some instances there is a spiritual dimension to motivations for tourism, with the second category of tourists seeking diversionary recreational experiences in artificial 'pleasure environments'. Urry (1990) identifies this search for artificial pleasure environments as part of the condition of postmodernism, and the 'dissolving of ... boundaries' (1990, p. 82) of cultural forms in society, with tourists engaged in 'pseudo-events and disregarding the "real" world outside' (1990, p. 7). This search for the artificial, added to tourism's reputation as being a resource-intensive industry (McKercher, 1993), raises ethical questions about the responsibility of how the tourism industry and tourists interact with host communities and the natural environment. An ethical response to the prudent use of resources for tourism creates a special challenge in the aspiration to achieve intra-generational and inter-generational equity. Prosser (1992, p. 37) considers that holidays are the 'high point of our leisure lives, as we are removed from the norms and structures of everyday life', and that 'one of the central dilemmas of tourism is that, by definition, it is a selfish and self-indulgent experience' (1992, p. 37).

McKercher speculates that as a resource-dependent and a private sector-dominated industry, with investment decisions being based predominantly on profit maximization, that 'tourism is an industrial activity that exerts a series of impacts that are similar to other industrial activities' (1993, p. 14). Furthermore, as a multifaceted industry, it is difficult to constrain and standardize within a coherent legislative framework or voluntary implementation of a code of ethics. In terms of the 'responsibilities' of tourists, McKercher (1993) views them as consumers, not 'anthropologists', and that essentially tourism is a form of entertainment. While he raises questions of how agencies and organizations might ameliorate and 'manage' the externalities of tourism, he argues that modifications to tourist activity might be dependent on the emergence of new forms of tourism. In this respect Palmer (1992) argues that we have an obligation of bequeathing 'an undiminished bank of natural resources' (1992, p. 182) to future generations, as part of a sustainable society. He identifies that the bequeathing of resources requires a more cautionary approach to development, with new forms of tourism adopting 'softer development paths' (Jafari, 1989; Poon, 1993).

Burns and Holden (1995) note that 'these ideas have also increasingly found favour in postmodern societies, in search of the alternative as a means of giving new meaning and values to social order' (1995, p. 208). Consistent with this statement, Urry (1990, p. 13) views the search for the 'alternative' as consistent with changes from 'post-Fordist' to more individual patterns of consumption, prompting more specialized purchasing and segmentation of consumer preferences.

In part Urry views the search for new tourist products as disillusionment with mass tourism products and 'contemporary consumerism' (1990, p. 13). He argues that an industry has emerged with specialist travel agents catering for a 'discriminatory independent minded clientele' (1990, p. 96) engaging in 'connoisseur leisure' (Shaw and Williams, 1994, p. 198). Nevertheless, Shaw and Williams identify that 'the essential features of mass tourism – spatial and temporal polarisation, dependency and external control, and intense environmental pressures – will remain little changed' (1994, p. 200).

However, Hitchcock (1993) recognizes a desire for a move away from uncontrolled and poorly managed tourism, towards alternative and appropriate forms of tourism, which signal 'a shift in the centre of gravity of mass tourism' (1993, p. 25). He recognizes that organizations such as Tourism Concern and the Ecumenical Coalition on Third World Tourism (ECTWT) have lobbied for 'softer forms' of tourism which replace exploitative tourism. Hitchcock recognizes the potential benefits of alternative tourism 'encouraging people both inside and outside the tourism industry to look more critically and questioningly at how tourism is affecting destinations' (1993, p. 26).

## The Experience Industry

Boorstin (1964), in lamenting the 'Lost Art of Travel', cites the example of Robert Louis Stevenson's *Travels with a Donkey* as a metaphor to contrast



slow and meditative forms of travel with more rapid travel, characterized by air travel. This rapid travel sees tourism as a 'superficial pursuit of contrived experiences – a collection of pseudo-events' (Richards, 2001, p. 14). This leads to the creation of *spectacle* through an array of manufactured tourist attractions, which are designed to mimic the awe-inspiring nature of religious and holy sites. These tourist attractions create manifestations of pseudo-events, satiating superficial experiences. Richards, in considering this, cites the work of MacCannell (1976) who views tourist attractions as 'symbols of modern consciousness' and also considers sightseeing as 'a modern ritual' with attractions venerated through 'sight sacralization' (2001, p. 15). Thus, as tourism has evolved, 'must-see' attractions replace 'must-see' religious sites, such that tourist attractions have become 'the modern cathedrals of consumption' (Ritzer, 1999, p. 17).

In this new form of interaction, these 'cathedrals of consumption' have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character for many people, but, in order to attract ever-larger numbers, such cathedrals of consumption need to offer, or at least appear to offer, increasingly magical, fantastic and enchanted settings in which to consume (Ritzer, 1999, p. 8 cited in Richards, 2001, p. 17). Richard's thesis is that both cultural and religious sites are not immune to this process but that in order to succeed, all attractions take on 'symbolic value and meaning' (2001, p. 17).

Richards (2001) highlights the work of Edensor (1998) who differentiates between 'enclavic' spaces of consumption such as hotels and attractions, which have dominant discourses controlled by the 'international tourist industry', and 'heterogeneous' spaces, which are largely unplanned, where consumption is typified by tourists who literally become "performers", creating experiences for themselves and their fellow visitors to consume' (Richards, 2001 p. 18).

In Boorstin's treatise on the inauthentic experiences of modern tourism, there are parallels between the perceived qualities of the traveller from previous centuries and the authentic experience of religious worship which they experienced. Travel in this former age had associated dangers, was arduous and involved a 'journey into the unknown', qualities also associated with religious veneration as part of the act of pilgrimage (1964, p. 14). The subsequent decline of this form of traveller and the rise of 'the tourist' (which Boorstin mapped to the mid-19th century) was, according to Fjagesund and Symes, linked to the decline of the traditional elitist associations with travel. And while a throwback to the 'exclusivity of the Grand Tour' (2002, p. 48) was articulated through travel literature of the 19th century, most notably the poems of William Wordsworth, the metamorphosis of the traveller into a tourist embodies a process of touristification (Picard, 1996) and a sense of the self-identity as to what it means to be a tourist, perhaps redefining what people 'do' as tourists.

Richards argues that 'the problems of growing cultural competition between cities has more recently led to a shift from consumption-led to production-led strategies' (2001, p. 12) and central to this is an increasing interest in festivalization and commodification of destinations. Inherent in this is a worrying implication that 'traditional culture is not sufficient – popular culture must be added to the production mix' (2001, p. 13). Richards (2001) cites the work of Pine

and Gilmore (1999) in suggesting that economies have 'gone through a transition from extracting commodities to making goods, delivering services and currently staging experiences as the primary arena of value creation' (2001, p. 55). The corollary of this thesis is that destinations are marketing themselves as places to visit to consume experiences and to engage in 'enchantment' (Richards, 2001, p. 58), rivalling not only other experience-based economies but also religious-based experiences. Therefore religion as a tourist experience will increasingly become part of the symbolic economy.

## Religion and Tourism

There is a range of historical examples of linkages between religion and travel. Sherratt and Hawkins characterize Islam as a 'vital, vivacious and expanding religion' (1972, p. 93) in which Muhammad's migration (the *Hijra*) from Mecca to Madinah (Medina) in AD 622 was the genesis of the rapid spread of Islam throughout the world. Embodied within the Five Pillars of Islam is the notion of pilgrimage and the obligation that once in a lifetime Muslims should undertake the pilgrimage to Mecca ('if able to do so'). Paralleled with this is the formation of a Non-conformist church through the emergence of Methodism in England, which saw John Wesley, its organizer, travelling over 250,000 miles on horseback to preach sermons (Sherratt and Hawkins, 1972). What is emerging from reflecting on similarities such as this is a body of academic literature which recognizes a systematization of religion, pilgrimage and tourism.

Nolan and Nolan (1992) were some of the earliest authors to address religious tourism, describing the European religious system as comprising religious attractions, pilgrimage shrines (both non-touristic and touristic) and festivals. They highlighted the interaction between 'pious' pilgrims and secular tourists, acknowledging that 'Regardless of their motivations, all visitors to these attractions require some level of services, ranging from providing for the most basic human needs, to full commercial development that rivals the most secular resort' (1992, p. 69). Despite Turner and Turner's earlier contention that 'if a pilgrim is half a tourist then a tourist is half a pilgrim' (1978, p. 20), Nolan and Nolan (1992) suggest that: 'At a well-visited shrine, visitors on any given day may represent a gradient from very pious and seriously prayerful, to purely secular and basically uninformed about the religious meaning of the place.'

Although visitors representing these extremes usually exhibit different behaviours, there is no dichotomy between pilgrims and tourists: 'Many fall into the range of intermediate categories' (Nolan and Nolan, 1992, p. 69). The authors suggest that despite the potential incompatibility of these different visitors it is possible to manage potential conflicts. These potential conflicts have more recently been catalogued by Wall and Mathieson (2006) who, through their historical analysis of linkages between the impacts of tourism on religious centres, cite meetings of the World Council of Churches (1970) and the Caribbean Ecumenical Consultation for Development (1971) as early examples of the Church being worried about how tourism, through growing commercialization, might have detrimental socio-cultural and environmental



impacts in religious centres globally. A third conference, the International Congress on Pastoral Care of Tourism on the Move in 1979, considered practical measures to organize tourism in religious centres: not least, the consideration of how to resource the preservation and conservation of religious buildings and artefacts, viewed as a more complex conundrum of how to retain special or sacred places for religious worship in the face of increasing globalization.

Therefore, while Wall and Mathieson acknowledge that 'Religion has been a powerful force which has long caused people to travel to religious centres in many parts of the world', they recognize that 'there is concern that holy places are being developed for tourism and that this is detracting from the religious significance which has made them famous' (2006, p. 251). The change in traditional forms of pilgrimage destinations, with diffusion in spiritual motivation, has seen cathedrals and churches increasingly becoming tourist attractions as well as places to worship.

In terms of the significance of the relationship between religion and tourism, many authors, such as Collins-Kreiner (2010) and Olsen (2013), present in their analysis a challenge of what aspects of religion should intersect with tourism as the central articulations of religious tourism and pilgrimage. Authors within this book not only apply strong multidisciplinary insights in this regard from tourism, events, economics, sociology, psychology and cultural theory backgrounds, but also apply the strengths of their diverse educational and academic cultural traditions from both Eastern and Western philosophies to their discourses on religion, pilgrimage, tourism and events. Undoubtedly, therefore, this book should have a compelling appeal to emerging and growing academic audiences within Asia and South Asia and the Indian subcontinent, as well as individuals from various fields of study within the West, which focus on the ever-increasingly important societal narratives of the 'sacred and secular', and the application of these narratives to the activities of tourism and events. Theoretical and empirical perspectives on travel, religion and pilgrimage are supported by case studies which express either personal perspective on religious devotion or research insights into the relationships between religion and tourism.

## **Overview of Chapters**

In Chapter 2 Anna Trono discusses the significance of religious journeys and how the physiognomy of the pilgrim, whose motivations include broader forms of spirituality and other objectives (cultural, etc.), has changed considerably in recent times. There has also been a change in the behaviour of the communities and host countries, which now see religious tourism (which is in continuous growth) as a means of cultural exchange and regional development. The pilgrimage industry adapts itself to tourist demand and reflects the increased contemporary consumerism and hedonistic behaviour.

In Chapter 3 Ian D. Rotherham highlights the range of global religious and ceremonial sites which have been the focus of journeys promoting spiritual well-being, particularly within the English village church locale, drawing on

additional examples of sacred sites within a UK context. The English village church locale is examined as the focus for an emerging tourist economy which can help to sustain an infrastructure for both religious and pilgrimage worship and visitation.

In Chapter 4 Kevin Griffin and Razaq Raj initially consider the problematic nature of religious and pilgrimage travel as part of the tourism industry, and within an Irish context present patterns and typologies of pilgrimage, focusing on the pilgrim who travels for religious and spiritual reasons. The authors cite the work of the ATLAS Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Special Interest Group to support insights into the motivation of religious pilgrims in Ireland. The chapter is underpinned by contrasts in the societal trends of increasing secularization and decreasing domestic religious travel and wider international consumption trends of globalization and internationalization.

In Chapter 5 Yasin Bilim and Sevde Düzgüner present a conceptual and theoretical framework regarding religious tourism and developing religious tolerance. They evaluate the initial effects of tourism's economic, social and environmental impacts, which are the most emphasized issues both by academics and practitioners. The chapter is underpinned by religious tourism and the movement to promote tolerance and peace. Tolerance regarding other religions or beliefs is seen as one of the main doctrines for all religions. The chapter further discusses how religious tourism has a dual effect of both promoting tolerance of other religions and developing a pilgrim's own religious foundation.

In Chapter 6 Tahir Rashid and Neil Robinson review many manifestations of terrorism with particular reference to the atrocities carried out against holy visitors. Their work is underpinned by an examination of motivations and the terror philosophy of the perpetrators behind attacks. Their chapter further provides insight into why travellers may take a journey – to develop themselves spiritually, to seek forgiveness for past sins, or to pursue benefit through the medium of God or a saint in the hope of a cure of an illness or a resolution of a difficulty (Barber, 1991).

In Chapter 7 Razaq Raj, Kevin Griffin and Ruth Blackwell reassess, within a theoretical framework, theories of motivation, both historical and contemporary, related to religious tourism, pilgrimage, festivals and events, recognizing the act of travel as well as the arrival as part of the complex matrix of travel motivators. They introduce discourses on content theory and process theory, highlighting the work of Maslow (1954) and Herzberg (1974) to underpin their analysis of motivations for religious tourism and pilgrimage.

In Chapter 8 Nigel Bond demonstrates that visitors to religious sites seek more than a casual encounter with an interesting or historic attraction. He further discusses the experience of pilgrims who are seeking a range of experiences, not simply those pertaining to their faith or religious beliefs. This chapter analyses how individuals construct their own meanings out of their experiences at religious heritage sites, and the author suggests that existing models of pilgrimage and tourism do not account for the multidimensional experiences that visitors, irrespective of their motivations, may have.

In Chapter 9 Vitor Ambrósio focuses on the historical framework of pilgrimage incorporating different phases in the development of pilgrimage, and considers the systemization of religious practice and pilgrimage based on a range of societal factors. The further development of this chapter articulates emic insights into the spiritual fundamentals of pilgrimage, exploring in particular the emotions expressed through Christian pilgrimage viewed as a significant event in a 'believer's life', providing both a cognitive and aesthetic experience. These insights are contrasted with academic discourses on the characteristics of pilgrimage.

In Chapter 10 Lluís Prats, Silvia Aulet and Dolors Vidal provide insights as to how social media is changing the development of religious sites. New communication technologies have been quickly adopted by society, and religion, being part of society, has not been left behind in the digital invasion. The chapter also looks at broadcasting through new technologies, circulating information and knowledge relating to a religion, site or brand image. The authors illustrate how using these data one can build up a profile of tourist types and consumption patterns, or generate more engagement with a site.

In Chapter 11 Alan Clarke and Ágnes Raffay demonstrate that the main stakeholders need to recognize producers and consumers as vital to the development processes of co-creation experience, basing their chapter on the driving forces and stakeholder relations behind the opening of a Religious Tourism Visitor Centre, at the historical centre of a Hungarian city. In their chapter, they demonstrate that the concept of co-creation experience, derived from American management literature, where industries are single core focused, has limited applicability in the complex domain of religious tourism. They propose that most suggestions for stakeholder mapping produce static representations of the complexities involved.

In Chapter 12 Razaq Raj provides insights as to what it means to be a practising Muslim, outlining the main tenets of this system of faith. The hajj is considered as the culmination of each Muslim's religious duties and aspiration and it is stated in the Holy Qur'an that every physically and financially able Muslim should make the hajj to the Holy City of Mecca (Makkah) once in his or her lifetime. The author argues that the hajj is not a tourist phenomenon; according to the Holy Qur'an and Hadiths it is one of the pillars of Islam, and thus it is not like any other pilgrimage in the world.

In Chapter 13 Jaeyeon Choe and Michael O'Regan discuss and examine the tourist motivations to visit religious (Buddhist) sites, and address the role of religious tourism in regional development among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). They discuss the motivation of visitors by way of a case study of religious tourism in Thailand, before investigating the opportunities and challenges for future integration among ASEAN members, particularly in relation to this important niche. They also explore the strategies required to overcome barriers to develop religious tourism in the region. Such strategies include the need for transparent objectives, community consultation and integrated national and regional plans.

In Chapter 14 Maria Leppäkari provides insight into the Nordic Protestant pilgrimage to Israel, with special attention paid to Christian Zionism (CZ). She further discusses how sacred shrines and holy sites often host pilgrims who are united by

strong degrees of cultural homogeneity. Jerusalem differs on this point. The city draws pilgrims from a vast multitude of nations and cultural traditions since the city is considered holy by three major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. She further provides personal travel narratives collected through a study of 285 customer satisfaction questionnaires at a Finnish travel agency.

In Chapter 15 Samson Fadare and Elizabeth Benson examine the relationship between the volume of consumption and consumers' satisfaction of tourism experience. They also provide socio-economic characteristics of consumers, pertinent factors that affect the consumption of religious sites. Their chapter illustrates the variety of sites present in a range of countries throughout Africa. The authors suggest that production, consumption and management factors be given adequate consideration in promoting effective and efficient tourism consumption of the sites.

In Chapter 16 Kevin Griffin and Hadil Faris provide a case study of Ashura and its commemoration. They outline the historical events that led to the celebration of Ashura by Shia Muslims, and how these are linked to the separate Muslim groupings. The various practices in the commemoration of Ashura are presented and in particular some of the most contentious elements are discussed. The chapter then outlines how this event, linked to Karbala in Iraq, can be commemorated in a country such as Ireland, which has a relatively small Muslim community. The chapter suggests that despite the distance, and the minority status of the adherents, a 'proxy' pilgrimage experience exists which is both important and relevant for the participants.

In Chapter 17 Carlos Fernandes, Jorge Coelho and Miguel Brázio provide insights into Northern Portugal's religious tourism potential. The religious tourist is assumed to travel in a manner characterized by multifunctionality, interacting with other forms of tourism, although the religious element assumes prominence. However, the authors address their complementarity concurrently with the various tourist modalities. They examine and highlight the changes in national and regional policy as they relate to religious tourism in the period between 2003 and 2013, and recommend that the northern region of Portugal be more consistent with its policy regarding tangible and intangible religious heritage as part of a tourism product, and that this should be in accordance with the national tourism strategy and current trends in the tourism market.

In Chapter 18 Maximiliano Korstanje and Geoffrey Skoll discuss the significance of a tragic fire at República de Cromañón, a classic nightclub in Buenos Aires where a large group of attendees were killed. They examine the anthropological roots of pilgrimage tourism as well as the connection between human beings and their death. The degree of conflict and the pejorative view of tourism make it very difficult to organize mass tours to the site, although the site exhibits interesting expressions of popular religiosity.

In Chapter 19 Nour Farra-Haddad examines a case study of holy places being used to rebrand Lebanon as a part of the Holy Land. In the study she focuses on South Lebanon where hundreds of churches, monasteries, mosques, maqâms and mazars are found in and around important cities and small villages. In the case study the author is seeking to understand the desire to integrate the religious sites into the biblical and evangelical tradition, supported

by a renewed interest in these shrines and above all the establishment of facilities and programmes to organize visits to such sanctuaries.

In Chapter 20 Vincent Zammit explores a case study of Saints Paul and Publius in early modern Malta and discusses how, since the 16th century, there has been a concentrated effort to increase devotion for the cult of St Paul and the subsequent creation of the cult of St Publius. This was done to enhance the prestige of the Knights of St John within the Catholic world, and their standing within the political world of Christendom. These same sacred places are now an integral part of the religious itineraries that are offered in Malta.

In Chapter 21 Tahir Rashid explores the case study of Takaful International, an Islamic insurance company which is based on the concept of mutual cooperation and solidarity, to enable pilgrims travelling to Islamic holy places to do so under Islamic jurisprudence or Sharia guidelines. The chapter also provides a comparison between Western classic insurance and Islamic insurance, followed by a case study of the Takaful International insurance company based in Bahrain.

These various chapters bring together important insights into religion, pilgrimage and tourism in global cultural traditions. In particular, the insights on religion and tourism to emerge from authors in different parts of the world reveal new perspectives on emerging tourist destinations and developments in acts of religious worship. In this sense, within this book we argue for a reassessment of analysis underlying religious motivations for travel and a full exploration of the pressures for sacred spaces to become venues for commercialized and festivalized arenas, particularly within re-emerging and increasingly secularized Western pilgrimage routes and destinations.

The aim of the book is to provide empirical and personal insights into the changing nature of religion in society and to further the debate for both policy makers and academics to consider these policy-making challenges within the future development of faith tourism and pilgrimage.

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# 2

## Politics, Policy and the Practice of Religious Tourism

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### Introduction

Defining and distinguishing *policy* from *politics* in religious tourism is not easy, because the two superficially similar terms in fact have quite different meanings. *Policy* indicates the search for a rational way of tackling problems of an ethical, religious, cultural, environmental and economic nature affecting religious tourism in different societies, cultures and locations. *Politics* is the search for solutions, not necessarily optimal ones, to issues concerning the promotion and management of practices and religious rites, taking account of their results in environmental and economic terms. At times, policy morphs directly into politics, especially where different 'religions', 'philosophies' and 'beliefs' end up becoming a given, and force policy to take a back seat. Values and motives get mixed up and rationality gives way to the expression of a popular belief, or more often to the will of some authority (secular or ecclesiastical) motivated above all by economic considerations, creating situations in which it is hard to discern whether they are coincidental or conflictual. However, as Hanson argues (Hanson, 2006, p. 92), it is also worth considering that 'much of the religious influence on politics takes place over long time periods. People do not change their basic identities in a split second'.

It is also difficult to emerge from the conflict without dismantling every single issue into its three elementary components: the *individual* interest (spiritual, cultural) of the person who practises religious tourism, the *collective* interest (religious, cultural, economic) of those who enjoy (or endure) its results and the *values* that drive religious tourism and may differ even within the same community. Religious tourism policy needs to evolve into a politics that is not just about ideological and religious confrontation but also a search for shared

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rational solutions that seek to improve behaviours and the quality of life and yield results that are useful for individuals and the region as a whole. This objective is frequently not reached as a result of economic interests, even when the founding values are religious and/or spiritual.

After analysing the values and principles that drive the protagonists of religious tourism today, this chapter focuses in particular on the people of various religious faiths who undertake journeys for reasons of a religious, spiritual, speculative or cultural nature. It also considers the practices, activities and policies that characterize and promote religious tourism and the role played by bodies, both secular and religious and public and private, in the organization, promotion and management of pilgrimages, sanctuaries and places of worship, religious rites and popular beliefs.

## Religious Tourism: Its Meaning in Different Times and Cultures

Religion and spirituality are the most common motivations for travel and, as demonstrated by the most recent estimates published by the WTO (World Tourism Organization, 2011, p. xiii), the number of tourists interested in sacred personages, places and events is considerable (600 million religious and spiritual voyages) and is growing constantly.

Faith-inspired journeys are at least as ancient as the history of human beings. Ever since pre-classical times, right up until our own day, a large number of pilgrims of different religions and cultures, driven by passions, myths, beliefs and religious fervour, but also by curiosity and cultural speculation, have been moving towards places of worship – focal points of religious rites and ceremonies – to which they attribute meanings and signifiers dictated by reason and tradition, culture and conformity to religious doctrines, or because of their religious interest and historic and artistic value (Fig. 2.1). Studies of the late antique Mediterranean world have described the phenomenon in some detail, emphasizing the catchment areas of shrines as the centre of a social network and pilgrimage as a social process.

The historian of Coptic Egypt finds these beliefs and practices apparent and familiar in miracle-collections, shrines living and dilapidated, icons and pilgrims' vials, and even the graffiti left on old walls.

(Frankfurter, 1998, p. 4) (See Fig. 2.2)

In the Christian religion, pilgrimage has taken on a more spiritual dimension over time. In the medieval period pilgrims travelled to sanctuaries (*causa orationis*), either from some need for interior mortification (*causa poenitentia*) or to obtain grace (*peregrinatio pro voto*) from the saint to whom the shrine was dedicated. To these may be added those who set off on a journey to expiate their sins, i.e. to compensate for grave sins or crimes committed against the social equilibrium and harmony. The growth of 'imposed' pilgrimage from the late 13th century onwards, particularly in Northern Europe (today's Belgium, Netherlands, Germany and France), was clearly influenced by the Irish model of *peregrinatio*, characterized by





**Fig. 2.1.** Abbey of Santa Maria di Cerrate, Lecce. (Photo courtesy of Loretta Martella.)



**Fig. 2.2.** Graffiti left by pilgrims on the old walls of the Karnak temple complex in Egypt. (Photo courtesy of Paola Davoli.)

ascetic components such as travelling without a pre-chosen destination, but also by punitive components (Vantaggiato, 2012).

The golden age of Christian pilgrimage lasted until the end of the 14th century, when European society began a process of secularization that transformed

the medieval pilgrims into simple travellers, whose legacy today is the continuing presence of the religious motive for travel. This motive, however, has been shaped by a need for *spirituality* as an emotional experience, the result of changes in modern society. In addition there are cultural interests, the desire for contact with nature and also the chance to escape from the exhausting reality of daily life.

A growing number of places, of both a religious and secular nature, are thus proposed as a sort of spiritual 'retreat' for all those who seek a holiday of the soul that meets the need for growth of the person, spirituality and creativity, often including courses of a mystic nature, self-training and alternative medicine.

The journey towards destinations of religious interest may thus be seen as a form of tourism that expresses the abiding memory of history, of 'religious' places that signify a past. It thus assumes the character of a movement that distinguishes it from the traditional pilgrimage, enriching it with cultural and experiential elements. This implies a change in the underlying intention that generates the journey, which has shifted from an essentially religious phenomenon to a 'search for meaning'. Travellers with religious traditions are particularly drawn by the need for self-knowledge and inner confidence, which enables them to face their daily existence with greater serenity and wisdom. It is sentiments such as these that motivate many travellers who head towards new sites or are attracted by ancient and new routes (see Figs 2.3 and 2.4). They seek an emotional reawakening, physical and mental well-being, authenticity, self-fulfilment, harmony, joy, knowledge and, by extension, longevity and health. There is an extensive literature focusing on the reasons for religious tourism, the types of tourist-pilgrim and their dichotomous characteristics (see in Trono, 2014).

It is thus a form of tourism that may rightly be called 'spiritual', this term being more 'comprehensive' and perhaps better adapted to explain the motives of the many contemporary 'wayfarers' who adhere to a 'less dogmatic' and more 'general spirituality'. The latter should be understood as a human experience that reflects the complexity of religiosity of today's technological and consumerist human beings and at the same time is linked to 'tourist travel' (Mazza, 2009). It represents a sort of 'anthropological shift' that restructures the human person and society in terms of lifestyles, horizons and perspectives. The high level of uniformity of spiritual motives allows us to see it as a transversal phenomenon, cutting across different religions and cultures with comparable models, as well as unifying themes and concepts and shared practices (Collins-Kreiner, 2009).

Analysis of the fundamental spiritual aspects underlying the philosophies of the four main religions (in terms of followers) – Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity – indicates the presence of shared motives, including the search for ancient testimony and holy places. Clearly, spiritual tourists are driven by a variety of motives, but these are founded on an emerging subjectivity and a religious and cultural syncretism, which reveal the heterogeneous nature of religious tourism, spiritually inclined or well-disposed to the values of other cultures, and sensitive to (and aware of) the differences (Raj and Morpeth, 2007). In the Muslim world the strict observance of certain fundamental precepts treats the religious journey as one of the pillars of the Islamic faith, obliging every believer to go on a pilgrimage to Mecca (the hajj) at least once in their life, if their circumstances permit. Pilgrimage represents an important event in the life of the Muslim believer: it constitutes a means of purification.



**Fig. 2.3.** Pilgrims on the Via Francigena–Siena route. (Photo courtesy of Nino Guidi.)

This is also the case with Hinduism, although in India everything is nuanced and nothing is truly obligatory, there being no moral dogmas concerning the individual, or ‘commandments’ such as may be found in the Christian Bible. Visits to sacred places (*tirtha*) are also of a distinctive character. The purpose of the journey (*yatra* in Hindi) is to visit holy places and at the same time to purify oneself of one’s sins. It is thus a necessity, a duty, although not as imperative as for Muslims. For Hindus, the journey can also be undertaken in one’s heart; it is not necessary to perform it physically, although this is desirable.

Today, just like 2000 years ago, pilgrimage in India mobilizes considerable masses of people, who cross the country in all directions. The texts on Dharma and the Puranas explain that the soil of India, itself sacred, hosts special places in which this sacredness is concentrated. These include rivers, lakes, mountains,





**Fig. 2.4.** Pilgrims going up to the Sanctuary of San Michele Arcangelo on Monte Gargano in Puglia. (Photo courtesy of Miki Del Guidice.)

and many other locations (the Matsya Purana refers to 35 million), but some are elevated above others (see [Figs 2.5](#) and [2.6](#)). Pilgrimage to sacred places is considered the ideal way to acquire merit in the calamitous times of the Kali Yuga in which we live. Such times are unfavourable to more arduous and exhausting practices such as sacrifice or asceticism, which humanity could have performed only in more ancient times. Even today, however, pilgrimage still represents a drastic break with time and profane activities, and requires a ritual and spiritual preparation that culminates in the *samkalpa*, a solemn and meditated declaration of intent (which *tirtha* one intends to visit, for what motives, etc.) from which one cannot turn back.

## Faith and Fanaticism in Religious Practices

Religious tourism is thus a multipolar phenomenon, driven by a range of motives that include differentiated elements which are hard to fit into pre-conceived schemes, but recall ancestral aspirations to achieve a link with the divinity, described by religions in various ways. Those who go on journeys to places of worship, regardless of their individual motives and the religion they profess and despite the objections of an increasingly secular society, have to face the timeless dual conflict of loyalty between an official religion, seen from an ecclesiastical viewpoint, and popular religiosity, understood as something



**Fig. 2.5.** Pilgrimage to Kailash, the sacred mountain. (Photo courtesy of Rosa Maria Cimino.)



**Fig. 2.6.** Feast of Durga in Delhi. (Photo courtesy of Rosa Maria Cimino.)

experienced and often emphasized as an alternative to or at least different from the 'real' religion.

Apparently disillusioned, yet fascinated by mystery, today's traveller goes in search of ancient testimony and holy places, taking in the whole range of 'needs' – for identity, company, culture – that combine with popular religiosity, as a 'naïve' response to the religious urge that an elaborate doctrinal system cannot satisfy (Mazza, 2009). Mysticism and fanaticism combine. Faith is opposed to reason, and reason to myth. What all religions retain is an undiluted belief in the unique role of the divinity, the practice of virtue and good works, the desire to eliminate the evil of sin, recognizing the value of suffering, stressing the obligation of every believer to expiate their sins and the need for inner conversion. These ancestral motives are repeated in all the religions. Sobriety and composure go hand in hand with dangerous forms of fanaticism, tolerated and/or crudely denied by religious authorities, but usually ignored by secular society.

For example, the 15th century was a period of fanaticism for Catholicism, exemplified by Queen Isabella's shameful decision to expel the Jews from Spain. The bloodthirsty Muslim invasions of India in the 11th century afterwards drove Hindu tribes to adopt ritual killings – shocking to our eyes – such as the suicide of widows, an authentic religious rite performed in accordance with a precise liturgy, which prevented defenceless women such as widows (especially among the proud people of Rājput and Mahratta) from being enslaved by bands of Muslim raiders (Filippini-Ronconi, 1981, p. 193). In 1480 the entire population of Otranto, Italy, was massacred by the Muslim Ottoman army when it refused to abjure its Catholic faith.



Although they still hold a strong appeal for many today, the extreme sacrifices associated with pilgrimage to a sacred place, seen as a journey with no return (e.g. awaiting death on the banks of the Ganges), are no longer common. However, Indian spirituality still includes numerous and extravagant ascetic and meditative practices (*tapasya*) on the part of holy men (*sadhus*) seeking to reach various levels of the spirit (see Fig. 2.7).

Some spectacular religious rites may impress, excite, shock or simply stir curiosity, like the rites of Holy Week in Angeles City in the Philippines, which on Good Friday, despite the disapproval of the Catholic Church, include flagellation, blood-letting, crucifixions and processions glorifying pain, seemingly reminiscent of certain rituals in Shia Islam (see Chapter 16). Spectacular and evocative rites are also celebrated in southern Italy, such as the 'flagellation' practised by penitents known as 'Vattienti' in Nocera Terinese in Calabria, supposedly in fulfilment of vows for prayers answered, which draws hundreds of fanatics. Rather than a Christian tradition, it appears to be a barbaric and fanatical exhibition of sadomasochism, which in any case has been condemned by the Church. During the procession the Vattienti thrash themselves (the origin of the word 'vattienti') with pieces of glass and other instruments until they bleed profusely (<http://www.folclore.it/It/Eventi/Italia/Calabria/Catanzaro/Nocera-Terinese/Il-Rito-dei-Vattienti.html>). In this way faith becomes a spectacle, stirring the curiosity and interest of those who attend the rites and liturgies.



**Fig. 2.7.** Holy men (*sadhus*) seeking to reach various levels of the spirit. (Photo courtesy of Rosa Maria Cimino.)

The Hindu religion also has evocative, cruel and sometimes incomprehensible rites. Some of the rituals that take place during the feast of Kumbh Mela, the biggest Hindu feast, may be shocking and astonishing to outsiders. On the day considered to be the most sacred, 10 to 15 million people from all over India, of different races, languages, customs, ways of life and dress, gather for a bathing ritual that will wash away their past sins and shorten the cycle of their earthly existence. An important part of the most sacred days is the processions of *sadhus* that come to the holiest of places to bathe.

From the early hours the people gather along the prescribed route, many kilometres long, protected by stockades and soldiers. It is one of the most dangerous moments of the feast, since the crowd, practically delirious at the sight of those (particularly the *naga sadhus*) who are considered 'the holy ones', surges forward. In the past this would result in dozens, if not hundreds of people being trampled to death in the collective madness.

During the processions, some of the holy men (especially the *naga sadhus*) like to display their control over their bodies with curious and extravagant exercises, designed to suppress the procreative and pleasure functions of their sexual organs, causing a frenzy among the crowd (Cimino, 2000, pp. 35 and 37).

Expressions of pagan idolatry linked to episodes of religious fanaticism – or even worse, deliberately induced collective hysteria – are seen in Sicily in the procession of the 'nudi' (barefoot penitents) who celebrate the martyred saints Sant'Alfio, San Filadelfo and San Cirino (see <http://www.lentinionline.it/>; [http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xr0roc\\_sant-alfio-2012-i-nuri-lentini\\_travel](http://www.dailymotion.com/video/xr0roc_sant-alfio-2012-i-nuri-lentini_travel)). The celebrations include forms of local devotional pilgrimage, which for some of the participants (the so-called 'nuri' or 'nudi') entail running for kilometres (Fig. 2.8). Bound to the saints by vows, and wearing only white shorts and a red belt, they reach the church barefoot and exhausted. They prostrate themselves on the ground, calling out the name of the saint and offering up



**Fig. 2.8.** Barefoot penitent, Sant'Alfio, Sicily. (Photo courtesy of Anna Trono.)



the enormous candle carried during the run. Involved in the feast are numerous religious associations, responsible for the management of the celebrations (the procession, exhibition of ex-voto gifts, decorative street lights and fireworks).

In Bari, Italy, highly evocative is the ceremony of the blessing and distribution to pilgrims of the 'manna' of San Nicola, a liquid extracted from the tomb of the saint in the basilica in Bari where his relics are kept. The famous ampoules in which the miraculous liquor is diluted in water were already a feature of the cult of the saint when his relics were kept in Myra (in modern Turkey), making him part of a vast array of 'myroblytoi' (i.e. producing myron) saints venerated in the Byzantine world.

As Leo Imperiale explains, as early as the beginning of the 10th century the sick, blind, lame, deaf and mute and those possessed by evil spirits crowded into the sanctuary of Myra to be cured by the oily liquid. It is told that the custodians of the sepulchre of the saint in Myra gave a small quantity of myron to some sailors from Bari, who asked about the exact location of the body of the saint. The custodians believed the sailors were devout pilgrims but the men from Bari carried off the relics, wading knee-deep in the holy liquor to retrieve the bones. Late 15th-century sources speak of the basilica in Bari and of the 'manna' that oozed from the relics, although none of the bottles of the manna conserved in the Treasury of the Basilica of San Nicola is older than the 17th century (Leo Imperiale, 2014).

It is almost certain that in the Middle Ages the blessed liquid was already being drawn by the canons of the basilica using a sponge, diluting it in water before distributing it to worshippers and pilgrims (see Fig. 2.9). The manna of San Nicola di Myra is still distributed today in Bari Cathedral on the occasion of the two annual feasts of the saint: on 6 December, St Nicholas' day, and 9 May in memory of the translation of the relics (Rizzello and Trono, 2013).

Liturgy and symbolism, faith and folklore are also seen in the 'miracle' of San Gennaro in Naples, a religious event that takes place every year in the Duomo (cathedral) of Naples. On the day of the feast of San Gennaro (the patron saint of Naples and Campania) the ampoules are displayed to thousands of worshippers who approach the altar to await the 'miracle' of the liquefaction with supplications, prayers and litanies in the local dialect. The occurrence of the miracle is seen by the inhabitants of Naples as a good sign for the city. In contrast, if the liquefaction fails to happen it is taken as an ill omen.

In the Christian world, religious fervour is linked to the traditions of a particular area and recalls the seasonal rhythms of nature. For example, in the municipalities of the eastern coast of the Salento, a local religious event (based on local foods) known as the Tavole di San Giuseppe ('the Tables of St Joseph') takes place, which represents the symbolic expression of a vow, a prayer granted or a remembrance for a family member who died. The event reveals a very close link between the area and its faith, local products and religiosity, rural life and collective rituals, in which an important role is also played by the individual dimension. The practices linked to the feast of San Giuseppe (19 March), which have been around for many years now, include rites linked to food, including the preparation of the tables and the lighting of fires. In many cases, cultural policies have included measures designed to promote aspects of local culture linked to food and charity. The rural world projected in this event is seen in its complete form in the person of St Joseph himself, described in the



**Fig. 2.9.** Ceremony of the blessing and distribution to pilgrims of the 'manna' of San Nicola, Bari. (Photo courtesy of Katia Rizzello.)

apocrypha as a maker of ploughs and yokes, fundamental for tilling the land and making it productive. The large loaves, vegetables, pulses, fried sweets, honey, symbolic fruits, oil and wine, together with the obligatory simulacrum of the saint, revitalise the small peasant communities and perpetuate a memory that reinvigorates the values of faith, brotherhood, solidarity and charity.

It is also the case that some popular feasts have only a veneer of religiosity and some processions 'are no more than tiresome begging marathons that offend public decorum', as was recently argued by the bishops of the Episcopal Conference of the Campania region against the local organized crime ('camorra'). In some cases they are even infiltrated by organized crime, with ambiguous mob-connected figures seeking to participate in order to gain prestige. The processions of saints may stop to give a form of 'salute' in front of the houses of known criminals (as in the 'affruntata' processions in the Easter period in Calabria and the obsequious gestures outside the houses of 'bosses' in Seminara and Oppido Mamertina during the procession of the statue of the Madonna, or the cult at the sanctuary of the Madonna dei Polsi, 'capital' of the 'Ndrangheta criminal organization, or the 'bowing' of the Madonna del Carmine to the mafia boss during the procession through the narrow streets of Ballarò in the city of Palermo in Sicily), to the irritation of the civil and religious authorities. This type of manipulation is one of the most striking dangers of popular piety, but religious feasts include other cases that are more subtle but no

less serious. Profane practices introduced by organizing committees in the name of 'evangelizing popular piety' actually suppress the freedom and spontaneity of worshippers, leading to measures designed to free religious ceremonies and rites from these forms of arrogance. The Catholic Church has recently made an effort in this regard, even suspending processions where necessary. It has also prohibited souvenir markets in liturgical places, processions where religious banners are covered in money and manifestations of hysteria that profane sacred places.

However, these efforts do not entirely absolve the Church of responsibility (which it shares with other religions and the secular authorities) for its insufficient attention to the principles of *spirituality*, *universal brotherhood* and *humanism*, which, if pursued effectively, would lead to global solidarity and peace.

In religious tourism and in the philosophies of all major religions (and many minor ones) an important role is played by social solidarity on various levels. Travel of a spiritual nature acts as a positive controlling factor with respect to both tradition and modernization. Spiritual journeys show that despite negative factors such as terrorism, racism, fundamentalism, economic recession and self-imposed limitations in response to the changes currently in progress, they represent more than a simple ritual, as many consider them. Indeed, they constitute vectors of reciprocal understanding, peace and economic and political benefits.

## Public and Private Sectors in the Management of Religious Tourism

Responding to old and new promptings, today's pilgrims, whatever their religion, generate new socio-economic dynamics, mobilizing public and private investment and creating employment, i.e. producing development. In India, Shinde describes:

religious tourism as a natural progression of traditional pilgrimage economy, where entrepreneurship springs from socio-cultural and ritual exchanges and knowledge of religious protocols and procedures between indigenous religious functionaries and visitors. Using religious hegemony, social status and networks, religious entrepreneurs innovate, develop new products and expand the cultural economy of rituals and performances to suit the demands of the burgeoning tourism.

(Shinde, 2010, p. 533)

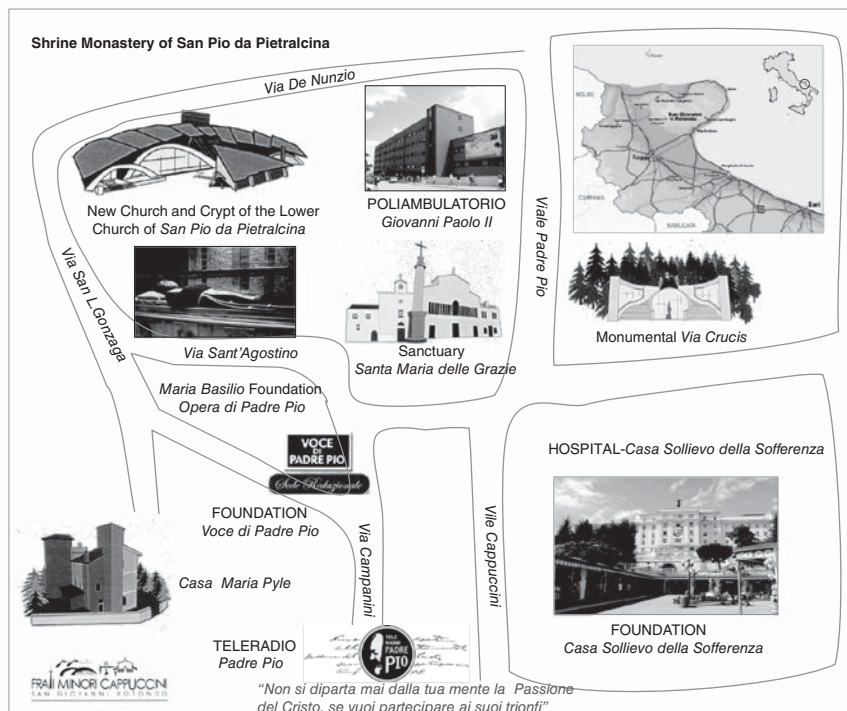
It is estimated that in 2008, religious tourism linked to the Kumbh Mela festival generated income of about US\$100 billion, and this is projected to reach US\$275.5 billion in 2018 (Mishra *et al.*, 2011 in Singh, 2012). In Saudi Arabia the number of pilgrims heading to the holy cities of Mecca and Madinah (Medina) produces an annual income of US\$16 billion. Closely controlled by the Saudi government, religious tourism is considered an important factor for diversifying the country's economy, currently dominated by petroleum. With a goal of 88 million foreign tourists by 2020, the government has launched an ambitious tourism development plan with an aggressive marketing strategy that includes big investment in hotels, leisure services and the infrastructure of the holy places most frequented by pilgrims (e.g. the Sacred Mosque in Mecca, King

Abdulaziz International Airport and Jeddah and Madinah Airports). The hajj is the best example of formalization of the religious tourism industry. The national government, through various ministries and agencies, controls and manages inbound tourist flows (Henderson, 2003; 2011).

In Italy religious tourism produces €4.5 billion of business (according to estimates by EURISPES in 2009), boosting the number and the turnover of companies (for example, in 1993 the 1400 religious craft companies had a turnover of 4200 billion lire; Lavarini, 1997). These data are highly approximate, considering that neither the number of religious tourists nor the economic benefits they bring are known with any precision (according to quarterly ISTAT reports in 2013, there were 1244 journeys for religious motives and pilgrimage in Italy). Clearly, benefits and beneficiaries are not being counted properly by statistical surveys, because religious tourism is a difficult type to isolate from others of a historical and cultural nature, and because some of the overnight stays are not subject to tax, the accommodation structures being managed by not-for-profit religious organizations.

It is precisely these organizations who are the greatest beneficiaries of religious tourism, although they form a broad universe of institutions, a myriad of organizations linked more or less directly to the world of religion. Awareness of the business generated by religious tourism has prompted many initiatives, involving secular and religious players, favouring small operators but also 'pilgrimage multinationals', the 'supra-national organizations' tasked with the promotion and management of religious tourism. The Christian universe teems with bodies of various kinds (a myriad of agencies, associations, organizations, tour operators, etc.) interested in guiding and managing pilgrimages, sometimes driven more by prosaic interests than spiritual motives. One hundred and fifty-three of them are listed by the Italian Catholic pilgrimage associations website (<http://www.siticattolici.it>), but there are certainly many more. Among the Christian operators, worthy of mention due to their organizational and managerial skills are: the Association Nationale des Directeurs Diocésains de Pèlerinages (ANDDP), founded in Paris in 1938, which operates in the spirit of the Pilgrims' Charter of 19 May 1981, in connection with the Pontifical Commission for Migration and Tourism; the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People; and the Opera Romana Pellegrinaggi (ORP), sponsored by the Italian Ministry of Communication. In the name of religion they provide services in accordance with a broad range of activities including the organization of journeys and pilgrimages, commercial activities, accommodation and catering services, publishing, communication and cultural, social and health services.

An exemplar of religious-based development is the Church of San Pio in San Giovanni Rotondo, in Italy, one of the most frequently visited holy places not just in Italy but in the whole of Europe. Really, the primary and most impressive miracle worked by San Pio is economic: his presence in a poor, mountainous and isolated region, whose only other assets lie in its beautiful landscape, has made it famous all over the world. His healing power is seen most clearly in the revitalization of the area's economy. Gravitating round the figure of the saint is a myriad of cultural social and economic initiatives (see Fig. 2.10). Of considerable



**Fig. 2.10.** The innumerable cultural, social and economic initiatives of the Shrine Monastery of San Pio da Pietrelcina in San Giovanni Rotondo, Foggia. (Photo courtesy of Anna Trono.)

importance in ethical and social terms are the philanthropic activities, especially those conducted for more than 50 years by the 'Casa Sollievo della Sofferenza' religious foundation, which manages, among other structures, one of the most prestigious clinics in Italy. The foundation undoubtedly upholds the Christian commitment to help the suffering and the needy, thanks to its social work, the initiatives of the prayer groups, the scientific research and the quality of the health care provided by the hospital, itself built at the suggestion of San Pio, exclusively with money donated from every corner of the globe.

Linked to his name are also a large number of religious, cultural, social and commercial activities; restaurants, hotels, travel agencies, tour operators and others all benefit from his fame. He is a reference for donations and legacies granted by private citizens, as well as for public initiatives and funding aimed at improving the provision of services to pilgrims. Even the municipality of Pietrelcina receives an Italian government grant of €500,000 a year to promote the cult of the saint.

During the Jubilee year of 2000, various initiatives were launched in San Giovanni Rotondo with a view to increasing the number of primary structures. However, the investment was not planned in accordance with an effective regional marketing policy, but was directed at the construction *ex novo* of new

hotels, requiring changes to the local town planning laws. Other specific measures have been put in place, such as the project referred to as '*La tessera dell'ospite*' (Guest Card), activated in San Giovanni Rotondo in 2002. In a bid to create a modern and competitive worship–culture–services system, the initiative envisages a single ticket granting access to public transport (for a maximum of 5 days), the Waxworks Museum, the cinema and theatre, the 'Parco del Papa' amusement park, the cloister of San Francesco and the seven churches in the old town.

Given the generosity of the faithful and the waste of public funding to encourage hotel construction, it is disheartening to see the evident expressions of opportunism and attempts to make money out of religious journeys, which the pilgrims themselves have no desire to see. These initiatives have transformed the site into a locale for holidays based on leisure, fun and the waste of resources. Indeed, many pilgrims are dismayed by the commercial business now associated with the saint, seen in the squalid trade in images and statues sold at outrageous prices outside churches, in the exorbitant prices charged by hotels (with a frankly unsustainable quality-to-price ratio) and in the absence or poor quality of services for the disabled. Strong objections have also been raised against the promotional and publicity activities conducted by the monks who run the holding company created to manage the site, and particularly against the ostentatiously expensive construction that would appear to be in contrast with the aims of the order.

Perhaps the most perplexing example of this is the imposing and richly decorated new church of Padre Pio, designed by the architect Renzo Piano and inaugurated on 1 July 2004, which can hold a large number of pilgrims. It represents big business, but also, as Luzzato points out, 'big politics' (Luzzato, 2007). It is one of the biggest churches in Italy and the world, second in Italy only to Milan Cathedral. Built next to the sanctuary and convent in which the monks lived, it is shaped like a shell and its layout recalls that of an Archimedean spiral. Enormous arches connect the external perimeter to the fulcrum of the 'shell' where the altar stands (see [Fig. 2.11](#)). Thick steel struts anchored to the arches support the vault, which is covered in pre-oxidized copper of an intense green. Covering 6000 square metres in area, it can accommodate at least 7000 pilgrims. Seventy thousand cubic metres of rock were excavated to build it, while the construction itself required 30,000 cubic metres of concrete, 1320 blocks of Apricena building stone, 60,000 kilograms of steel, 500 square metres of glass and 19,500 square metres of pre-oxidized copper.

Built to a modern style, the church is certainly one of the most interesting architectural projects of the new millennium. It has a distinctive crypt that has aroused deeply contrasting opinions on the part of San Pio's followers: its lining of gold (see [Fig. 2.12](#)), obtained by melting down the ex-voto donations of the faithful, was not appreciated by those who would have preferred a more sober and austere style, typical of the Franciscan world.

The crypt of the new church of San Pio is also decorated, thanks to the decision of the Capuchin friars, with the works of an artist-theologian of international fame, the Slovenian Jesuit Father Marko Ivan Rupnik, and his workshop. Thirty-six niches represent the lives of San Francesco and San Pio, with mosaics, partly made of gold, containing millions of tesserae covering an overall surface area (including the ramp and the lower church) of about 2000 square





**Fig. 2.11.** New Church of San Pio da Pietrelcina. (Photo courtesy of Anna Trono.)



**Fig. 2.12.** Crypt of San Pio da Pietrelcina. (Photo courtesy of Anna Trono.)

metres, the biggest ever work by the Aletti workshop (see [Fig. 2.13](#)). A total of 54 scenes were created, requiring six months of study and 12 months of work.

Certainly there is a clear understanding between different actors of their engagement in religious tourism economies. A certain kind of synergy between



**Fig. 2.13.** Niches represent the lives of San Francesco and San Pio. (Photo courtesy of Anna Trono.)

the Church, the state and private enterprises leads to better experience and better management of religious tourism. The private enterprises provide resources including rituals, festivals and events, and ensure availability of infrastructure, transport facilities and private businesses, including tour operators and the hotel industry. The state also promotes religious and cultural tourism for boosting the local economy in religious places.

The ecclesiastical bodies function as corporate entities and not only manage tourist flows at their sites but also actively promote religious tourism at tourism expos and fairs (Shinde, 2012a). They receive revenues, acquire privileges and enjoy tax breaks that arouse discontent among secular operators in the sector and in civil society. Recognition of the legitimacy, responsibility and legality of the activities and services provided – and of the rights and obligations that derive from this – causes conflicts and problems of an environmental, cultural, ethical and economic nature, which can only be resolved by transparent management of the initiatives and activities linked to religious tourism. Above all it requires policies that not only safeguard the religious and spiritual motivations of the protagonists but are also respectful of the needs of civil society.

Tourism linked to religious sites clearly represents a significant source of income for many institutions and religious organizations, generating incomes that cover the costs of maintenance and restoration of the sites and the religious heritage they host, but it also gives rise to many legitimate criticisms, grievances and misunderstandings.

Visiting sacred places and participating in religious ceremonies frequently become initiatives to attract tourists, in which the related celebrations and elements of folklore (lights, festivals, etc.) become the dominant motives. Essentially, linked to recreation and leisure, they give rise to conflicts with the religious authorities. The religious component of human beings should not conflict with their need for leisure activities, essential for the complete development of



their humanity. Indeed, their participation in feasts of a religious nature should have at least three complementary dimensions: spiritual, social/familial and recreational/cultural. After fulfilling their spiritual needs by participating in religious ceremonies, it should therefore be possible for them to complete their journey of faith with participation in cultural and recreational activities (visits to churches, museums) and learning about local traditions and culture (festivals). The problem is that religious feasts and festivals sometimes provide a pretext for popular celebrations in which sacred and profane accompany each other, in a flexible and understandable situation, which justifies entertainment and pleasure but favours pseudo-cultural speculation that has little to do with the religious motive (e.g. the celebrations for the patron saint; see Fig. 2.14). The result is a form of degeneration typical of mass tourism and strong pressure on the environment (Shinde, 2012b).

Devotional pilgrimages, rites and religious ceremonies constitute an important factor for the development of tourism in the area that hosts them but they need to be monitored and regulated in order to ensure respect for faith and tradition. This means ensuring compatibility and sustainability, as well as consistency in the measures adopted, via horizontal integration of the regional system (environment, landscape, socio-economic systems etc.). This of course includes local actors (institutional and otherwise) involved in the management of cultural heritage (research, protection, conservation, promotion and use). Comparison and analysis of good practices in the planning and management of many religious sites (for example, Santiago de Compostela) reveals the importance of a holistic approach to urban planning and the management of cultural and economic activities in line with local cultural traditions and the reality of the market.

The success of a pilgrimage destination or route undoubtedly requires the spontaneous formation of a strong popular devotion but it also needs the planning of specific measures, with the participation and involvement of all those who are affected. While in the formation of a new route or the establishment of a new pilgrimage destination there is a strong element of chance, the same cannot be said of its development, which requires a strong shared commitment in terms of planning and management.



**Fig. 2.14.** The dance of the knives. Religion, tradition and celebration in honour of St Rocco in Torrepaduli, Municipality of Ruffano, Lecce. (Photo courtesy of Marcella Nuzzo.)

## Summary

Pilgrimage still constitutes a fundamental component of religious journeys, but the physiognomy of the people undertaking these journeys, whose motivations include broader forms of spirituality and other objectives (cultural, etc.), has changed considerably. There has also been a change in the behaviour of the communities and host countries, which now see religious tourism (in continuous growth) as a means of cultural exchange and regional development. Many governments are investing in infrastructure and the creation and/or improvement of accommodation structures, and are implementing full-scale tourism development policies; often, however, in a climate of limited cooperation and/or diffidence on the part of the affected populations.

The pilgrimage industry adapts itself to tourist demand and reflects the higher contemporary consumerism and hedonistic behaviour. The considerable economic interests bound up with religious tourism and the secondary economic activities that it generates give rise to speculative ventures that have little to do with ethical, religious or cultural objectives, or respect for values, traditions and local culture.

Religious travel thus involves sharply differing meanings that often conflict with each other, and solutions can be found only through dialogue and cooperation. Religious tourism strengthens relationships between different cultures while respecting local diversity, it promotes inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-generational dialogue, and it creates sustainable tourism aimed at improving the quality of life of the local population. However, it should be borne in mind that all this is possible only through shared policies and activities.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss and review how the spiritual journey is a good way to fulfil the new needs of society.
2. Explore how ethical it is to treat faith and the desire for spirituality that still drives religious travel in contemporary society as a field of financial investment, even when it serves to boost the development of an area.
3. Investigate how expressions of faith such as pilgrimages and religious events can also be considered as expressions of 'power' of individual actors, whether secular or religious.
4. Review how is it possible to evolve policy into politics, as a search for shared rational solutions for improving behaviours and the quality of life of individuals and the region as a whole.

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# 3

## Sacred Sites and the Tourist: Sustaining Tourism Infrastructures for Religious Tourists and Pilgrims – a UK Perspective

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### Introduction

This chapter explores issues and concepts associated with pilgrimage and with religious tourism. Casting the net wide, it considers sacredness and sense of place in relation to spirituality and the visitor experience. On the one hand, visitors to a locale can mean economic impact and a vibrant local community; on the other hand, these places and their landscapes are contested terrains. Actors and players include both religious and non-religious residents and visitors, and in the UK, with an increasingly secular society, this may generate or exacerbate tensions. However, many visitors who would not claim adherence to a particular religion still experience a deeply spiritual interaction with buildings, places and landscapes of significance. Indeed, for the UK in particular, with a decline in formal Christian faith and a rapidly diversifying cultural and ethnic society, there has been a parallel re-emergence of nature-based spirituality and, in some cases, paganism. Furthermore, those now embracing such beliefs hold strong attachments to religious and sacred places and spaces. Recent contestations over heritage sites such as at Stonehenge in Wiltshire, or at the Stanton Moor Stone Circle in the Peak District, bear witness to the depth of feeling. A tourism visit may be a religious event for one person but sacrilege to another. A location, building or space might be secular heritage or a religious shrine.

Alongside the issues above is the increasing desire, and even imperative, for these resources of built structures, places, sites and locations to help generate active leisure and tourism industries. This varies from a remote rural setting with ancient religious significance, to a modern city with its medieval cathedral.

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Associated with this is a cost in terms of maintenance and upkeep of the feature and its fabric subjected to tourism footfall, and in potentially diminished spirituality. Historically, the commercialization of religious tourism is not a new phenomenon, but in a more secular society its management may be more problematic. Sustaining the infrastructures within a framework of sustainable tourism and of sustainable development remains a major challenge.

The account here takes a diversity of examples from across Europe and elsewhere in the world, and then focuses on the specifics of the UK situation. Indeed, in the context of current austerity measures and the resultant reduced planning controls, and reduced expertise in local government and in governmental agencies, the challenges and potential tensions are perhaps greater than ever before.

## Pilgrimage, Religion and Tourism

Pilgrimage is one of the oldest forms of tourism and remains an integral component of the tourist industry. Indeed, with estimates of between 200 million and 600 million national and international religious and spiritual journeys worldwide, pilgrimage, however defined, is one of the fastest growing sectors of tourism (Rinschede and Bhardwaj, 1990; Timothy and Olsen, 2006; WTO, 2011). Rotherham (2007) gave an overview with case studies of issues of religious tourism and Stausberg (2011) provides an in-depth review of issues of the dynamic interactions between contemporary tourism, religion and pilgrimage.

The three terms, pilgrimage, religion and tourism, can be defined in different ways and from differing viewpoints. Firstly, pilgrimage is a journey made by a pilgrim, who travels from place to place, usually journeying a long distance and to a sacred place as an act of devotion (Onions, 1983). Secondly, Harvey (2000), for example, describes religion as structured, orderly, socially sanctioned ways of reaching out for what people want most. Thirdly, tourism generally relates to the activities of persons travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year, for leisure, business and other purposes, according to Cambridge Policy Consultants and Geoff Broom Consultants (Anon., 1998).

In fact, the definition of tourism does become important in addressing what is within the scope of relevant studies. The main purpose of the trip is not an activity that will be remunerated from the place to which the trip is made. The authors discussed above combine the UK Day Visits Survey definition of a day trip (i.e. an irregular trip of three or more hours' duration undertaken by people travelling to and staying in places outside their usual environment) with overnight stays away from home, to define a tourism trip. The Social and Planning Research team of the former Countryside Commission (Countryside Agency, 1998a, 1998b) described a day visit as a round trip from home or work, for leisure purposes, with return within the same day. Roe *et al.* (1997) define tourism as any form of travel that involves a stay of at least one night, but less than one year, away from home. They note that it is generally domestic or international travel for leisure or recreation, including day trips. Cohen (1992) raises important ideas, in particular noting relationships between the pilgrim and tourist as travellers.

The breadth of these definitions raises issues discussed later around potential stakeholders, actors and conflicts of beliefs. From a spiritual perspective, such an experience may offer a location, place or experience to a believer that relates to someone or something that they venerate, such as a saint. Sociologically it may provide cultural access to sacred art and sculpture, which may attract atheists or those of other religions as well as the devout of a particular faith. Cultural roots may be embedded in places or images regardless of whether or not the contemporary tourist is a believer.

For the pilgrim, this touristic experience may be to a place such as a holy shrine or a journey between two significant places. For Catholics, for example, the journey might be from Mont Saint-Michel to Lourdes or from Lourdes to Rome. It is also helpful to examine briefly the terms visitor attraction and tourist attraction, and Busby (2003) is useful in this respect. While these terms are often used interchangeably, the latter may exclude leisure day visits, and this is unhelpful in addressing the issues raised here. What amounts to a visitor attraction is also important, and the Scottish Tourist Board definition is informative:

A permanently established excursion destination, a primary purpose of which is to allow public access for entertainment, interest or education, rather than being principally a retail outlet or a venue for sporting, theatrical or film performances. It must be open to the public without prior booking, for published periods each year, and should be capable of attracting tourists as well as local residents.

(Scottish Tourist Board, 1991)

Religious tourism and the visiting of sacred sites offer experiences to meet both demands. They can cater for those demanding spiritual retreats or provide a priest to accompany a group of pilgrims. On the other hand, they may facilitate understanding of the significance of a particular religious building, perhaps in relation to a living church of relevance to the participant. Alternatively, they can package the religious experience within a tour or study trip, incorporating the broader topics of history and heritage, food, etc. Tourism can simply provide the experience of a guide for an itinerary of artistic and cultural works from religious and sacred places, the locations serving as museums.

Religious tourism – including pilgrimage – is embedded within a complex of heritage tourism and mass tourism activities. The interrelationships are complex, and interactions with local people and communities are central to the understanding of religious tourism in creating community-based sustainable development. What constitutes heritage for one group is conversely a religious place or artefact for another, and there is potential for serious conflicts of interests and priorities.

Yet, religious tourism and the visiting of religious sites, such as churches in rural England, is important, with synergies to many aspects of heritage leisure and historical tourism in both urban and rural areas and the bringing of economic benefits. Tourism is recognized as important to many economies – an industry with potential to impact significantly on local communities and the environment (Beard *et al.*, 2000; Rotherham *et al.*, 2005) – and religious pilgrimage offers established economic benefits in other parts of the world.



## The Breadth and Importance of Religious Tourism

A typical image of religious pilgrimage is the tourism associated with Lourdes in France, famous for its Roman Catholic shrine where, in 1858, 'Our Lady of Lourdes' is believed to have appeared repeatedly to St Bernadette. This small town (population 16,581 in 1990) in Hautes-Pyrénées, south-west France, lies at the foot of the Pyrenees. Today, millions of people make the pilgrimage there each year, drawn by their faith in miraculous cures attributed to the waters of the shrine.

Similarly, every year, huge numbers of Muslims visit Mecca, with over two million in January 2006 (*The Guardian*, 2006). Woodward (2003) noted the importance of the hajj, for example, to the economy of Saudi Arabia. With 40% spent on renting rooms to pilgrims, this is worth around US\$1.5 billion; a major input to local economies. Yet, as discussed later, there are serious conflicts of interest over this impact, and considerable damage to the resource has resulted. The breadth both of this topic and of associated research is important. Bhardwaj (1998) noted that in studies of Islam and of tourism, research has neglected non-hajj pilgrimage and it is the same scenario for other faiths. Much literature focuses on better-known sites and bigger events, while lesser-known activities are neglected.

Tourism associated with religions, sites and pilgrimage is recognized as ever more important. This is for both religious reasons per se and economic impacts. The small village of Epworth in North Lincolnshire, UK, was the birth-place (1703) of John Wesley, the founder of Methodism. Hundreds of thousands of tourists come from around the world, especially from the Far East and the USA, to visit the site or to take part in celebrations. These visitors are the cornerstone of an emerging tourist economy in an area of severe economic and social decline (Smith, 2004).

In the Western world, we live in an increasingly secular, often non-religious society. Whether this lacks spirituality is a different question. Harvey (2000) and Blain *et al.* (2004) consider these issues in terms of diverse religions and religious experiences. In the UK, for example, the diminished role of the organized Christian church is paralleled by a growth in multiculturalism and moves towards other sources of spiritual enlightenment and fulfilment. In some cases, these include a return to paganism, such as the Druid movement. This re-emerged in the Victorian era, influenced by both the Romantics and the work of antiquarians such as William Stukeley, whose research associated ancient Druids with places like Avebury and Stonehenge. In some cases – such as Stonehenge (Jenkins, 2006) and Stanton Moor in the Peak District National Park, England – there are major conflicts over spiritual 'ownership' of these heritage sites.

From the earlier definition, it is clear that many religious places such as churches and mosques are tourism and leisure visitor attractions. So are iconic sites of former faiths, such as 'Druidic' stone circles or the pyramids of ancient Egypt. The complications, of course, relate to issues such as modern-day Druids viewing ancient stone circles as religious sites while their culture has no direct link to the ancient Druids. Bronze Age peoples built the stone circles that

they now venerate, and the real-time Druids themselves were unconnected to these sites. Questions of sacred to whom and when raise issues of potential conflicts and contestation of space. Clearly, with religious tourism and the visiting of sacred sites there is the potential for problems. Mass tourism and religious observance present an intersection of two contrasting approaches to life, and present realities that are difficult to reconcile. The image of the mass tourist suggests consumption, triviality and leisure; that of the pilgrim is of sobriety, often with asceticism, and an engagement with deep religious process and being, above all, serious. These seem to conflict and for different cohorts of stakeholders they vary in time and in space. A recent article in *The Guardian Review* (Self, 2014) provides a succinct if journalistic view of these issues in relation to the development of the recent visitor centre and touristic experience at Stonehenge in Wiltshire. This brings together quasi-religious but deeply spiritual views of 'ownership' of and access to a sacred site and conflict with archaeological conservation on the one hand, and tourism development on the other. Additionally, attitudes and perceptions of sites and of landscapes affect visitors. Reality, myth, legend and spirituality combine to influence attractiveness of a locale, and in some cases fear of visiting (Rotherham, 2013b). These influences have deeply spiritual and psychological elements.

Jenkins (2006) raises interesting points about the heritage issues and about the cultural 'ownership' of sites such as Stonehenge by neo-ancients and Druids. The numbers of visitors, both religious and secular, can be huge (817,981 in 2004 for Stonehenge). Visitors to Stonehenge may be secular, non-practising Druids; whereas many secular Western tourists visit Mount Fuji, Japan (the latter has over 25 million day visitors per year). Pungetti *et al.* (2012) give a detailed account of the links between sacred sites, culture and biocultural conservation.

The search for spirituality may include extreme sports such as mountaineering, and many visits to beautiful locations, both cultural and natural, have a degree of spirituality, whether conscious, overt or hidden. Tresidder (1999) and Aitchison *et al.* (2000) discuss these, and Woodward (2003) addresses broader roles of visits to sacred sites in the wider context of tourism products.

Inspection of UK visitor data provides insight into the importance of visits to sacred sites (see [Table 3.1](#)). The UK has 61 cathedrals which, excluding worshippers, attract around 19 million visitors per year. Taking data from the year 2000, 19 of the UK's 50 most visited buildings were cathedrals. York Minster receives around 1.6–2.2 million visitors per year, the city having over one million leisure visitors and 2.5 million retail tourists. This is part of a tourism economy in the city worth over £250 million per year, supporting 9000 jobs. Similarly, Lincoln Cathedral has nearly 250,000 tourism visits per year. In 2000, it began charging £4 for entry; income is vital in maintaining the fabric of the buildings and the quality of facilities and experience for visitors. In Lincolnshire, tourists and their spending are major contributions to a regional tourism economy based on three million staying visitors and 18 million leisure day visitors to the county per year, and are worth around £800 million. This raises huge issues, with a religious resource expected to be freely accessible to worshippers, but also being a major heritage and tourism asset, which requires



significant capital and revenue for its maintenance. These iconic buildings have contemporary economic worth unrelated to their religious functions.

Table 3.1 presents some examples of where religious and sacred sites appear in the lists of tourism visits to attractions in Great Britain. Clearly, despite the economic recession, visitor numbers to major sites like Canterbury Cathedral and St Paul's Cathedral, for example, are buoyant and rising year on year. According to Visit England (2013), such locations charge at the higher end of the entrance fee spectrum with an average of £8.25 per visitor in 2013. Some locations such as York Minster were affected by the impacts of major repair and reconstruction works. However, the figures presented disguise the importance of such iconic buildings to tourism in a city, town or village. Far more visitors gaze from the outside than pay to enter and be counted, yet they are even more important. Also often neglected are the visitors to smaller churches, and a selection of examples is given in Table 3.2.

**Table 3.1.** Position of sacred sites in top ten most frequently visited historic properties in the UK. (Data for 1999 and 2000 from ICOMOS-UK (2000); 2010 and 2013 from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA).)

Site	Position in top ten sites in 2000	1999 visits	2000 visits	2010 visits	2013
York Minster	2	1,900,000	1,750,000	512,075 <sup>a</sup>	493,904 (2012)
Canterbury Cathedral	3	1,320,000	1,260,000	1,033,463	2,138,130
Westminster Abbey	4	1,260,000	1,230,000	1,394,427	2,020,637
Chester Cathedral	6	1,000,000	1,000,000	no data	no data
St Paul's Cathedral	7	1,070,000	940,000	1,892,467	2,138,130
Stonehenge	9	840,000	800,000	1,009,973	1,241,296

<sup>a</sup>Site subject to major construction and repairs.

**Table 3.2.** Tourism visitors to some smaller English churches. (Data for 2013 from the Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA), for Churches Conservation Trust sites.)

Site	Visitor numbers in 2013
St Peter's Church, Sandwich, Kent	66,366
St Peter's Church, Sudbury, Suffolk	59,567
St Mary's Church, Shrewsbury, Shropshire	49,690
Holy Trinity Church, North Yorkshire	48,515
St John's Church, Chichester, West Sussex	42,754
St Peter and St Paul Church, Albury, Surrey	41,743
All Saints Church, Kedleston, Derbyshire	41,731
St Mary Magdalene, Croome D'Abitot, Worcestershire	41,322
All Saints, Harewood, West Yorkshire	37,563
St Andrew's Church, Hove, East Sussex	36,669

Additionally, the costs and benefits associated with these buildings and historic sites are not evenly distributed or balanced. There is a challenge to spread benefits more sustainably throughout the community and to sustain the more remote, but often historic, rural churches. Around 12 million people annually visit nearly 17,000 churches and chapels across the UK, though the real importance to tourism is undoubtedly much greater. Miller (2001) is actively promoting the wider church network in the context of places to visit and recreational walks around Lincolnshire. A typical English village church location may reveal settlement and significance extending back beyond Christian cultural use, having drawn visitors from a distance for millennia. Increasingly, these places now attract secular visitors, tourists being the new economic if not spiritual lifeblood of village and community. Furthermore, the Church of England, for example, has other agendas. With falling congregations, particularly in rural areas that may suffer depopulation, visitors to churches present opportunities to draw new people to the faith, or to claw back those that have slipped away. This additional benefit involved in providing a visitor experience was noted in an assessment of church visiting by the English Tourist Board (1984). The pilgrim and the tourist offer financial and congregational opportunities and benefits in exchange for a leisure experience and a spiritual encounter. Research by Keeling (2000) gives some insight into the motivations of visitors to English churches, which included:

1. spiritual motivation;
2. impulse visiting;
3. family connections;
4. connections with famous people or literary connections; and
5. interest in architecture.

However, the problems remain of considerable maintenance costs of, say, a village church which, while bringing tourism-related economic advantage to an area, derives no direct benefit towards its own upkeep. Furthermore, tourism visitors may pose risks, issues of security, and associated costs, when churches house important or valuable relicts, artworks or sculptures. The difficulty is in marrying the potential conflicts and the benefits. The pressure of visitors can damage an important heritage site, and the spirituality, while sometimes enhanced by sheer numbers in the case of mass pilgrimage, can be lost in the crowd. A site or location (such as Stonehenge) can be both a cultural and secular heritage site to one audience, with rules and concerns, and a religious place of spiritual significance for another.

Tourism and pilgrimage create opportunities, but problems too. Extreme conflicts of this sort have occurred with Islamic sites of tourism and of pilgrimage in Iran, Afghanistan and – especially – in Saudi Arabia. Mashhad is Iran's holiest city and its name literally means 'place of burial of a martyr'. Over 12 million pilgrims annually visit the shrine of the eighth Shiite imam and direct descendant of the prophet Muhammad, Imam Reza, who died in AD 817, and these numbers have increased with the conflicts in Iraq (Cochrane, 2004). Current issues of differing Islamic beliefs across the Middle East are now causing huge damage to religious sites of historical and cultural significance. The recently established

London Middle East Institute (LMEI) aims to help the preservation of Middle Eastern and North African cultural heritage, including religious buildings and artefacts. The Taliban's destruction of non-Muslim sites in Afghanistan, including the well-published destruction of ancient Buddhist statues, is an extreme example (Rathje, 2001). Fundamentalist groups are also destroying many Islamic sites in Saudi Arabia (Howden, 2005). These actions not only destroy heritage, but they also remove forever the potential social and economic benefits of both pilgrimage and secular tourism.

However, major conflicts aside, the two types of function of the site or experience, religious and secular, are not always incompatible. The emergence of literature to both promote visits and to guide owners and providers in visitor management reflects the trends in trying to maximize benefits, while recognizing the potential problems. Both the potential and the challenges are considerable. The Arthur Rank Centre has published a guidebook for Church of England parishes to help in the promotion of tourism and to help support the management of visitors to rural churches (Francis and Martineau, 2001). This method of engaging the religious community with the visitor is relatively low-cost and eminently transferable.

## Opportunities and Drivers

For many people and communities, tourism provides huge opportunities for economic development (see Figs 3.1–3.4), but there are major obstacles and potential problems. In an increasingly multicultural, secular and globalized world, there is enormous potential for tourism associated with religious sites



**Fig. 3.1.** Mugs and mementos outside the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy.



**Fig. 3.2.** Queuing outside the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy.



**Fig. 3.3.** Sales outside the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy.





**Fig. 3.4.** Sales outside the Basilica di Santa Maria del Fiore in Florence, Italy.

and heritage. Visits related to religion and sacred heritage can be in the form of either mass tourism in the industry mainstream or low-key, related to sustainable tourism and local sustainability.

The focus may be a long-standing or permanent attraction, or a one-off or sequential event or events. The public display of the Turin Shroud is an example of a major tourism happening (Shackley, 2001). Interestingly, this has

involved careful management of artefact and visitor to allow free access to the religious devotee, while at the same time offering a major paying, touristic event. The proposed Sea of Galilee Theme Park (Urquhart, 2006) is an extreme example of a mass tourism initiative. Low-key examples include attempts in the UK to promote visitors to regional networks of rural churches such as in Essex (Essex Tourism, undated) and in Derbyshire (Tomkins, 2000), and the Hidden Britain Project, discussed later in the case study section. However, while support for local projects through the Heritage Lottery Fund continues in the UK, the 2006 demise of the Countryside Agency, dedicated to provision of necessary guidance and encouragement for rural tourism projects, represents a major setback.

Drivers for mainstream religious tourism and pilgrimage are deep within a faith and outside this discussion. However, for religious heritage tourism and low-key rural tourism, the motivation is often financial and/or social. In rural parts of the UK, for example, the rural economy has suffered badly, and initiatives to promote rural church tourism are often attempts to support the community through economic benefits of tourism spend. Additionally, it may help to re-establish the church at the core of rural communities.

## Problems and Issues

Religious and heritage tourism based on historic sites or artefacts faces difficulties and raises controversial issues. These include competition between faiths for a location and heritage, and conflicts between pilgrimage and secular, commercial tourism. The building, shrine or artefact may have great spiritual value, but a commercial value too. As such, and often in an openly accessible situation, it is vulnerable to theft and vandalism. Furthermore, as with other specialist or low-key tourism assets (Rotherham, 2006), financial benefits associated with, say, church visiting do not pay for the resource and its management. The church may be the attraction, but the money is spent in the local café, pub or gift shop (see [Figs 3.1–3.4](#)), with little reinvestment in presentation or conservation of the site, building or artefact. This situation is not sustainable.

There are aspects of sacred site visiting and management already noted that render some problems particularly important. There can be serious conflicts between a desire to keep facilities freely open to religious visitors, a need to raise money to maintain the fabric and the vulnerability of often remote sites to vandalism, theft and desecration. According to the English Tourist Board survey (English Tourist Board, 1984), more than half the churches assessed had suffered from theft and almost as many from vandalism, with up to 80% of sites affected. There were problems of wear and tear, damage to buildings, noise, disturbance and litter. A more recent study (ICOMOS-UK, 2000) considered the problems of cathedrals and churches, but with a smaller sample (around 100 sites) than the 1984 survey (see [Table 3.3](#)). Other conflicts may arise with visitors to sites such as graveyards and churchyards. For example, in England during the 1980s and 1990s, many historical monuments were either levelled or removed completely for health and safety



**Table 3.3.** Visitor-related problems for cathedrals and churches. (From ICOMOS-UK, 2000.)

Problem	Problem level (%)	
	ICOMOS-UK study (2000)	ETB <sup>a</sup> study (1984)
Insufficient parking for cars and coaches	54	46
Wear and tear on fabric	27	33
Occasional congestion or overcrowding	20	33
Theft	10	–
Vandalism	10	–
Noise	9	–
Disturbance to services	9	–

<sup>a</sup>English Tourist Board.

reasons that were later declared spurious. However, a considerable amount of damage to history, heritage and religious significance was done.

Visiting of Churches in Britain as a Case Study

That rural communities and their economies depend more on tourism spend is increasingly recognized (Countryside Agency, 1998a; Countryside Agency and English Tourism Council, 2001) and is a key consideration of this case study. In the UK, the situation has become particularly acute in recent decades with serious problems for rural communities of economic recession and depopulation. Declines in farming and forestry over the 1990s were paralleled by increases in leisure day visits and tourism to countryside areas. The issues came to a head with chaos over foot-and-mouth disease and the economic impacts of advice given to the public not to visit the countryside. Incomes plummeted and businesses closed (Countryside Agency and English Tourism Council, 2001). In the aftermath of the crisis and in response to other problems of rural areas (the disease BSE, etc.), many organizations considered ways of responding to and supporting these hard-pressed communities. The lead organization in the development of rural sustainability projects was the Countryside Agency, which in 2006 merged with English Nature to become Natural England. In terms of its vital work in the countryside, the agency has never recovered, and the subsequent austerity cuts ensured that many initiatives planned were never delivered.

For churches of various denominations, but perhaps for the Church of England in particular, the rural economy and the rural community of England pose serious problems, considered in research by authors such as Binney and Burman (1977) and the English Tourist Board (1979). However, there are related issues too, affecting mainstream secular and tourism interests. In a socio-economic environment in which it is felt imperative to promote leisure visits to the countryside for both tourists and day visitors, for much of England the parish church is hugely important. It has a significance of place in the rural setting beyond almost anything else other than the landscape itself. Church towers or spires on the highest ground reach out across the rural landscape, and churchyards are sanctuaries of historical depth in the core of the rural settlement.

The cultural relationship of church and community is embedded deep in the fabric of village and town. Old buildings, lanes and even trees, giving character and distinction, are often a part of this attachment. St Helens Church at Darley Dale in Derbyshire has elements from AD 950, a wealth of objects and artefacts from over 1000 years of worship and a 2000-year-old yew tree in its churchyard. The site is visited by Christian pilgrims, by historians interested in artefacts and by people fascinated by the ancient, pre-Christian tree. Custodians of sites such as this have responsibilities and liabilities for maintenance and upkeep of a unique heritage resource. In most cases – and this applies to different situations and faiths around the world – they have little expertise, and often no finance even for necessary recording or conservation.

In the rural areas of England there is a serious problem of falling congregations and perceived lack of relevance of church to society, making related issues of heritage management – often in secluded and remote locations – problematic. The potential costs of maintaining and perhaps staffing a site, building or facility, and of conserving or protecting the heritage resource, are considerable. Many, including the remaining congregation and religious visitors, expect the village church to be open and available, its artefacts, artworks and treasures on view, but free of charge. These pressures and responsibilities combine with obvious vulnerability to vandalism and theft in an increasingly secular society.

The Church has a complex role as provider of spiritual experience and guidance, but also as curator and custodian of a unique heritage for a wider community than its congregation. This is a problem faced by many churches around the world. Where these buildings, locations and artefacts also become the focus of an increasing tourism industry, the problems come sharply into focus. It is surprising that so little has been done to consider the visiting of rural churches in the wider context of tourism.

Relationships between religion, pilgrimage to sites and artefacts and tourism raise important issues of resource and community sustainability. Some have been discussed by Shackley (1998, 2001), who considers the management of heritage sites and specific issues of sacred sites. However, the broader issues of sustainable development and local economies have not been considered in detail. Researchers such as Busby (2003, 2004) have looked at church visitors in a particular region in detail (e.g. Cornwall in England), and considered definitions, issues and difficulties in relation to tourism. He noted issues of the definition of churches as heritage attractions, and this crosses national and cultural boundaries. With over four million visitors to Cornwall each year, he discussed visitor attractions (mostly heritage sites) to place the visiting of parish churches in context (Busby, 2002). This work details visitor age profiles and social status, raising important issues about long-term sustainability and challenges to growth in this sector.

However, while it can be argued that the medieval Church pioneered religious tourism through shrine visiting and festivals, the modern church has often been reluctant to accept the mantle of tourism provider. According to Busby (2003), churches in Cornwall are very much a part of the regional heritage and tourism experience. Data extrapolated from church visitor books indicate numbers from 2000 visitors per year to over 40,000 in some cases visiting

individual, smaller churches in Cornwall. The 1984 survey by the English Tourist Board (English Tourist Board, 1984) suggested that at least 10 million visitors to English parish churches annually spent £2 million or more. Many of the 974 churches surveyed indicated that this income was important – and in some cases vital – for their survival, thus addressing, in part at least, the concerns expressed earlier. The more recent survey by ICOMOS-UK (2000) examined cash flows at churches and cathedrals in more detail (see Table 3.4). This gives some insight into how these locations are ‘buying into’ the tourism economic game. Once again, though, there is a considerable market in memorabilia and sale of religious icons that is not taken into account as it occurs in surrounding businesses such as gift shops.

Increasingly, publications and guides link rural churches together and to their mother cathedral in the urban core. In rural Essex, for example, *A Guide to Essex Churches* (Essex Tourism, undated) brings together key information on a selection of the county’s churches, with notes on location and access, history, facilities and a contact point; there is website support too. Information is distributed through the usual tourism outlets, but particularly via major visitor sites in the urban centre, such as Chelmsford Cathedral. Books that are more ambitious are also available, for example *Derbyshire Churches and Chapels open to Visitors* by Tomkins (2000). This again presents a substantial selection of churches and chapels, in this case from a number of denominations, with comprehensive information on access, facilities and history.

It is clear that these initiatives recognize the importance of smaller – and especially rural – churches in today’s tourism; Hidden Britain is one such initiative.

There are a number of typical approaches in providing information and support to church and cathedral visitors across the UK. The following list from

**Table 3.4.** The varying income streams from a sample of charging cathedrals and churches. (From ICOMOS-UK, 2000.)

Site	Annual visitors 2000	Gross revenue (%)					
		Admissions	Donations	Food and drink	Sales, gifts, etc.	Events and activities	Other
Canterbury Cathedral	1,350,000	53	1	1	40	–	5
Westminster Abbey	1,275,000	61	3	6	27	2	1
St Paul’s Cathedral, London	1,075,000	65	1	2	30	2	–
St Mary the Virgin, Oxford	300,000	60	5	10	25	–	–
Lincoln Cathedral	200,000	50	15	10	15	–	10
Oxford Cathedral	175,000	90	5	–	5	–	–
St Mary’s, Rye	170,000	45	19	–	28	2	6
Glastonbury Abbey	120,000	77	6	–	11	1	5
St Patrick’s Armagh	10,000	10	10	10	30	40	–
Mean for all sites	n/a	57	7	7	23	9	5

Woodward (2003), based on an ICOMOS-UK (2000) report, highlights the levels of use for each approach:

1. Guided tours 47%.
2. Recommended routes 36%.
3. Guide books 31%.
4. Foreign language guidebooks or leaflets 30%.
5. Displays or exhibitions 26%.
6. Volunteers or stewards to welcome visitors 24%.
7. Education programmes 16%.
8. Children's programmes 15%.

What do we know of rural church visiting? The answer is: frustratingly little. There have been some studies, but these are generally not up to date, and leave many questions unanswered. Much research is on urban sites of historic importance, particularly on cathedrals. The English Tourist Board report of 1984 published a detailed assessment of English churches and visitors. This survey assessed important aspects of church visiting, including:

1. access;
2. location and relation to tourist board areas;
3. numbers of visitors recorded in church visitors' books;
4. features of interest to visitors;
5. relationships to other tourist attractions;
6. interpretation, guided tours, events and concerts; and
7. community group uses.

It also examined publicity and marketing, visitor management issues, wear and tear/damage and gross visitor revenues. This was a comprehensive overview, with substantial recommendations.

However, much of the work required updating, so the ICOMOS-UK (2000) study is important but, for rural churches in particular, critical questions remain. The 1984 report relies almost entirely on visitor books for visitor numbers. Yet observations in and around churches suggest that most visitors do not 'sign in', and rural church visiting is much higher than these estimates. Work by Busby and colleagues in Cornwall demonstrated the importance of detailed local and regional studies.

English Tourist Board research in the 1980s suggested the importance of visitors for the survival of small churches in rural areas. Busby (2003) notes the importance of the church to cultural regional heritage and to tourism and the economy. Again, data from visitor books underestimate numbers. Furthermore, visitors to churchyards only, or the importance to visitors of the church in the landscape, are not considered.

## **The Hidden Britain Approach**

Around the UK, there are 'low-key projects' that promote visitors to rural churches. The problem is often how to embed these within a local community

and to develop maximum economic benefit. The *Hidden Britain Project* aims to encourage tourism and to help people discover lesser-known countryside areas. The intention is to provide a different and more meaningful visitor experience. Developed by the Arthur Rank Centre based in Warwickshire, the project works with a range of denominations. It operates with and through local communities, focusing on local business promotion, local employment and local community life. This approach, developed through the church – especially the Church of England in rural areas – seeks engagement with communities to help them face problems of declining rural economies and industries.

The context, as already noted, is that in the UK the past 30 years has witnessed massive declines in the traditional rural economies of farming and forestry. However, in some regions, there has been increased economic importance of tourism and growing recognition of this impact. This major impact of tourism has been seen only in areas with established attractions and infrastructures, with other areas missing out and benefits bypassing many in the rural community.

In order to help address these issues, Hidden Britain has developed low-key tourism projects embedded in local, rural communities across England, engendering many aspirations of sustainable rural development. While not attempting to grow mainstream or mass tourism in these areas, the project has quietly and effectively evolved a niche market. If this brings economic benefit so that local shops, post offices, petrol stations and village pubs remain open, then for these communities the urban drift may have been halted. The project is 'not for profit', with a national membership and supported by a 'How To' handbook, and with advice and support, regional and national marketing and literature, a national website, a support network and quality assurance monitoring. Monitoring of economic impacts is limited to positive feedback from participants. While not focused specifically on churches or religion, it is led and coordinated by religious organizations, seeking to engender projects that maximize benefits for religious buildings and sites and their communities and congregations. This approach potentially re-engages churches with communities, and reawakens local pride in history, culture and heritage.

It is too early to judge long-term effects of projects like this, but the aspirations make it an exciting contributor to rural development through sustainable rural tourism. Furthermore, publications such as *Beating the Bounds* by Terry Miller (2001) on Lincolnshire show church visiting as a part of rural tourism and leisure day visits.

The approach is transferable to other providers and other regions. It is low-key and relatively low-cost. As each project grows within the community, it demonstrates the benefits of sustainable rural tourism. The Hidden Britain local initiative, supported by a national framework and based on particular local interests, character and distinctions, is easy to follow and modest to resource. This initiative, led by rural church communities in England, demonstrates how low-key rural tourism, centred on religious sites and their congregations, fosters sustainable rural development. It highlights faith and facilities stimulating sustainable tourism, with social and economic benefits. However, with the more recent demise of the champion agencies such as the Countryside Agency, the Regional Development Agencies, and the Regional

Tourist Boards, supporting and finding even modest projects becomes problematic and some of these challenges were predicted (e.g. Rotherham, 2010).

## Summary

Tourism offers religious sites more than visitors and financial opportunities: it brings a wide and potentially receptive audience. The English Tourist Board report (1984) quoted the vicar of Little Walsingham, Norfolk, who stated that:

I feel strongly that parish churches have tremendous potential for proclaiming the Christian faith to visitors, who are often impressionable and have time to look and think. I am most anxious to develop this potential here.

Visitors to religious sites may become 'converts' and this is important to many faiths. There is also opportunity to extend understanding and awareness of faith and heritage to a wider audience, and there are also pragmatic issues, with religious tourism and secular visiting of sacred sites generating social and economic development opportunities. While modest in the case of the English parish churches, these are vital. However, managing these visitors to religious sites, while minimizing risks and damage, is a challenge. Case studies in England suggest that local community ownership of process and opportunity is important in the sustainable provision of this visitor and tourism experience. The present and indeed ongoing controversies over locations such as Stonehenge serve to highlight potential problems and challenges.

The basic needs for sustainability of religious tourism are similar to those relating to the wider tourism industry. These issues range from trying to make large-scale mass tourism less socially and environmentally damaging, to developing low-key, sacred visits to support rural communities. Many ideas and lessons are transferable between faiths and across national boundaries. Where religion has struggled to find contemporary relevance, initiatives can help re-establish faith within the community. If this is not effective, then many buildings, artefacts and heritage sites will not be sustained. Additionally, the importance of religious and sacred sites, heritage and locations is becoming a part of a wider context of eco-cultural tourism development (Rotherham, 2013a). Managing the resource and the visitors must seek to recognize this wider relevance. Much of the success of these local and regional initiatives depends on the development of stakeholder networks and so there must be awareness of the power issues, benefits and disbenefits of such approaches (e.g. Rotherham and Capriello, 2008, 2009).

With 'sacred' visitation to historic towns, approaches are often through holistic town planning such as in York and Durham in the UK, with Woodward (2003) suggesting micro-level responses tailored to local circumstances reflecting cultural traditions and market opportunities. Within rural communities, provision of opportunities to embed 'sacred' visitation and religious tourism more fully within sustainable models has emerged through initiatives such as Hidden Britain to establish sustainable development in practice. The initiatives in England help to provide real-time examples of approaches which might be applied more widely.



In the wider landscape, there remain issues of the 'ownership' of a sacred site, as in a built situation we have the tension of one person's place of worship being another's heritage, and furthermore a potential cash cow for other actors and stakeholders. It seems that while some progress has been made in integrating religious sites into wider concepts of tourism development, there remain deep-seated matters of spirituality and sacredness which trigger pilgrimage tourism while at the same time generating contested spaces and places.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how religious tourism might contribute to regional economic growth.
2. Consider and highlight potential conflicts of interest in promoting commercial aspects of religious tourism (i) in a major, European cathedral city and (ii) in a small, rural setting.
3. Review some of the potential conflicts in the development of tourism in a setting where there are a number of historically significant sites but for different religions or sects.
4. Explore ways in which religious tourism might develop synergies with other areas of visitor activity such as heritage tourism, wildlife tourism, food tourism, etc.

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# 4

## The Globalization of Pilgrimage Tourism? Some Thoughts from Ireland

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### Introduction

Whilst in many societies – especially in the developed world – belief in religion has been eroded in the face of growing agnosticism and atheism, religious sites have become an increasingly popular object of the tourist gaze, even if people do not subscribe to the beliefs that such places represent.

(Williams, 1998, p. 166)

There are many reasons why people travel, and these motivations have been researched extensively by geographers, sociologists and others, including the business community. The phenomenon of religious tourism – and, more particularly, pilgrimage tourism – while widely recognized has not received much attention in literature. Perhaps the reason for this neglect is the difficulty of classifying this aspect of the tourism industry in a growingly secular world, where spiritual meaning is often seen as unfashionable and perhaps even seen as a little ‘backward’. Referring to Ireland, this disquiet was captured by Pochin Mould as early as 1955, who commented:

To write of the Irish pilgrimages is to tread on dangerous ground, it is to attempt to keep a true balance between agnosticism and excessive credulity. It is easy to sneer at somebody else’s superstition, and equally easy to fall into a too-sentimental piety.

In order to avoid these pitfalls, it would appear that the easiest solution for those concerned with examining tourism has been to deal briefly with, or totally avoid, the topic of religious tourism. This is not to say that it has been ignored by all authors (a lengthy and highly useful international bibliography of religious

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tourism was assembled by the ATLAS Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Special Interest Group in 2005, unpublished), but the emphasis in most texts has been on either pilgrimage or tourism and, where both have been considered together, the emphasis would appear to be on descriptive case studies of religious tourism and on religion as being a motivator for early tourism. In attempting to tackle this 'weakness', and to build a body of work on religious tourism and pilgrimage, Raj and Griffin have produced a number of publications which they outline in the introduction to their *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, which was launched in 2014 (see <http://www.arrow.dit.ie/ijrtp>).

In its true sense, pilgrimage is defined as journeying to a sacred place or shrine as a devotee (Park, 1994; Pontifical Council, 1998). However, it must be acknowledged that the identification and examination of this journeying in the overall context of conventional tourism is difficult. This chapter presents some patterns and typologies of pilgrimage tourism in an Irish context: domestic pilgrimage appears to be in decline, while Irish inbound and outbound pilgrimage appears to be experiencing major growth.

Research suggests that the once personal and local practice of visiting a well, shrine or holy place has been gradually superseded in importance by a more public desire to seek distant, national or international wells, shrines or holy places (Sopher, 1967; Murray and Graham, 1997). This public display of pilgrimage is even more interesting when set against the perceived move in Ireland away from religious practice, towards a more secular, affluent and materialistic society.

Thus, the overall pattern of pilgrimage travel in Ireland appears to be following international consumption trends of globalization and internationalization, resulting in newly emerging management issues for those both organizing pilgrimages and maintaining Ireland's holy places. However, there are a number of exceptions to this overall pattern, and they serve to further colour the interesting tapestry of Irish pilgrimage tourism.

## Tourism and Globalization

Globalization is a much contested concept that has many meanings, with some critics debating whether the concept even exists. Globalization is generally identified with a global transformation that has been recognized (though debated by some critics) since the mid-20th century (Claval, 2002). Despite evidence of protectionism, global monopolies, financial regulation, military fragmentation and imperialism throughout the 20th and into the 21st century, there appears to be an emergence of universal trends, including a greater international movement of commodities, money, information and people; and also the increasing development of technology, organizations, legal systems and infrastructures to allow this movement (Wikipedia, 2006). The International Forum on Globalization defines globalization as: 'the present worldwide drive toward a globalized economic system dominated by

supranational corporate trade and banking institutions that are not accountable to democratic processes or national governments' (IFG, 2006).

Depending on one's viewpoint, globalization can either be seen as a force that has benefited a relatively small number and made life more difficult for most people around the world, or alternatively it can be seen as a force that has resulted in a more equalized, fair and just world (Reiser, 2003).

As it was traditionally considered an economic entity characterized by small-scale enterprises, tourism was not initially seen as a causal force of globalization. However, since the 1990s, the growing literature on globalization and tourism argues that tourism must be considered in the context of its contribution to and influence over the global economy (Brown, 1998). Some would claim that tourism is a major player in the trend towards globalization, and others would go further by stating that 'The concept of globalization encompasses tourism' (Reiser, 2003, p. 306).

Much of the recent academic discussion is centred on whether tourism is a positive or negative force in a globalized society, and whether tourism can be used as a force to actively combat global inequalities and poverty (Reid, 2003). This discussion of globalization has led to the emergence of organizations such as The Glocal Forum, a non-profit organization dedicated to the pursuit of balance between global and local forces in today's world in a process that they define as 'glocalization' (Glocalforum, 2014). Tourism and globalization are thus connected in a variety of ways, as they both deal with the movement of people, ideas and capital across boundaries. In this chapter we focus on the implications of globalization (and indeed, glocalization) in the context of Irish pilgrimage tourism.

## **Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage**

Something as deeply personal as religious belief is bound to be difficult to define. One can consider the critical views of Freud that religion is 'illusion' or that of Thomas Edison that 'religion is all bunk'. Alternatively, one can accept a less judgemental viewpoint that religion is 'human beings' relation to that which they regard as holy, sacred, spiritual or divine' (Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2006).

The present discussion acknowledges, but is not concerned with, the 'accidental' religious tourist who happens on a sacred site; it is concerned primarily with people at the other end of the pilgrimage continuum, who intentionally travel for reasons related to religion or spirituality in their quest for meaning. This is religious tourism, irrespective of the range of motives, destinations and manifestations of their experience. These religious or spiritual travellers are often ignored as a distinct grouping by traditional tourism research, as the quest for what Edison would have considered 'bunk' is, at its very best, a nebulous concept: 'The religious sense is nothing more than man's original nature, by which he fully expresses himself by asking "ultimate" questions, searching for the final meaning of existence in all of its hidden facets and implications' (Giussani, 1997).



Despite such intangibility, pilgrimage has long been an important aspect of the major world religions. Much of the Old Testament is a journey by the Jewish 'chosen people', beginning with their exodus from Egypt, journeying through the desert and entering the Promised Land. Three times a year the Israelites made pilgrimage to the holy city of Jerusalem. Muhammad, inspired by Jewish (and subsequent Christian) pilgrimage, commanded Muslims: 'accomplish the pilgrimage and the visit for Allah' (Qur'an 2: 196, <http://quran.com>). This has resulted in many millions of Muslims undertaking pilgrimage (which is one of the Five Pillars of Islam) to Mecca and Madinah (Medina) every year.

The followers of Hinduism make pilgrimage to the Ganges, the holy river, which cleanses them from sin, Buddhists make pilgrimages to places Buddha consecrated by his life, Shintoists go into deep forests and meditate in silence and Christians go to the holy places where God revealed Himself or places connected with Jesus Christ and His saints (Rebic, 1999). Reviewing the numbers involved in this travel (as outlined in Table 4.1) illustrates that this is by no means a niche activity, but, perhaps because of the complexity required in calculating the numbers accurately, it is poorly documented.

At its most basic, pilgrimage can be viewed as any travel that involves a religious experience. In view of the fact that such journeys are obviously a combination of a religious experience and travel, it would be easy to characterize all journeys to religious sites as religious tourism (Davies and Davies, 1982). But definitions of religious tourism based simply on a combination of 'religion' and 'tourism' are of little help in understanding the phenomenon of pilgrimage. In their *Annotated Bibliography on Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* (2005, unpublished), the ATLAS Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Special Interest Group suggest that the number of tourists travelling purely for religious reasons is relatively small. They make the distinction that spiritual motivations for engaging in pilgrimage outweigh religious ones. It could be argued, however, that this separation of spiritual and religious presupposes that the individual travelling (or even the researcher) has a clear understanding of these differences.

Rather than become distracted by such theological discourse, in this chapter the key focus is a rather narrow one, considering pilgrimage as: 'a religious phenomenon in which an individual – or group – sets forth on a journey to a particular cult location to seek the intercession of God and the saints of that place in an array of concerns' (Murray and Graham, 1997, p. 514). Thus, the chapter includes visitors to sacred sites who partake in some form of external ritual related to the site visited. Notwithstanding this, the authors are aware of the importance of the internal journey in pilgrimage, which many writers have alluded to, as in the following, traditional view of pilgrimage, presented by Wiederkehr:

Pilgrimages have been an important part of religious history throughout the ages. A pilgrimage is a ritual journey with a hallowed purpose. Every step along the way has meaning. The pilgrim knows that the journey will be difficult and that life-giving challenges will emerge. A pilgrimage is not a

**Table 4.1.** Scale of global pilgrimage. (Data for this table are mainly taken from <http://www.arcworld.org/projects.asp?projectID=500>, supplemented by authors' research.)

Site	Millions of visitors per year
Shrine to Ayyappan at Sabarimala, India	30
Tirumala Venkateswara Temple, Tirupati/Bala-Ji, India	30
Harmandir Sahib/Darbar Sahib in Amritsar, Punjab	30
Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Mexico	20
Ise, Japan	14
Shrine of Imam Hussein in Karbala, Iraq during Arba'een	15
Kumbh Mela	10–70
Nanputuo Temple, Xiamen, China	10
National Shrine of Our Lady of Aparecida, Brazil	10
Feast of the Black Nazarene in Manila, Philippines	8
Western Wall, Jerusalem, Israel	6
Vrindavan, Braj	6
Dwarka, Gujarat	5
Jasna Góra Monastery, Częstochowa, Poland	5
Fátima, Portugal	4–5
Lourdes, France	4
Qadiriyyah shrine in Kano	3
Bishwa Ijtema (World Gathering) of Tablighi Jamaat, Bengal	3
Hajj, Makkah (Mecca), Saudi Arabia	3 (inc 1.8m overseas)
Canterbury Cathedral – St Thomas Becket	3
Iglesia ni Cristo's (INC) Grand Evangelical Mission. Manila	2–3
Wutai Shan	2.1
Basilica of St Thérèse, Lisieux	2
Kadhmayn, Baghdad, Iraq	2
Second largest Tablighi Jamaat – Raiwind, Pakistan	c.1.5
Knock, Co. Mayo, Ireland	1–1.5
World Youth Day	1 (up to 5m in Manila in 1995)

vacation: it is a transformational journey during which significant change takes place. New insights are given. Deeper understanding is attained. New and old places in the heart are visited. Blessings are received. Healing takes place. On return from the pilgrimage, life is seen with different eyes. Nothing will ever be quite the same again.

(Wiederkehr, 2001, p. 11)

Journeys such as this, related to religious sites and festivals, pilgrimage or spirituality, have long been a feature of human travel.

In the context of inner journeys, the literature often questions narrow definitions whereby pilgrimage tourism can be considered only where travel is for truly spiritual motives. The suggestion that travel can only be pilgrimage when it involves pure, internalized spiritual motives would question whether the 14th-century *Canterbury Tales* (see Fig. 4.1) recount a journey of pilgrimage or pleasure. One of the earliest English texts, the *Tales* recounts the story of a group of pilgrims on their way from Southwark to Canterbury to visit the



**Fig. 4.1.** The pilgrims in the *Canterbury Tales*: woodcut from Caxton's 1483 Second Edition. (From British Library, 2006.)

shrine of Saint Thomas à Becket at Canterbury Cathedral. As suggested in the image, and in the text itself, the tales of the pilgrims include reference to more base desires than simple spiritual well-being. Indeed, some of the Tales are of a much more earthy nature. Thus, the *Canterbury Tales* in an interesting manner illustrates a complex matrix of motivations, with interplay between pilgrimage as spiritually motivated and journeying more for pleasure and entertainment. The importance of 'pure' pilgrimage can be clearly seen in sites such as Lourdes, Mecca and Chiang Mai, but it is not only the key religious sites of major world religions that are important for pilgrimage. Sites ranging from major cathedrals and temples right down to local wells, rocks and trees are considered as destinations for pilgrimage.

In addition, the continuum of religious tourism ranges from pilgrims who are motivated to visit a location entirely for religious purposes to the secular tourist who visits a site irrespective of its religious provenance, perhaps for architectural or historical motives (Cohen, 2001). Though outside the remit of this chapter, authors have questioned whether Graceland in Memphis, USA, Ground Zero in New York and burial places of heroes such as Jim Morrison,

W.B. Yeats and, more recently, George Best could be considered as sites of pilgrimage. Thus, pilgrimage sites throughout the world vary, but it may be argued that religious sites in many locations provide a foundation for modern tourism.

[P]erhaps paradoxically, the decline in churchgoing in recent years has been paralleled in many cases by a growing interest in religion and religious travel. The reason for this seems simple: people are searching for meaning in their increasingly uncertain lives. Many people have not been able to find this through traditional forms of worship, so they are now taking to different forms of experience to find it. This includes the rediscovery of pilgrimage or journeys to sacred places.

(ATLAS, 2005, unpublished)

The following sections examine how this search for 'different forms of worship' has been a feature of Irish pilgrimage in recent times, with people travelling overseas to engage in pilgrimage. The work explores whether this change in practice (or perhaps returning to earlier Irish peregrinations) can be considered as an indicative feature of globalization.

## Pilgrimage in Ireland

Kathleen Hughes, in a discussion on 'The Changing Theory and Practice of Irish Pilgrimage', recounts the earliest religious peregrinations of the Irish throughout Britain and Europe from the 5th century AD onwards. The missionary zeal of these individuals is remembered to the present day in the dedication of churches to Columba, Moluag, Kilian and Columbanus. Holy Irish travellers such as 6th-century Fursey and Columbanus 'Though seeking salvation and solitude...founded a series of monasteries which rapidly became centres of learning, hostels for Irish pilgrims and headquarters of evangelistic effort' (Hughes, 1960, p. 144). The recent (2014) application to the European Commission for recognition of a European Cultural Route under the title The Columban Way (<http://www.thecolumbanway.eu/>) by a consortium from Ireland, France and Italy, mirroring the route of this Irish Saint's travels through Europe, is a clear demonstration of linkage between an early pilgrimage and its 21st-century manifestation.

Interestingly, due to their numbers, the Irish at times became unwelcome in Europe. This may be related to the practice of imposing pilgrimage upon a sinner as a form of penance, or the Irish law that allowed a man to escape legal liabilities by setting out on pilgrimage. By the 10th century, however, the focus of Irish pilgrimage had changed and the main emphasis was no longer on the old-style wanderings, but on journeys to famous shrines at home or abroad.

According to Harbison (1991), early documentation of pilgrimage is 'sparse and sporadic', with information being gleaned from tangential references such as records of when and where pilgrims died. One of the earliest accounts of domestic pilgrimage, discussed by Harbison, was a traveller who died at Clonmacnois in the year AD 606. Some of the other early sites mentioned in the records include Glendalough (AD 951), Armagh (AD 976), Croagh

Patrick (AD 1113) and Lough Derg, County Donegal (AD 1147). Thus, the origins of key sites for modern pilgrimage in Ireland, some dealt with in this chapter, can be traced back to the very early days of Irish Christianity.

By the 19th century, Catholic Irish pilgrimage was almost exclusively domestic, with the more extreme Catholic pilgrimage rituals in Ireland being a form of fascination for the aristocratic Protestants who documented them. The following piece by Dixon Hardy expresses his disquiet at the physical hardship endured by the pilgrims on Holy Island in East Clare:

It is lamentable to consider the extent to which idolatry, attended by its inseparable concomitants, still prevails in this benighted country... as regularly as the season of Whitsuntide comes, here you find a concourse of people assembled to perform penance... this is performed on the naked knees through a heap of rugged stones; the females tuck up their clothes, and expose their persons in the most indelicate manner. Men of the most dissolute morals go to witness this part of the exhibition, but none can witness the finale without feelings of the greatest horror being excited; when it comes to this, all must (without assistance) descend on the naked knees, a step nearly a foot in depth. This is a most painful operation. The writhing postures, the intense agonies, and the lacerated knees of the votaries are most distressing to the spectators. After the descent they must go on their bleeding knees through the rough stones in the church to the east end, when in a posture of most profound reverence, they kiss a particular stone.

(Dixon Hardy, 1836)

## Pilgrimage in Modern Ireland

Not quite as arduous as Holy Island, two of the best-known pilgrimage sites in Ireland – Lough Derg (St Patrick's Purgatory) in County Donegal and Croagh Patrick in County Mayo – are both physically demanding, while Knock Marian Shrine, also in County Mayo, is gentler yet no less important. Many other ancient pilgrimage sites exist throughout Ireland, such as the monastic city of Glendalough in County Wicklow, Clonmacnois in County Offaly and the Skelligs in County Kerry (Harbison, 1970; Alton, 2002). However, since these last three sites are possibly more important in modern times as tourist sites than as pure sites of pilgrimage, the emphasis will remain on the more strictly sacred sites.

### Lough Derg

Lough Derg has been a site of pilgrimage at least since the beginning of the second millennium. It is said that Saint Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland, fasted and prayed there for 40 days and slew a serpent that lived in the waters of the lake. The classic Lough Derg pilgrimage takes place between June and mid-August every year and lasts for 3 days. The pilgrims begin fasting at midnight on the first day and travel to the island by boat during that morning. Once there they remove all footwear, undertaking the pilgrimage barefoot.

The religious observances require the pilgrims to undertake a series of 'stations', which are a sequence of prayers and gestures while walking and kneeling.



This is all conducted in silence. During the 3 days, the pilgrims complete nine stations around 'beds' dedicated to various saints – Brigid, Brendan, Catherine, Columba, Patrick, Davog and Molaise. These beds are circular structures, which may have been cells or huts built and used by early monks. A further exercise is to undertake an all-night vigil of prayer, repeating the stations, but one does not make up for lost sleep the next day. An additional penance of this pilgrimage is frugal eating and drinking, with a single meal of black tea or coffee and dry toast permitted each day. When pilgrims depart, they commit to continue fasting until midnight that day.

Despite – or perhaps because of – this severity, the Lough Derg experience is valued by many as being a unique religious experience. The following testimonial by a pilgrim clearly demonstrates the difference between this experience and that of tourism:

When I arrived it was totally different to what I expected. There is a deep sense of holiness and peace there. It was wonderful to walk around day and night, in bare feet, in silence, praying in the company of so many other people of all ages and from all walks of life. The peace and joy remained with me for many days after I arrived home. I was kinder, more patient, and gentler than usual. It was as if there was less of me and more of God in me.

(Lough Derg, 2006a)

Notwithstanding this deep spiritual reward, numbers visiting Lough Derg for the 'traditional' 3-day pilgrimage have dropped throughout the late 1980s and 1990s. This may be linked to the boom of the Irish economy at this time, and a recognizable decrease in general religious observance. To cater for falling numbers, the site has adapted its pilgrimage 'product':

The tradition of the historical three-day pilgrimage has been preserved, but other services have been offered in recent years. The introduction of these new services, one-day retreats, youth retreats and special group retreats allows people the opportunity to experience this sacred place when age or disability might otherwise prevent them from participating in the traditional pilgrimage.

(Lough Derg, 2006b)

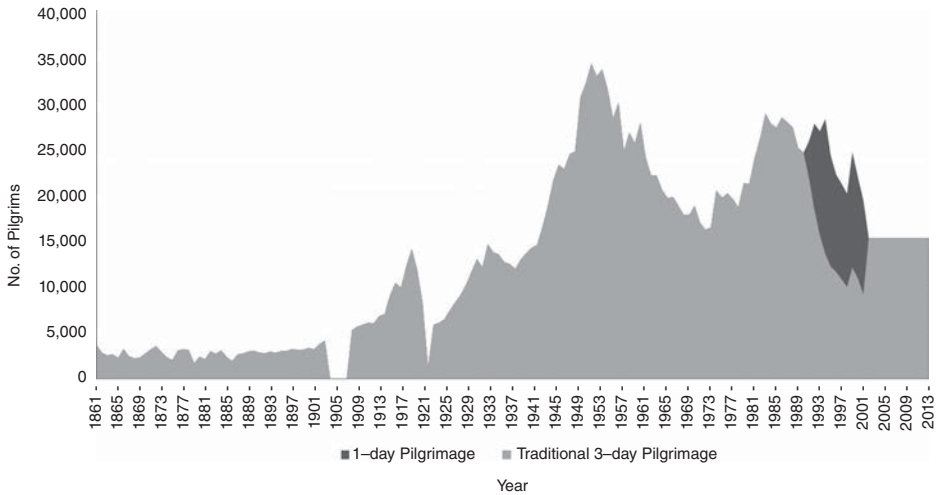
As can be seen in [Fig. 4.2](#), the provision of alternative, perhaps 'softer' rituals appears to have halted the decline of this pilgrimage observed by the *Catholic World News*:

Ireland's Catholics seem to be losing interest in the country's toughest pilgrimage. Over the last ten years the number of pilgrims visiting St. Patrick's Purgatory on an island in Lough Derg, Donegal, has fallen almost by half... Monsignor Richard Mohan, the prior of Lough Derg, said 'people might not be as conscious of pilgrimage and prayer as they were ten years ago'.

(CWN, 1997)

The growth in 1-day pilgrimages appears to have somewhat arrested the decline in numbers at Lough Derg. A further noteworthy development (not indicated in [Fig. 4.2](#)) is a significant increase in the number of school retreats, with





**Fig. 4.2.** Pilgrimage to Lough Derg 1861–2015; numbers in 2003–2014 fluctuated between 13,000 and 18,000. (Data received from the Lough Derg Office.)

two schools participating in the year 2000 and 20 in 2005 (Maureen Boyle, personal communication, 2006).

### Croagh Patrick

Croagh Patrick is a dramatic, conical-shaped mountain that rises out of a relatively flat landscape near Westport, County Mayo, in the west of Ireland (see Fig. 4.3). This has been a site of Christian pilgrimage for at least a millennium, and was most likely an important site in pre-Christian times, possibly even as far back as the Neolithic period (Watt, 1995).

While approximately 100,000 people a year visit the site, the main pilgrimage takes place on the last Sunday of July each year. On that day, 20,000–30,000 pilgrims climb 764 metres to the top of this peak, overlooking Clew Bay, for mass. Those who complete this ascent are satisfied that they have undertaken a task for which they will receive spiritual reward:

It is a mystical place of beauty and peace, where . . . the people of Ireland flock and the descendants of emigrants return to kneel together in submission on the cold rock, asking for peace and giving thanks for their freedom.

(Rose, undated)

To prepare for this pilgrimage, which is also linked with Saint Patrick, Ireland's national apostle, pilgrims often fast and many undertake the climb barefoot as an act of penance. Penitential exercises such as this have been handed down by many generations. One observer noted:

[T]he main pilgrimage day sees thousands of visitors coming from all over the world to climb the three-mile long, tortuous path, with the last 500 yards, Casan



**Fig. 4.3.** Pilgrims on Croagh Patrick, County Mayo. (Photo courtesy of Louise Nugent)

Phadraig, being at an angle of almost 45 degrees ... the ever-present danger for the climbers of being flattened by loose, moving stones being dislodged by climbers higher up! ... It is pure Hell! Take my personal, unbiased word for it! ... Until recent years ... the first climbers began the ascent after midnight but some time ago the Archbishop of Tuam [banned] night-time climbing.

(*Mayo Gazette*, undated)

## Knock

From Fatima to Bethlehem and from Lourdes to Kiltimagh I've never seen a miracle like the airport up in Knock.

(Moore, 1983)

As the presence of an international airport suggests, unlike the previous two sites steeped in long traditions and possibly even pre-dating Christianity, Knock is a modern, well-served pilgrimage site, based on a specific Marian apparition. In 1879 a group of local people saw a vision of the Lamb of God, St Joseph, St John the Baptist and Our Lady at the gable wall of Knock Church. This occurrence has been accepted by the Catholic Church and, as a result, Knock has grown in status to become recognized as an important international Marian shrine.

A new Basilica was constructed in 1975 (see [Fig. 4.4](#)), and a visit by Pope John Paul II in 1979, on the centenary of the apparition, resulted in renewed devotion and Vatican endorsement of the shrine. Mother Teresa of Calcutta



**Fig. 4.4.** Basilica at Knock. (Photo courtesy of author.)

visited in 1993 and now approximately 1.5 million pilgrims visit annually, making it one of the most visited locations in Ireland.

Religious practice is also an important feature of the pilgrimage at Knock, with dedicated prayers and mass an essential part of the tradition. However, unlike Lough Derg or Croagh Patrick, which provide little or no ancillary services, for practical reasons, with such a large number visiting (many of them infirm), the provision of additional facilities is essential. At Knock, pilgrims may avail of the following:

- Rest and care centre for invalid and sick pilgrims with a doctor on call/wheelchairs/refreshments/minibus with wheelchair lift.
- St Joseph's Hostel, which provides accommodation for people with disabilities and employs helpers on a nightly basis.
- Professional counselling service year-round – drop-in basis or appointment.
- Youth Ministry that caters for young people.
- Guided tours during pilgrimage season – twice daily.
- Audio-visual centre with a varied programme of films in the prayer guidance centre.
- Knock Folk Museum, which encourages understanding and appreciation of the Shrine.

In addition to the religious support services, the village of Knock can provide accommodation in three-star hotels, a number of bed and breakfasts and self-catering establishments, or a camping site. It also has a number of restaurants, a golf club, shops that are famous around the country for inexpensive (and

often plastic) souvenirs and, nearby, built ostensibly to serve the shrine and immortalized in the song by Christy Moore quoted, is Ireland West (International) Airport, Knock.

Knock Shrine is open all year and consists of two pilgrimage periods: the main season, which runs from the last Sunday in April until the second Sunday in October, and the remainder of the year. Each Saturday and Sunday during the 'season' is allocated to a particular group, including most Catholic dioceses of the country, religious orders, special Catholic organizations or devotions to particular saints and holy people (Duffy, 1996; Knock Shrine, 2006). This is a very well-organized and managed site, which would appear to provide a modern product for the modern pilgrim and their materialistic demands. This is supported somewhat by the following comment by a visitor:

People have travelled the world to visit Knock to pray for a miracle. Knock is a mustvisit for Catholics vacationing in Ireland... Holy water is a very popular item and across the street from the Shrine is a bazaar-like atmosphere that thrives by selling plastic holy water bottles and other inexpensive souvenirs.

(Magner, 2002)

## Decline of Local Pilgrimage?

With the rising popularity of sites such as Knock and Croagh Patrick and the changed nature of Lough Derg, there is a perception that 'local' sites are being neglected or forgotten in Ireland. To explore this concept, it is worth examining holy wells. These sites have been presented in a plethora of popular and academic literature, but much of the work is descriptive and static, illustrating individual interesting sites, drawing parallels with pre-Christian, Celtic shamanism, or focusing on artistic imagery or hidden Christian meaning, rather than on the use of sites. The following 19th-century quotes from County Clare suggest that local abandonment of wells, whatever the reason, is not a new phenomenon:

[Flannan's memory was formerly celebrated in Killaloe, now his holy well is visited] on any day the pilgrims think proper.

[In Kilfenora, people] have no remembrance of a Patron Saint here but the name, and that only as being borne by his well, which however, is no longer looked upon as a holy well but is used for domestic purposes as well as if it never had received sanctification from the blessed hands and words of the Holy Saint Fachtna, whose name it bears and whose festival was formerly kept there on the 14th of August.

(O'Donovan and Curry, 1997)

It would appear from this that the holy wells of Ireland have been in a state of decline for over a century. However, such a generalization is unfair. Literally thousands of wells are recorded by the Office of Public Works in their *Sites and Monuments Record* of Ireland (Office of Public Works, 2001). County Clare

alone contains 381 holy wells and, while some may be forgotten over time, many wells around the country are still visited by locals and ‘pilgrims’ from further afield. One commentator (Walsh, 2006a), who is somewhat sceptical of the spiritual value of the site, has recorded activities at St Brigit’s holy well in Liscannor, County Clare (Cunnayne, 1974; Fig. 4.5) for a number of years, and illustrates through his website the constantly changing votive offerings left by pilgrims.

The survival of and continued devotion at holy wells such as this may in fact be a direct connection with rituals at sacred sites that have survived since pre-historic times. The ritual of leaving personal items (pictures, items of clothing, prayer cards, crutches, babies’ dolls and even a bank card) is as intriguing as it is colourful.

The continued practice of pilgrimage to wells can be seen throughout the country by examining local newspapers. The following announcement is just one of many ‘local notes’ in the *Limerick Leader* newspaper, in this instance referring to Ballylanders:

Celebrations have now been finalised for this year’s annual Pattern Festival. This year’s programme is packed with entertainment for young and old. The highlights of the festival will commence with the celebration of Holy Mass in the cemetery where Our Lady’s Well is located. The main events will be a Vintage Rally... Fashion Show, fancy dress, street entertainment and a special card game as usual on Wednesday night... Ballylanders Pattern can trace its origins back to more than 300 years and ranks amongst the oldest events in the County.

(*Limerick Leader*, 2003)

The juxtaposition of Holy Mass with a vintage rally, fashion show and card game (suggesting gambling) could be seen by some as sacrilegious, but for many small Irish communities this reflects the acceptance of an annual pilgrimage of this nature as a well-established norm.



**Fig. 4.5.** St Brigit’s Holy Well, Liscannor, County Clare. The circular flowerbed in the picture on the left is a structure similar to the ‘beds’ described in Lough Derg. Pilgrims making ‘rounds’ circumnavigate the bed on their knees, reciting prayers as they do so. The entrance to the well is through the archway to the left. The picture on the right shows the inside of the well with the ‘offerings’ left by pilgrims. (Photos courtesy of Joel Bortoli.)

## The Travelling Community and Holy Wells

In a world where globalization, assimilation and conformity appear to be paramount, the Irish travelling community (indigenous Irish gypsies) represents a unique ethnic group that has resisted absorption into mainstream society. Sometimes confrontational, always proud of their traditions, travellers trace their ancestry to early Ireland, identifying with the wandering heroes of the pre-Christian period (MacLaughlin, 1995). It is interesting, therefore, that this community, which places great emphasis on the oral tradition, is still closely linked to a faith that venerates local pilgrimage sites. The following extract from a study of traveller oral tradition in County Wexford presents an account by children of the annual pilgrimages they make throughout the country:

We go to holy wells in the summer and in the winter. We go to pray for other people and for ourselves. Holy wells are very special. Some wells are very important to other people too. The names of some of the wells we visit are St. Ann's Well in Killanne in Wexford and Our Lady's Well up the Half-way Road outside Bunclody, St. Kevin's Well in Wicklow, St. Patrick's Well in Rathvilly, County Carlow, St. Bridget's Well in Myshall, County Carlow and St. David's Well in Oylegate in County Wexford.

(Bunclody, 2006)

Further evidence for the importance of a faith mixed with superstition and visits to religious sites is evidenced in the words of another traveller, Kathleen McDonagh:

Travellers are very religious. I love a lot of blessed pictures and statues and plenty of holy water in the place. If I miss Mass it takes a lot out of me. Travellers believe a lot in priests and cures. We are very superstitious – marriages and black cats. We believe in ghosts – it gives us an idea that there's life after death. We wouldn't miss the patterns of the graves.

(Pavee Point, 2006)

## Irish Pilgrimage Overseas

Irish people have embraced the concept of international pilgrimage with new-found enthusiasm. Traditionally, the sites that they visited were well-established Catholic sites such as Lourdes, Rome and the Holy Land, but in addition they now flock to sites such as Medjugorje, Fátima and San Giovanni.

Examples of modern Irish pilgrimages include the following:

- 1500 young people travelled to World Youth Day (WYD) 2005 in Cologne, Germany (organized on a diocesan basis). More recently 1500 travelled to WYD 2011 in Madrid; however, only 170 travelled to WYD 2013 in Rio.
- Due to the easy access to Italy, many parishes and organizations travel to Rome, San Giovanni and Assisi for pilgrimage. In 2002, 2000 Irish people travelled to Rome for the canonization of Padre Pio (over 400,000 people present).



- Irish Pilgrimage Trust began in 1972 in Ireland – bringing 500 children to Lourdes, France, annually.
- 2500 people travel on Dublin diocesan pilgrimage to Lourdes annually (including c.180 sick pilgrims, c.550 voluntary helpers, c.200 young people).
- 50,000–70,000 Irish pilgrims travel to Lourdes annually.
- 20,000 Irish pilgrims travel to Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, annually.
- ‘Large numbers’ visited Rome for the funeral of Pope John Paul II. Numbers are difficult to calculate, but 10,000 people visited the Phoenix Park, Dublin, to watch the funeral on large television screens.

The market leader in Irish pilgrimage is Joe Walsh Tours which services about 85% of the Irish pilgrimage market (based on Wood, 2002; updated by David Walsh, personal communication, 2014). The most popular destination is Lourdes in France, with 40,000 pilgrims (25,000 in parish groups and 15,000 on diocesan pilgrimages). Next most popular is Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina with 15,000 pilgrims, then Italy (including Rome) and Fátima in Portugal, both with 10,000 Irish visitors annually. According to Wood (2002) the reasons for the strength in Irish pilgrimage numbers are higher incomes, better-quality accommodation, day flights, more choice of destinations and personalized service for group leaders. It is interesting to note that Joe Walsh Tours are now one of the biggest operators in the UK pilgrimage market, looking after 13 diocesan pilgrimages to Lourdes along with many parish, youth and other groups to Lourdes, Fátima, Medjugorje, the Holy Land, Italy and Poland. For 2014/15, their portfolio includes a wide variety of pilgrimages; in addition to those already listed above are pilgrimages to the Shrines of France; Shrines of Poland; Steps of St. Paul; Shrines of Italy; Santiago de Compostela; Footsteps of St. Teresa of Avila; World Youth Day 2016; and Combined Pilgrimage & Sun Holidays.

## Lourdes

The world-famous Catholic shrine of Lourdes is located in the Pyrenees Mountains in the south-west of France. The story of Lourdes and the appearance of Our Lady to a young shepherdess, Bernadette Soubirous, has been recounted the world over, and made into a film by Hollywood Director Franz Werfel (*The Song of Bernadette*). Today, the town of Lourdes is a thriving place with three basilicas, attracting pilgrims from around the world. As part of the pilgrimage, participants take part in a torchlight procession, follow the Stations of the Cross and also participate in a Ceremony for the Sick.

The number of Irish pilgrims travelling to Lourdes increases every year. In 2004, 50,000 Irish pilgrims travelled, while a 2014 report claims in the region of 70,000 pilgrims from Ireland, with virtually every diocese in the country organizing trips every year. In addition, groups and organizations as diverse as boy scouts, the army, religious orders, individual parishes, prayer groups and youth groups have travelled on pilgrimage to this important site (Joe Walsh Tours, 2006b).

## Medjugorje

From June 1981, the small village of Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina has become a focal point for Marian pilgrimage, with the appearance of Our Lady, Queen of Peace. Since then, large numbers of Irish pilgrims have visited the site. Joe Walsh Tours alone claim that 11,000 Irish pilgrims travelled to Medjugorje in 2003, while Limerick-based Sharon and Martin Clohessy, official Marian Pilgrimage organizers, estimate that as many as 5000 pilgrims from Limerick and Clare have visited the shrine since its foundation to join more than 25 million people from around the world who have visited this small village (Joe Walsh Tours, 2006a; *Limerick Post*, 2006).

## Is Irish Pilgrimage Becoming Globalized or Glocalized?

To talk of pilgrimage in language other than religiously focused, pious reverence may be seen by some as sacrilegious. For example, while religion and tourism may seem to be inextricably linked for some, at a major Irish conference in 2000 dealing with pilgrimage, only three of the 82 papers mentioned the word 'tourism' in their abstracts, the majority dealing instead with pilgrimage in the context of safer themes such as history and theology.

Likewise, the topic of globalization does not appear to be associated very much with pilgrimage, despite the growth in popularity of international pilgrimage. This chapter has examined the perceived downturn in local and national observance in Ireland and, while a certain amount of decline is evident, many sites show evidence of continued religious practice.

In an attempt to synthesize some of the thoughts in this chapter, [Table 4.2](#) suggests connections between globalization and pilgrimage tourism, proposing that while some of the evidence suggests that Irish pilgrimage is becoming more globalized, conversely there is a continuing value in the traditional, national and local pilgrimage. Thus, the adoption of the term 'glocalized' would appear to be more appropriate to Irish pilgrimage.

When one looks at the pilgrimage to Croagh Patrick and sees what Shiel (2005) described as 'lines of gleaming SUVs in car parks at the base [of the mountain]', one could think that the pilgrimage had changed from local practice by an impoverished people to a 'fashion parade' demonstrating people's wealth. However, while the shining cars may be testament to the increasing affluence of the modern pilgrim, the numbers taking part are constant (albeit with fewer undertaking the pilgrimage in bare feet). In the region of 20,000 pilgrims make the climb each year. In the words of the Archbishop of Tuam, Dr Michael Neary: '[Despite] the seeming weakness of faith in an Ireland of growing prosperity [there is] still a vibrant church calling men and women to seek God with the strength and companionship of others' (Shiel, 2005).

**Table 4.2.** Globalized or glocalized – trends in Irish pilgrimage.

Characteristic of globalization <sup>a</sup>	Characteristic of Irish pilgrimage
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• International trade growing faster than the world economy</li> <li>• Increased international flow of capital and foreign direct investment</li> <li>• Greater individual access to international cultural exchange (Hollywood and Bollywood movies), multiculturalism and cultural diversity, but also reduction in diversity through assimilation, hybridization, Westernization, Americanization or Sinicization</li> <li>• Erosion of national sovereignty and borders (World Trade Organization (WTO) and Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC))</li> <li>• Greater international travel and tourism</li> <li>• Greater immigration</li> <li>• Global financial systems</li> <li>• Increased importance of multinational corporations and practices such as outsourcing</li> <li>• Increased role of international organizations (WTO, World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), International Monetary Fund (IMF))</li> <li>• Increased international standards (copyright laws, patents)</li> <li>• Spread of local foods such as pizza and Indian food to other countries (often adapted to local taste)</li> <li>• Global telecommunications and transborder data flow (Internet, communication satellites, telephones)</li> <li>• Formation or development of a set of universal values</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism, and indeed pilgrimage tourism, is an area of major growth in Ireland</li> <li>• International flow of capital does not appear to influence Irish domestic pilgrimage, but international pilgrimage is managed by corporate travel agents, often using international finance for accommodation and service provision</li> <li>• Greater access to information and awareness of international sites of pilgrimage has resulted in many more international pilgrimages, but native Irish practices, while altered, appear to remain strong, thus maintaining and perhaps increasing diversity</li> <li>• National sovereignty appears to remain uninfluenced by pilgrimage; however, the international popularity of Ireland for 'Early Christian' centred pilgrimages may help to bolster Irish identity</li> <li>• Access to cheap travel, particularly flights, is facilitating greater participation in international pilgrimage. Some national and local sites may be in decline, but many remain popular</li> <li>• Growth of immigrant groups in Ireland is increasing the viability of travel provision to parts of Eastern Europe and the Middle East. As yet there is no discernible impact on pilgrimage patterns</li> <li>• The introduction of the euro facilitates easier travel to locations within the eurozone</li> <li>• Ryanair flying from Ireland to airports near shrines is weakening the hold of tour organizers</li> <li>• Recognition of Christian sites such as Knock by the Vatican validates their worth as pilgrimage sites</li> <li>• Improved safety and standards at destinations is encouraging more pilgrims to engage in repeat travel</li> <li>• Awareness and experience of international cuisine is decreasing the perception of 'food' as a deterrent to international travel</li> <li>• Information technology and telecommunications are facilitating international travel at a phenomenal rate, but technology is also used by many sites to market their pilgrimage product</li> <li>• While the Irish appear to be more aware of universal values, they would also appear to be maintaining their own traditional values</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup>Adapted from globalization work of Reiser (2003) and Wikipedia (2006).

## **Inbound Pilgrimage – Or Tourism?**

In undertaking the research on Irish pilgrimage, a number of inbound tours to Ireland were examined, and while these included the use of pilgrimage in a number of ways such as a 'Walking and Art Pilgrimage' and a week-long pilgrimage of 'Native Irish Spirituality and Mythology', comments were also received from organizers of more traditional Christian pilgrimages into Ireland. These following excerpts provide an insight into the strongly religious motives and ideals of those organizing pilgrimages to Ireland:

I tell people not to come with us unless they want Mass every day, three rosaries every day, evening holy hours, processions, and bible studies. I really don't want others to come. This way, we are all of a like mind. As a result... our faith experience is enriched on every level... even the guide and the chaplain expresses this.

The chaplain and the guide must themselves be pilgrims and not tourists. Unfortunately, many pilgrimages are run by unholy individuals, and then the pilgrimage is little different than a tour.

Pilgrimage is very different from touring... [it] is journeying for a spiritual purpose... almost to a person, those who have gone on pilgrimage with me have returned home claiming to have touched a deeper spiritual place in themselves. It has much to do with being in the places that have been sacred for so many centuries and finding the inner ancient and holy place where the divine dwells.

I have had the privilege of working with leaders who facilitate this experience.

However, not all tour organizers were quite so zealous, with one taking a milder approach:

My observation is that pilgrims will do some shopping along the way and have just as much fun as tourists. Remember, the pilgrimage of the Middle Ages was quite commercial and fuelled European commerce and trade in that day. Some say it led the way for the Renaissance and the Reformation.

The pilgrims who go on my fall tour to Ireland usually buy all their Christmas presents for that year while there.

## **Summary**

In Ireland, much pilgrimage is for a mixture of religious and tourism-focused motives, but there is an abundance of evidence for pilgrimages that are undertaken purely for spiritual and religious reasons. There is a growing trend for people engaging in international pilgrimage, both into and out of the country; however, there is also a continued appreciation and observance of many forms of domestic pilgrimage. Thus, while this chapter began with a suggestion that there is a growing trend towards globalization of society, religion and pilgrimage, this would appear to be an over-simplification.

At one level there is a desire to visit internationally important sites, to take part in global events such as the funeral of a pope, the canonization of a holy person or the ritualistic practices one has seen on television, read or heard about. At the other end of the scale, people would also appear to be interested in attending and finding out more about their local sites of pilgrimage. While some sites have been neglected and are long forgotten, throughout the country there are many holy wells, churches, reliquaries, mass rocks and graveyards that are visited for the purpose of pilgrimage. Perhaps this practice is a reaction to the increased pace of life, the growing pressures to conform and the general homogenization of society.

In conclusion, the use of the term globalization in the title of this chapter does apply to the increasing practice of international pilgrimage from Ireland, and somewhat to the arrival of overseas pilgrims into Ireland, but it does not provide a complete picture. Adoption of the term 'glocalization' is proposed to bridge the gap between the increasing importance of 'global' pilgrimage, while at the same time preserving the concept of 'local' pilgrimage. It is suggested here that the current trend in Ireland is taking advantage of both: moving people towards a larger, homogenized world while at the same time focusing on the parochial and local.

Therefore, the present-day patterns of pilgrimage in Ireland reflect empowerment, increased choice and information, which facilitate a more varied pattern of travel (*Economic Times*, 2002). In this context, the future of pilgrimage in Ireland – and throughout the world – is one that is happy to combine both the excitement of the international experience with the stability of ethnic practice; in other words, the future of pilgrimage lies with glocalization.

## Discussion Questions

1. What is the significance of the term glocalization and how does it apply to religious tourism and pilgrimage?
2. Comment on the challenge of understanding both the inner journeys and the external rituals undertaken by pilgrims, and how different authors have emphasized one or other in their defining of pilgrimage.
3. How do the likes of Ireland's Lough Derg or Knock compare to a pilgrimage site you are more familiar with?
4. How does a pilgrimage to Ireland differ from a regular tourism itinerary?

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# 5

## Religious Tourism for Religious Tolerance

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### Introduction

This chapter presents conceptual and theoretical proposals to explain the role of religious tourism in developing religious tolerance. While evaluating the initial effects of the tourism industry, economic, social and environmental effects are most emphasized both by academics and practitioners. However, philosophical and phenomenological aspects like faithfulness, spirituality, peace and moral and ethical beliefs are not very well considered. Different communities meet each other and have inter-communal experiences through the medium of tourism activities. Religious tourism, as a kind of cultural tourism, plays an active role in this interaction. Based on this, inter-religious approaches present a new research area for tourism.

Religious tourism can be the most important movement to promote tolerance and peace. Also, tolerance and peace are essential preconditions for travel and tourism. Tolerance towards other religions or beliefs is one of the main doctrines for all religions. So, religious tourism has dual effects of both tolerance to other religions and completing one's own religious formation. Maybe the roots of most current religious movements arise from this philosophical nature. In this sense, the issue of religious tourism for religious tolerance has to be examined.

### Tourist Motivations

Maybe the main purpose of the tourism movement is to become better acquainted with other places and countries and to get closer to other parts of

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the world. And so, tourism raises levels of human experience, recognition and achievement in many areas of learning, research and artistic activity (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). Gnoth (1997, pp. 283–284) emphasizes that from the holidaymaker's perspective, tourism is psychologically, socially and economically different from other facilities which encapsulate similar behavioural dimensions of departure and returning to home. In tourism research, some theoretical approaches try to explain the motivational factors. Crompton's 1979 pull-push factor model is well accepted for explaining tourist motivations. The model argues that push factors are related to inner sources, while pull factors are mostly related to external factors. Iso-Ahola's (1982) two-dimensional theory for tourist motivation proposes that two motivational forces simultaneously influence an individual's behaviour. The seeking dimension involves the motivational force which drives an individual to seek psychological (intrinsic) rewards through travelling to a contrasting environment. In comparison, the escaping component involves leaving the everyday environment behind and perhaps introducing change to a daily routine. Vogt and Fesenmaier (1998) and Yüksel and Bilim (2009) assert that inner emotional sources have a greater effect on the motivations and behaviour of tourists. Therefore, compared to the past, modern tourists are more inclined to satisfy inner needs like spirituality, serenity and curiosity.

Direct outcomes of behaviour are influenced by individual motives and needs. Goeldner and Ritchie (2003) have summarized these and list particular motives, such as personal control, love, sex, competence, tension reduction, arousal, achievement, acceptance, self-development, respect, curiosity, security, understanding and self-actualization. McIntosh and Goeldner (1990) simplify these motivational factors into four groups of motivator:

- physical (relaxation, suntan, exercise and health, sex);
- cultural (sightseeing, experiencing new cultures, religious, historical);
- inter-personal (visiting friends and relatives, making new friends, needing to satisfy others); and
- status and prestige (fashionability, exclusivity, obtaining a good deal) (cf. Page, 2009).

Dann (2001) citing Krippendorf (1987) observes that the travel industry moves towards countrysides which have natural beauty and interesting old cultures for eliciting a longing for pure air, unspoilt scenery, adventure and getting spiritual gains, against the dirt, noise, hard work, rush and pollution of metropolitan life, and mass media, films, advertising and fashion magazines. When potential visitors associate with the needs, they generate a holiday mood of informality, abandonment, serenity, freedom and pleasure. Then the traveller experiences peace, space, time standing still, relaxation, romanticism, and a return to nature and origins.

Evaluating the different motives of travel and tourism, positive arguments can be made about its nature, philosophy and structure. Most individual motivations for travel are based on satisfying the need for pleasure. This begins before the actual travelling takes place, during the planning and perception period, when attitudes and intentions are formed which are of an enjoyable and

goodwill nature (Dann, 2001; Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). Urry (1989) suggests that the main goal of tourism is to achieve satisfaction, and satisfaction in this instance does not refer to the selection, purchase and use of objects. Here it comes from anticipation and daydreaming, from seeking pleasure and imagining. Additionally, one of the factors distinguishing tourism from other service products is that it means an experience of voluntarily travelling outside of one's natural places. The key concept here is it being voluntary – which develops an inner and natural source of travel motivation (Cooper and Hall, 2008). This seeking of pleasure from voluntary activity induces positive effects on an individual. Psychologically and philosophically, planning a journey, travel intent, dreaming of being there and anticipating all the things on the way are all elements which fulfil gaps in human nature. Thus, tourism can be a tool for adding positive values to individuals. So it can be concluded that while tourism may have many different motivational roots, eventually all of them emerge on a positive basis, related to favourable thoughts regarding humanity.

## Motivations for Religious Travel

As mentioned above, tourism has different motivational sources. Religious factors cover a private and personal area in these motivations. The history of tourism shows that religious travel is one of the oldest types of tourism. Resulting from increasing knowledge about the world, people have moved to different places where they can learn inherent aspects of other cultures and they can find out about reality, spirituality, self-respect and self-actualization (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Blackwell, 2007). In other words, human beings are spiritual and look for intangible spiritual connections with multiple areas, people and contexts (Willson *et al.*, 2013). Sharma (2013) provides an explanation related to religious travellers who wish to travel not just for leisure or pleasure, but who want to find personal meaning and fulfilment. Furthermore, religious travel is a voluntary initiative to seek mental/psychological transformation. These approaches are related to intrinsic and spiritual sources of religious experience. Raj and Morpeth (2007) and Matthew (2013) suggest that traditional religious and pilgrimage motivations may be declining and that due to diffusion in spiritual motivation, religious places are becoming tourist attractions as well as religious sites. It can be pointed out that the number of tourists travelling for purely religious motivation is relatively small, while spiritual motivations are more common in travelling to religious places (Matthew, 2013). Many studies have been conducted on pilgrimage and religious motivations. Few of the studies, however, have examined the deeper meanings behind spiritual, non-religious and other secular motives (Drule *et al.*, 2012; Willson *et al.*, 2013).

Examination of pilgrims' and non-religious travellers' motivations concentrates on push factors, the pull factors being less important, because religious motivations are mostly derived from internal or psychological sources (Drule *et al.*, 2012). Another theoretical approach related to motivation is expectancy theory. This theory asserts that people are motivated by rewards.

Based on the theory, religious travel or pilgrimage would be rewarded by spiritual enhancement, self-actualization, recognition and increased status within the religious community (Blackwell, 2007). Religious travel motivations can also be examined in terms of two-dimensional theory (novelty-seeking and relaxation-seeking). Maybe these two motivations seem appropriate for holiday motivations; significantly, however, both sides also encompass religious travellers' motivations. For non-religious travellers, a sacred site introduces a novel experience like seeing a different culture, religion or ritual and testing other religious outcomes (religious festivals, etc.). For both pilgrims and non-religious travellers, a sacred site provides spiritual serenity, mental relaxation, religious satisfaction, and a mood of informality and freedom resulting in entire relaxation (Dann, 2001; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Blackwell, 2007; Sharma, 2013).

Cultural and social aspects of religious travel motivations with regard to spirituality and non-religious motivations have also been emphasized in the literature. People who feel the need for social and cultural interaction prefer being at religious or sacred sites in order to make new friends or in order to feel part of a group to satisfy their social and cultural needs (Blackwell, 2007). Aktaş and Ekin (2007) try to explain the connection between religion and tourism and say that religions perform their function in formation of moral life, social relationships and value judgements of society and cultural conditions. Tourism also creates a sense of social interaction and provides opportunities to understand natural, social and cultural environments.

From the anthropological view, one of the most important motivations for travel is to observe cultures in another world (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003). Religious travel is one of the most appropriate activities for this. Shuo *et al.* (2009) point out that non-religious tourists have different motives from religious travellers, based on how important they consider desire for adventure, discovery of something different, cultural enrichment and simple curiosity. Unlike cultural tourism, religious tourism can have additional functions. Religious travel is a form of observing or participating in different activities according to one's belief and is about sharing a religious experience with others and the witnessing of faith (Matthew, 2013). Tomasi (2002) suggests that religious tourism, seen as both a devotional and a cultural activity, proves the existence of a common search for a better knowledge of history, culture, nature, religious traditions and different ways of life.

As a learning activity, religious interests and activities, visiting historical religious places and meeting with other cultures and religions are strong motivational factors. Regarding the more theoretical aspects of personal acquisition, religious travel is both to make spiritual gains and also to experience cultural and social components. When it is linked with secular tourism motivations, the goals of religious tourism are of a favourable and peaceful nature. Citing from Butcher (2003), Scheer (2007, p. 164) posits that:

Tourists should gain a deeper personal insight and perception during journeys and contact with another culture . . . If the exchange of the tourist with the host becomes more sensitive or conscious, there will be more interest in culture, traditions and another culture expression.

Theerapappasit (2006) claims that tourism development may be characterized by positive peace based on goodwill between hosts and guests, and therefore links closely to the basic motives of the religious tourist and sacred site where hosts are more prone to develop positive relations. Religious travel is a vehicle for reflection and perception of different world views and values of human life. Religious traditions are important features of attraction for religious destinations and more importantly this can be harnessed and used positively to develop understanding of the differences between cultures and religions (Theerapappasit, 2006).

## Host Perceptions in Religious Places

While the motivational factors of religious tourists are relatively well represented in the literature, host perceptions regarding tourism in religious places have not yet been examined very much. Unlike the generally positive perception of religious tourists, host perception in religious places has different aspects. It can be concluded that hosts welcome 'others' with a tolerant feeling and this is a positive perception; on the other hand, however, due to the negative effects of tourism development, hosts can be intolerant (Besculides *et al.*, 2002; Uriely *et al.*, 2003). Uriely *et al.* (2003) emphasize that promoting tourism in religious or cultural heritage sites is very complicated depending on the perceptions of the local communities, since the feelings of communities on religion and culture are very sensitive and often more critical than attitudes to tangible elements. When the hosts perceive that their religious heritage has been misinterpreted or negatively portrayed by the tourism industry, it is expected that the host community will have negative attitudes towards tourism development. Conversely, positive perceptions by the local industry stakeholders in interpreting the religious heritage can result in positive recognition, and thus attitudes will be more positive.

The desired outcome is a sustainable model that develops the cultural environment, while maintaining the social/religious ambiance and unique sense of place (Theerapappasit, 2006). This is not an easy task for religious sites because of the deep sense of ownership and holistic approaches of host communities towards religion. In this way, positive impacts motivate the hosts to seek preservation of religious places (Terzidou *et al.*, 2008). Besculides *et al.* (2002) emphasize that cultural tourism can provide benefits for host communities who share their culture as well as for those visiting the communities. It can be said that if the host community in religious places is adopted by tourism, the benefits are derived from reciprocity, tolerance and a stronger sense of ethnic identity. Farahani and Musa (2012) point out that some religious communities which seem more resistant to tourism development and less tolerant to tourism activities have followed global economic, social and cultural changes. These changes in the local economy and society due to a large number of tourists may contribute to cultural and religious accommodation and acculturation.

For some religious host communities, religious tourism can be a useful phenomenon for disseminating their message to the world. Thus, even though



tourism generates economic power, the marketing power of tourism to spread religious ideas is another goal of host communities. Perhaps tourism is the most harmless mediator to achieve this. As their religious and cultural heritages are positively portrayed, host communities support tourism development and are willing to tolerate inconveniences and changes (Uriely *et al.*, 2003).

Contrary to this positive viewpoint, the roots of negative perception are clearer. This is a general response to the negative impacts of tourism (environmental, socio-cultural and economic). For religious places, differentiating the impacts in general and socio-cultural effects in particular is more important than for a secular resort destination. Conservatism, fear of negative influences on local traditions, religious habits and lifestyle, and cultural degeneration of upcoming generations are all issues that can be linked to negative perceptions by host communities (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Poria *et al.*, 2003; Theerapappasit, 2006; Farahani and Musa, 2012). Besculides *et al.* (2002) point out cultural disbenefits like over-development, over-commercialization, assimilation, conflict, xenophobia and artificial reconstruction as issues that lead to resistance to tourism development and intolerance to tourists. Environmental effects of tourism also have to be examined in terms of religious places because the discussion is not limited to cultural aspects. Mass movement of tourists can damage the tangible 'assets' of a host community as both ecological and architectural fabric (temples, sacred buildings, etc.) can be quite fragile, leading to deterioration of the intangible environment which is created by a spiritual atmosphere (Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003; Terzidou *et al.*, 2008).

## Relationships between Religious Tolerance, Travel and Tourism

Throughout history humans have believed in a transcendent being and have been in relationship with that being. Religious belief plays an important role in forming the concept of sacred place which is the centre of getting closer to the transcendent being or a religious leader. Therefore, religiously motivated travel has been widespread for centuries (Olsen and Timothy, 2006). In many religions, holy scripts determine the quality, frequency, destination and significance of these travels. For instance, a verse in the Jewish Torah says: 'Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord, Hashem, the God of Israel' (Torah, Shmos, 34: 23). Likewise Allah declares in the Qur'an that:

[Such believers are] the repentant, the worshippers, the praisers [of Allah], the travellers [for His cause], those who bow and prostrate [in prayer], those who enjoin what is right and forbid what is wrong, and those who observe the limits [set by] Allah. And give good tidings to the believers.

(Qur'an, Tawbah, 9: 112)

A Hadith of Prophet Muhammad is also a good example to underline the role of faith in tourism. It says: 'Do not set out on a journey (to worship Allah) except for three Mosques i.e. Al-Masjid-Al-Haram, the Mosque of Allah's Apostle, and the Mosque of Al-Aqsa' (Bukhari, chapter of Anbiya, Hadith number 8; Muslim, chapter of Masajid, Hadith number 2).

Interestingly, religion does not motivate only religious tourism but also other kinds of travelling. A verse in Qur'an makes this point clear: 'It is Allah who made the earth manageable for you, so travel its regions, and eat of His provisions. To Him is the Resurgence' (Qur'an, Mulk, 69: 15).

A nuance exists in religiously motivated travelling and pilgrimage, a specific form of the previous. The verses about travelling are advisory while other verses about pilgrimage are instead imperative. An example of an advisory verse states: 'Say, "Roam the earth, and observe how He originated the creation." Then God will bring about the next existence. God has power over all things' (Qur'an, Ankabut, chapter 29, verse 20). Meanwhile, an example of an imperative verse is as follows: 'And announce the pilgrimage to humanity. They will come to you on foot, and on every transport. They will come from every distant point' (Qur'an, Hajj, 22, verse 27). These verses indicate that religion is an important motivator of travel/tourism in general. So the relationship between religion and tourism goes beyond religious tourism, which means to visit sacred places.

Whatever its direction and motivation, the main function of tourism is to provide interaction between people and societies (Apostolopoulos *et al.*, 2013). Meeting another person or society leads to developing a certain attitude towards him/her or that society. Positive attitudes lead to tolerance while negative attitudes lead to intolerance. Therefore, the factors that form attitudes are of importance (see Kağıtçıbaşı, 2008) and religious belief is one of the most influential ones. It is worth noting here that religion presents a holistic way of life which spreads to all moments of a believer's life. Hence it is religion itself which shapes the believer's traits and attitudes to others as it does in his/her travel preferences. This can extend to people's view of how individuals and groups are created differently, as explained in the Qur'an:

O people! We created you from a male and a female, and made you races and tribes, that you may know one another. The best among you in the sight of God is the most righteous. God is All-Knowing, Well-Experienced.

(Qur'an, Hujurat, chapter 49, verse 13)

Tolerance or intolerance is a step that follows knowing each other. The world religions attribute importance to human relations and praise tolerance. In Judaism, tolerance belongs to God/Yahweh himself (Güner, 1995, cited in Hemşinli, 2007). In Christianity it is forbidden to violate others:

Jesus said to them, 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules like the one who serves.'

(Bible, Luke, chapter 22, verses 25–26)

Islam attaches great importance to being tolerant in many verses and Hadiths. One verse in the Qur'an declares that:

As for those who have not fought against you for your religion, nor expelled you from your homes, Allah does not prohibit you from dealing with them kindly and justly. Allah loves those who are just.

(Qur'an, Mumtahina, chapter 60, verse 8)

Research indicates that the approach of religious scriptures to tolerance affects the followers' actual and daily lives. In his research, Kayıklık (2001) has found a significant negative relationship between religious orientation and intolerance. In other words, there is a significant correlation between religious orientation and tolerance. Although the various holy scriptures praise tolerance towards others and research supports this idea, the practices of humankind may differ. In other words, religious tolerance and religious intolerance coexist in the world. However, the roots of religious intolerance ought to be examined in the context of communities because religious intolerance stems from conflict, prejudice and hostility between them (Gürses, 2005). One of the main reasons for religious intolerance is lack of empathy and being too introverted. Depending on the interaction between people and societies, tolerance is involved, with tourism often providing the opportunity for this interaction (see Bilim and Özer, 2014). Therefore, religious tourism and religious tolerance are correlated as well.

## Effects of Religious Tourism on Religious Tolerance

When one evaluates the motivational factors of tourism, the main point may be that the entire philosophy or nature of tourism movement is explicitly related to favourable and positive considerations. As previously mentioned, when evaluating religious travel in terms of tolerance one sees the emergence of religious tolerance, and the fundamental motives are linked to similarly positive dispositions. Tourism brings together individuals with other lifestyles and other religions because tourism also encourages the best conditions for freedom of movement and respect of human rights, in particular for religious tourism. So, tourism should be recognized as an instrument for dialogue and tolerance between cultures and religions. Religious tourism can be a catalyst for peace and long-lasting friendship, and religious understanding between hosts and visitors. The dialogue between cultures, religions and broader civilizations offers an opportunity for tourism (UNWTO, 2007; Chand, 2010; Apostolopoulos *et al.*, 2013; Sharma, 2013). The Amman Declaration, as a report from the Global Summit on Tourism and Peace organized by the International Institute for Peace through Tourism (IIPT), was published in 2003 and pointed out the important roles of tourism for peace and tolerance, such as:

1. Human differences should be respected and cultural diversity should be celebrated as a precious human asset, and peaceful relationships between all people should be promoted and nurtured through sustainable tourism.
2. The global power of the tourism industry should be utilized in promoting dialogue on peace and in bridging the have and have-not societies of the various regions of the world.

Furthermore, the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism adopted by the World Tourism Organization includes some important statements which refer to tourism and tolerance relations:

1. The understanding and promotion of the ethical values common to humanity, with an attitude of tolerance and respect for the diversity of religious,

philosophical and moral beliefs, are both the foundation and the consequence of responsible tourism.

**2.** When practised with a sufficiently open mind, it is an irreplaceable factor of self-education, mutual tolerance, and for learning about the legitimate differences between peoples and cultures and their diversity.

Initial forms of religious travel just focused on pilgrimage or worship, but religious travel motivations have transformed with the effects of contemporary developments like globalization, communication, travel conditions, work life, and pressure of environmental and social changes. It is not sufficient to simply examine this as a form of escaping one's physical and daily life conditions. The spiritual roots of such travel are becoming more important for urban people. Particularly, technological changes have provided much easier access for people to contact and share spiritual values with others. Willson *et al.* (2013) imply that the expression of spirituality also means seeking a harmonious relationship with an 'other' or God/a Higher Power. Here the important point is meeting with other cultures and religions. Meeting with other religions can provide a historical, cultural and social experience, then an inner spiritual satisfaction at the end. The way for changing our perceptions about our own or other worlds and religious places is through travel, which is a clear agent for witnessing society, culture and religion directly. In this way tourism leads to religious transaction among people and places (Kayadibi *et al.*, 2013).

The role of tourism all over the world is to bring people together. In addition, the mission of religions is not only to deal with religious issues but also to disseminate peaceful messages all over the world and to develop tolerance for others as well. Both tourism and religion can be regarded as promoters of international order, peaceful conflict resolution and tolerance building (Poria *et al.*, 2003; Theerapappasit, 2006). Higgins-Desbiolles (2006) argues that many researchers emphasize the potential contribution of tourism to global peace and understanding and many of them agree that tourism can provide knowledge of other places, empathy with other people and tolerance. But, few experimental studies have been conducted to examine the effects of religious tourism on tolerance. Kayadibi *et al.* (2013) have suggested a case study on the contribution of religious tourism attractions to social tolerance from Malaysia. They claim that religious tolerance goes hand in hand with experience of place – tolerance then contributes to people's social life by developing more tolerant relations. According to their findings, people are used to visiting religious places to see the cultural beauty of others. For instance, many non-Muslims are interested in visiting mosques rather than their own temples or churches, which suggests that people tolerate other religions in their activities. Thirty-two per cent of the respondents were affected in a positive way when they visited other religious places. Significantly, most of the people who visit religious places already tolerate other religions and they are willing to feel even more tolerant as a result of their visits (67% of respondents felt more positive emotions than before when they visited the other religious places). The research of Weinmann (1983) and Carlson (1991) (cf. Wearing, 2001) demonstrate that visitors who are exposed to a

new culture (including religion) experience personal development related to greater tolerance, a more compassionate understanding of other people and their individual differences, a more global perspective and insight into new values, beliefs and ways of life.

Pizam and Mansfeld’s (1996, p. 2) statement presents a remarkable point:

Tourism can only thrive under peaceful conditions.

### Mawlawi Sema Ceremony and Tolerance

It is suggested that tourism supports the development of peace and tolerance which is an essential pre-condition for travel and tourism. A well-known religious destination in Turkey can illustrate this philosophy. The tomb of Mawlana Jelaleddin Rumi, who is a well-known Sufi, spiritual leader and Muslim philosopher who lived in the 13th century, is one of the most popular places situated at the junction of religious tourism and religious tolerance (see Aslan, 2014). The Mawlawi Sema Ceremony, which is a spiritual ritual based on Rumi’s thoughts, is performed for a week each December in Konya. People go to Konya to visit Mawlana Jelaleddin Rumi’s tomb and to participate in such ceremonies. What makes these ceremonies important for our discussion is that tolerance is a key point in Rumi’s thoughts, and the Sema Ceremony symbolizes the journey of humans to Allah and the purification of the human soul, including being tolerant to all creatures. Many people know that tolerance is a significant concept in Rumi’s teachings even if they are not well informed about Rumi and the Sema Ceremony.

According to Özensel’s (2001) research almost half of the sample interviewed (46.7%), when questioned about what they know about Rumi, identified tolerance as his main attribute. The most popular of Rumi’s statements, ‘come, come again whoever you are’, is at the core of his tolerance and this statement alone is enough to motivate people to visit Rumi’s tomb, which is a form of religious tourism. In other research, Düzgüner (2007) discussed the psychological effects of the Mawlawi Sema Ceremony on people. A great majority of her sample (82.8%) agreed with the statement, ‘at the end of Sema Ceremony, I made the inference that I should treat people with more tolerance’ (see [Table 5.1](#)).

**Table 5.1.** Ideas about tolerance at the end of the Mawlawi Sema Ritual.

Nationality of the participant	At the end of the Mawlawi Sema Ceremony I made the inference that I should treat people with more tolerance			Total
	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	
Turkish	279 (82.8%)	27 (8.0%)	31 (9.2%)	337
Foreigner	22 (73.3%)	3 (10.0%)	5 (16.7%)	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>301 (82.0%)</b>	<b>30 (8.2%)</b>	<b>36 (9.8%)</b>	<b>367</b>

Here some questions arise from the reaction of host communities. It is suggested that tourism and religion create a favourable environment for both hosts and visitors. But this can not be applied to all cases, and some instances show negative results of tourist flows on religious places. Because of ethnic and religious conflict, religion is seen as an impediment for international peace (Amstutz, 1998). A discussion of this nature must also consider political stability and security issues. Tourism is vulnerable to national and international threats such as religious conflict and terrorist attacks (Hitchcock and Putra, 2010). In their interpretation Jafari and Scott (2014, p. 9) have highlighted the Muslim world and its relationship to tourism. They say that there is a small but significant literature on the effects of negative cases on travel both to and from Islamic countries. They additionally argue that the underlying causes of these cases are socio-cultural and political rather than religious.

Another area linked to tourist and local relations is religious differences of hosts and guests, which may influence the touristic service. In some countries tourism is discouraged due to certain religious beliefs, because it is thought that the impact of tourism on local communities is largely negative. Tourism is seen as a threat by locals and it has perceived influence on local traditions including religious habits and spiritual atmosphere (Poria *et al.*, 2003; Olsen, 2006).

It is argued that the common negative effects of tourism are also valid for religious places and hosts may not desire tourism development because of this mass movement. However, more of the responses to tourism and its effects are positive, peaceful and tolerant than are negative. Sharma (2013) asserts that tourism can play a role in reducing phobias and prejudices that arise from religious differences and that discourage spiritual seekers or non-religious tourists, and it can enhance their understanding. It can be concluded that religious tourism is evidently an essential tool for developing religious tolerance. The fundamentals of tourism and religions have the required elements for achieving this.

## Summary

In terms of the motivational sources of tourism, nowadays people are seeking more intangible attractions. The main goal is to acquire favourable experiences from the attractions. Aside from classical tourism attractions, motivations of religious travellers are more spiritual. Some studies indicate that modern travellers are ready to pay for the satisfaction of spiritual goals. Their spirituality not only includes religious beliefs and pilgrimage, but also motives of cultural and religious curiosity about differences and experiences from the intangible world. The attraction of religious places is based on these differences. A Muslim traveller can visit a church; a Christian traveller can visit a mosque. Is the visiting just a cultural learning or a taste of the others' feelings? Which is the stronger and deeper motivation?

We allege that, as a phenomenon that shapes all dimensions of a believer's life, religion is correlated to tourism and as a moral system it is correlated to tolerance. Because they depend on human/society interaction, tourism and tolerance are intercorrelated as well. Researchers support this conclusion and



the findings suggest that religious tolerance is both a motivator and an outcome of religious tourism.

In this chapter, it is emphasized that tourism motivations commonly have a favourable nature and that viewpoints are formed by human goodwill. Although some negative examples have been considered, host and guest relations are mainly developed in this positive atmosphere. The concept of tolerance is a product of this atmosphere. Maybe in the near future, some religious places could be used for political issues to build bridges between different communities. At this time promoting religious tourism may be the most important policy for achieving tolerance.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss how tourism can be a useful tool for cultural and political conflict resolution.
2. How can we solve the problems of residents' negative religious perceptions about tourism development?
3. It can be said that 'religious tourism encourages religious tolerance'. Is this a discussion about the role of tourism or is it a political, religious and administrative matter as well?
4. What is religious tourism's real role? Learning about differences, understanding others, curiosity, finding a spiritual atmosphere, or all of these?

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# 6

## Pilgrimage, Diversity and Terrorism

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### Introduction

Over recent years we have seen an increase in politically motivated attacks on individuals from differing faiths while they are engaging in the act of pilgrimage. This chapter will review the many manifestations of terrorism in general, with particular reference to the atrocities carried out against the holy visitor and a review of the motivations and terror philosophy of the perpetrators behind the attacks. Issues associated with security, freedom of travel, diversity and contested religious heritage will all be discussed in an attempt to identify possible solutions to ensure safe passage for the world's religious travellers.

The act of pilgrimage is found in all the great religions of the world and is associated with travel for religious reasons to a distant sacred goal. Outwardly, it involves travelling to new, different and sometimes dangerous places. Inwardly, pilgrims may take the journey to develop themselves spiritually, to seek forgiveness for past sins, or to pursue benefit through the medium of God or a saint in the hope of a cure for an illness or a resolution of a difficulty (Barber, 1991).

While we are somewhat familiar with travel for recreation and leisure purposes, the act of pilgrimage and its motivations are complex and multilayered. According to anthropologists, what we refer to today as pilgrimage was in fact originally an ancient tribal initiation, where the individual was separated from the tribe and was required to live under a new set of rules, and then finally brought back into society with this new status. Pilgrimage has some of these aspects but is more concerned with the individual rather than society.

From a chronological perspective, travelling for pilgrimage was common in ancient Egypt, Persia, India, China and Japan. The Greeks and Romans often consulted their gods at local oracles as an act of pilgrimage. In ancient Israel,

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pilgrimage was carried out to Shilo, Dan, Bethel and later to Jerusalem. While pilgrimage normally tends to be associated with theology, it is argued that the act of pilgrimage can itself be any act of travel associated with a divine interest in a particular subject matter; so, for example, visiting football or music venues can take on quasi-mystical pilgrimage-like tendencies.

According to Swatos and Tomasi (2002) there has been considerable debate on the definition of pilgrimage, with the term no longer confined to traditional belief systems. It may have New Age associations with more personalized forms of spirituality pursued, and these types of journeys could have several purposes – religion may not be the sole element. The discussion about tourists as pilgrims is multifaceted and it can be argued that every tourist is a pilgrim of some kind. However, a distinction can be made between pilgrims of formal religions, who commonly conform to predesigned patterns of behaviour, and conventional travellers, and although some general needs may be common it can be argued that rigid dichotomies between pilgrims and tourists no longer seem reasonable in the fluctuating world of postmodern travel. Having said that, for the purpose of this chapter we will discuss pilgrimage from the theological perspective as opposed to from the commercial/secular perspective.

## Diversity in the Travel Industry

The travel sector is by nature a diverse and resource-intensive industry, drawing its theoretical development from a number of academic origins (Dale and Robinson, 2001) and impacting upon many differing sectors of global commerce (Jafari and Ritchie, 1981). At local levels the travel industry creates employment and facilitates foreign exchange; it is often seen as a mechanism to create long-term fiscal stability, redistribution of income and improved infrastructure provision. At macro level the sector brings economic, cultural and political stability to countries where traditional industries such as manufacturing might be limited or virtually non-existent. In common with other components of the service sector, the travel industry is labour intensive, creating opportunities for the development of a highly employed and economically active community. In Westernized economies, the travel sector has contributed positively towards economic development (Jansen-Verbeke, 1998) and impacts positively on other industry sectors which supply it with services and raw materials (Dale and Robinson, 1999, 2003).

In fact, the travel and tourism sector has developed into an industry with an annual economic impact (direct, indirect and induced) of around US\$6.5 trillion worldwide. In 2012, the number of international tourist arrivals exceeded the one billion mark for the first time, an increase of almost 50% compared to 10 years earlier. In 2013, there were 110.1 million international tourist arrivals in North America and 51.6 million in the Middle East. Among these tourists, international travellers from China, Germany and the United States are some of the biggest spenders worldwide (Statista, 2014).

Linked with the tourism industry, the hospitality sector has also seen an increase in income generation. As an indication, United States travellers

contribute one third of the world's hotel industry revenue, which is approximately US\$400–500 billion. Large multinational hotel chains such as the Inter-Continental Hotels Group, Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Accor, Starwood Hotels & Resorts, and the Wyndham Hotel Group have seen expansion in recent years of providing food and lodging for pilgrims in the confines of five-star luxury surroundings (Statista, 2014). Indeed Mecca, the most holy city in the Muslim world, is presently experiencing a growth in the luxury high-end market of religious travellers, who fly in on luxury jets and stay in opulent hotels overlooking the holy shrine of Kabbah. This is illustrated by the following case.

### **Case Study: More and More New Luxury Hotels in Mecca**

According to Karantzavelou (2013), there is one prime hotel market where hoteliers should be interested in delighting Muslims: Mecca (or Makkah), Saudi Arabia. All large hotel chains are now present in the holy city or are currently investing there, with 12 new top hotels (a total of more than 6000 rooms) under development. This has been revealed in a report issued by TOPHOTELPROJECTS (2013), the worldwide provider of global B2B hotel data. Marriott and Hyatt are each investing in three large properties (Karantzavelou, 2013).

Mecca is by far the largest hotel market in Saudi Arabia, with more than 61,000 existing hotel rooms compared to approximately 10,000 in Riyadh and just 7800 in Madinah (Medina). Over the last 10 years the number of top hotels in Mecca has increased by 172%, and an increase of 13,000 hotel rooms (+18%) is expected in the next few years (Karantzavelou, 2013).

Every year approximately 22 million pilgrims and other visitors travel to Mecca (statistics from 2010) and generate a tourism revenue of around \$US8 billion (Karantzavelou, 2013). On average guests stay 5.1 nights. The over-night stay market increases by 10% each year, the daily hotel rate increases by 11.8% and the RevPAR (revenue per available room) by 23.8% (Karantzavelou, 2013).

Marriot International will add three new top hotels to increase its hotel portfolio in Mecca to 11 properties in total. This is expected to include the Makkah Marriott Hotel (540 rooms), a JW Marriott (636 rooms) and a Courtyard by Marriott (432 rooms) (Karantzavelou, 2013). Like Marriott, Hyatt Hotels have also been preparing for the opening of a number of new hotels during 2015. The latest and currently most attractive hospitality hot spot in Mecca is the 1795-room Anjum Hotel, opened in mid-2014. This luxury hotel is just one part of the 'Jabal Al Ka'aba' project run by Abdul Latif Jameel Real Estate Investment Company (Aljreic), one of the leading Saudi Real Estate development companies. In total Aljreic will open several new hotels comprising 8500 rooms in Saudi Arabia during the next 5 years, investing round about US\$2.6 billion (Karantzavelou, 2013).

Similarly, working on the idea of infusing spirituality with luxury and leisure, the Punjab tourism board in India has introduced a 9-day trip package called



'A Spiritual Journey'. The journey, on board a luxury train called the 'Deccan Odyssey', covers the five most religious pilgrim sites for Sikhs named the *Panj Takhts* (The Five Takhts), including: Sri Akal Takht Sahib in Amritsar; Takht Sri Damdama Sahib in Bhatinda; Takht Sri Keshgarh Sahib in Anandpur; Takht Sri Hazur Sahib; and Takht Sri Patna Sahib. The package is not only targeted to the Sikhs in India but also to the Sikhs residing in the United States, United Kingdom and Canada. Beside visiting these holy sites, the train also makes stops at some of the popular tourist sites like the Taj Mahal, the Wagah Border, Qutub Minar and Jaipur, the Pink City (Thakur, 2011).

## Travel and Terrorism

The act of travel has for many years been associated with terrorism; by definition the traveller is often perceived as being highly vulnerable when engaging in travel away from the safety and confines of the home environment. Being away from the home environment presents the traveller with a whole host of uncertainties in the form of language barriers, currency conversions, geographical fears, and infrastructure/superstructure incompatibilities. Such uncertainties can create problems for the traveller which can be exploited by those who wish to do harm to the leisure or faith-based traveller. Indeed, history is littered with examples of terrible deeds being done against the pilgrim. The seizure of the Grand Mosque by Shia terrorists in Mecca in 1979 and more recently in December 2013, car bombings and the shooting of Shia Muslim pilgrims on their way to the holy city of Karbala resulting in 33 killings and 55 wounded (New York Post, 2013) are examples of such targeted violence.

There were over 10,000 terrorist attacks in 2011, affecting nearly 45,000 victims in 70 countries and resulting in over 12,500 deaths. While the total number of worldwide attacks in 2011 actually dropped by almost 12% from 2010 and nearly 29% from 2007, they nevertheless underscore the human toll and geographic reach of terrorism. Of these atrocities, the Near East and South Asia continue to experience most attacks, incurring just over 75% of the total in 2011. On the other hand, Africa and the western hemisphere experienced 5-year highs in the number of attacks, exhibiting the constant evolution of the terrorist threat (National Counterterrorism Center, 2011).

According to Pizam and Smith (2000) terror acts have had an enormous impact on tourism destinations since before the end of the Cold War. The effects of terrorism are experienced throughout society and many industries are disrupted by such acts, but the effects upon the tourism sector are particularly profound. Indeed it would be difficult to argue with observers when they suggest that there is probably no industry in the world where a crisis (brought about by an act of terrorism) can have a greater effect than with tourism.

From an external perspective, acts of crime and violence against travellers are all too commonplace. Pizam (1999) argues that mass destruction of life and property (i.e. war and terrorism), loss of life (i.e. murder) and bodily harm (i.e. assault and rape) are all examples of crime and violence that have impacted upon the traveller during the act of travel. Looking further into the act of terrorism,

the US Department of State defines terrorism as 'premeditated, politically motivated violence perpetrated against civilians and unarmed military personnel by subnational groups ... usually intended to influence an audience' (Sönmez, 1998, p. 417). However, Sorel (2003) argues that defining terrorism is difficult and is bound up in attitudes and value judgements. Whereas some may perceive terrorism as a criminal act, for others it is an 'act of struggle for freedom or liberation' (Pizam, 1999). Later Pizam and Smith (2000, p. 123) define an act of terrorism as a 'systematic and persistent strategy practiced by a state or political group against another state or group through a campaign of acts of violence ... to achieve political, social or religious ends'. Thus, terrorism and terrorist reasoning is by its very nature complicated and is often driven by a multitude of motivations.

A number of authors, including Sönmez (1998), Pizam and Fleischer (2002) and Pizam and Smith (2000), have researched the link between terrorism and tourism and conclude that targeting tourists clearly helps terrorists in achieving their objectives by disrupting the industry and assuring publicity. Owing to the negative publicity by the media a tourist destination can experience a crisis whereby its reputation may be damaged and the operation of tourism-related businesses might experience a severe turndown. The effect of the disruption and violence on the industry is a crisis, which needs careful and decisive management (Evans and Elphick, 2005).

## **Acts of Violence Against the Pilgrim**

Pilgrims from all religions have some time or another faced violence and intimidation, and even in many cases death, from 'other' extremist religious or nationalist groups. The phenomenon of violence against pilgrims is not new. Christian pilgrims visiting the Temple Mount in Jerusalem experienced escalating violence resulting in the capturing of Jerusalem in 1099 by the Crusaders (Stark, 2009). During the Black Death in Europe in 1348 violence was perpetrated against minorities such as Jews, Muslims, pilgrims, foreigners and beggars in cities throughout Europe from Cracow to Barcelona. Why this was done is not exactly clear, but it has been suggested that allusion as a result of psychological phenomena may have been the cause (Nirenberg, 1996).

However, more recently this trend has grown at an alarming rate. Christian pilgrims in Israel and Palestine have seen an escalation of violence against them after a wave of vandalisms in Jerusalem churches by extremist nationalist Jews. This was particularly noticeable around the time of Pope Francis's visit in May 2014. Vandals wrote offensive graffiti, 'Death to Arabs and Christians', in Hebrew on the Vatican's Notre Dame Centre in Jerusalem's Old City and obscene graffiti was also written on a wall close to the Romanian Orthodox church. Similarly, a Christian place of worship in Galilee was vandalized and stones were thrown at pilgrims. A radical rabbi also sent a threatening letter to a priest in Nazareth. These attacks prompted the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem to state that Christians in Israel felt neither safe nor protected and called on the Israeli government to take action against rightwing Jewish extremists. At the same time acts of vandalism and violence were targeted against Palestinian

Arabs in the West Bank, known as ‘price-tagging’ – a campaign of intimidation that Jewish extremists claim is the price Palestinians should pay for Israeli government crackdowns or restrictions on settlement activity (Crowcroft, 2014).

Likewise, the Jewish community are themselves not immune to such terrible acts of violence and history is littered with anti-Semitic attacks. More recently, examples include attacks on synagogues and the desecration of Jewish cemeteries. In the latest of a spate of anti-Semitic attacks in Jerusalem, a group of Jews were subjected to an assault in broad daylight after being ambushed by an Arab gang on Rosh Hashanah. The Jewish worshippers were on their way from the ancient Shiloach Pool in the City of David where they had been taking part in the *tashlich* ritual, in which Jews symbolically cast their sins into a body of running water as a gesture of repentance. The site, which dates back to the Byzantine times, is usually frequented by Jewish worshippers during Rosh Hashanah, and the route through the predominantly Arab neighbourhood of Shiloach (also known as Silwan) is supposed to be secured by police in order to prevent any violence against Jewish pilgrims (Soffer, 2014).

Similarly, concerns and threats from some Salafi Islamists kept thousands of Jewish pilgrims away from an annual celebration on the Tunisian island of Djerba. No more than 500 pilgrims attended the religious festival celebrated a month after Passover at one of Africa’s oldest Jewish sites – an event that used to attract thousands of visitors (*The Jerusalem Post*, 2010).

During the Hindu Kumbh Mela Festival, violence sometimes breaks out between rival akharas over gaining access to the best spots on the River Ganges at the best time. It has been reported that pitch battles often flare up between two orders, the Niranjani and the Juna, for seemingly trivial reasons, such as one of the group delaying their evacuation of the most sacred of the ghats. The fighting has been known to involve ceremonial swords, staves and trishuls – trident-like staffs – resulting in hundreds being injured as well as many people being thrown into the Ganges and ashrams being burned down.

Similarly, Shia and Sunni Muslim pilgrims have faced bloody violence against each other. The most recent and regular occurrence of these has been in Iraq after the withdrawal of American troops in December 2011.

## Mechanisms to Limit Acts of Crime and Terrorism Against the Pilgrim

A number of possible operational solutions exist for those attempting to reduce acts of crime and terrorism on holy travellers.

### A pan-regional travel action group

The formation of a pan-global Travellers Against Terrorism Action Group comprising tourism ministers, industry leaders, voluntary campaigners and action groups would facilitate better communication between those stakeholders who influence travel strategy within host nations and result in the sharing of best practice across states. Such a group could be further divided geographically

into regional hubs with cooperation on multilateral agreements for the prevention of terrorism, and coordinated travel policies can then be introduced to enhance the protection of travellers at destination level.

### **Increased use of travel destination intelligence officers**

Intelligence officers acting as travellers within a destination and circulating around holy sites/destinations under possible threat of terrorism could act as a source of information for preventing potential terrorist activity. In Egypt during the 1990s, non-uniform police were placed on all transportation vehicles used by holy travellers. Such a concept aligns with the notion of community policing strategies.

### **Pre-/post-trip education and feedback**

Though it is important to ensure the travel experience is not impaired by initial bad impressions, it is important that travellers are informed of the dangers of a possible terrorist threat and the potential dangers when engaging in pilgrimage. A terrorism awareness information code/protocol should be developed and distributed to all travellers pre-departure. Browne (2004) notes how the use of sensitization campaigns to report any unusual events were instrumental in removing the terrorist cell in the weeks following the Madrid bombings of 2004.

### **Community involvement in the development of contested heritage**

It is important for any holy destination where heritage is contested and subsequently being presented as a religious commodity that all religious groups associated with the artefact or location are involved in its presentation and interpretation. A good example is the Western Wall (Wailing Wall or Kotel) located in the Old City of Jerusalem in Israel, which is a sacred site to Christians, Jews and individuals of the Islamic faith. The wall itself has been a site of conflict on a number of occasions in the past, when access to the site has been blocked by security personnel, resulting in a sense of isolation for certain religious groups, ultimately resulting in bloodshed. In another example, Anson (1999) details how the Tower Museum, Londonderry, Northern Ireland has been employed to bring together opposing religious factions in an attempt to effectively disseminate a shared heritage.

### **Product diversification**

By developing the 'Red Sea Riviera', Egypt is a good example of a destination that has diversified its tourism product to counter the ill effects of terrorism activity (*Travel & Tourism Analyst*, 2003). The development of East European

attractions by the new member states will similarly generate further tourism activity and minimize the negative economic consequences of any potential terrorist attack, and possibly promote greater understanding through interaction of people from different faiths, cultures and backgrounds.

## Summary

The terrible acts of terrorism carried out against the holy traveller are ever increasing, in part due to the nature of the global telecommunications proliferation. Indeed, while global travel is becoming increasingly safer due to developments in technology, a flip side of this technological improvement in mass communication sees news media being always accessible anywhere in the world and in real time. Gone are the days of the family going once a week to watch the Pathé newsreels of the early 1900s, which espoused the great safe world in which we lived or how well the British expeditionary forces were doing in a colonial backwater of the British Empire, fighting so-called insurgents. Today, we see news media impacting on our daily lives and while the world has not become a more dangerous place for the religious traveller, with 24-hour instant news coverage it certainly appears that the perceived threat has increased.

Notwithstanding the comments made regarding technology and its ability to facilitate 24-hour news feeds, one must at least give some thought to the future of holy travel and possible solutions to ensure greater safe passage for all who travel under the pilgrimage umbrella, irrespective of religious beliefs. As a starting point, disenfranchised communities who lack basic housing, health care, voting provision and equality are possibly the largest obstacle in ensuring a reduction in violence against the holy travellers. In the case of the present Iraqi government, which is predominantly Shia and sees very few Sunni leaders making up the Iraqi government cabinet, this has resulted in a disenfranchised Sunni minority who have been generally discriminated against. Add to the mix those extremists (albeit in the minority) who seek to exploit this imbalance and we then have the making of a terrible conflict, which is presently being played out in the Middle East. Ensuring that political equality is at the base of any geographical makeup is fundamental in creating safe passage for the pilgrim.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the various motivations for pilgrimage.
2. Discuss the changing diverse nature of the travel industry.
3. With reference to the case study 'More and More New Luxury Hotels in Mecca', discuss how the pilgrimage to Mecca is changing for the traveller. In your opinion, is the spiritual aspect of the journey being affected by this change?
4. How has terrorism around the world impacted pilgrimage for different religions? By giving specific examples, discuss ways in which this can be reduced for the pilgrim.

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# 7

## Motivations for Religious Tourism, Pilgrimage, Festivals and Events

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### Introduction

The religious tourism phenomenon arouses the interest of many researchers and practitioners, but few concentrate on the non-religious motivations of religious travellers. The aim of this chapter is to provide an understanding of the motivations for religious tourism, pilgrimage, festivals and events. Religion and spirituality are very common motivations for travel over the last few decades for religious pilgrimage. Major world religious tourism destinations having developed over the last century due to links with sacred people, holy places and religious festivals. The religious tourism phenomenon in the last decade has provoked major discussion among many leading researchers and practitioners, but only a few have managed to look at the motivation theory, or why travel to religious destinations has increased.

Theories of motivation will be identified and discussed in order to identify the prime motivating factors underpinning people's decisions to make pilgrimages and to take part in religious tourism. Theories of motivation are divided into content theories and process theories. Content theories focus on what actually motivates people, seeking, therefore, to identify and explain the relevant factors. Process theories of motivation place their emphasis on the actual process of motivation, with the aim of identifying the relationship between various dynamic variables, such as values and expectations, which influence individual motivation. Both sets of theories can inform our understanding of motivation in the religious context of travel.

Definitions of pilgrimage and religious tourism will be compared and contrasted so that the essential features of each form of tourism can be identified and analysed within the context of motivation: this will provide us with

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a fuller understanding of the various motivations for these kinds of travel. Understanding and classifying the motivations of pilgrims and religious tourists can inform tourism management in developing ways to meet the needs of pilgrims and religious tourists on journeys to religious destinations and during their stay at those destinations. It is clearly imperative that, given the rise in this kind of tourism, we understand what motivates travellers to sacred sites and to what extent, if at all, their expectations can be met.

It is believed that since the dawn of time human beings have defined some elements of the natural and built environment as spiritual sites, regarding them as sacred and, in many cases, endowing them with supernatural qualities. Even though the spiritual meaning of some of them has been lost over time there is still immense interest in many of these ancient sites and their artefacts, examples of which can be found all over the world, such as the statues of Easter Island, Stonehenge in England, Uluru in Australia, the Ring of Brodgar in Orkney, the Teotihuacanos in Central America, Angkor Wat in Cambodia and sacred mountains in China. As knowledge about our world increases, more and more sacred sites are being discovered so that the list is seemingly endless. It seems, therefore, that travel to sacred places was, and is, an inherent aspect of all cultures; as early as 30,000 years ago Australian aboriginal people made yearly journeys on foot for the purpose of ceremonies, ritual and festivals. These journeys can tell us something about the relationship between humans and nature, that there is an awareness of natural artefacts as embodying a life force. The world's greatest religious sites inspire feelings of awe in those who visit them (Wilson, 1996). People have always been interested in making sense of their lives and the world in which they live and, it is claimed, have looked to the sacred for meaning. The search for meaning has often involved travel to sacred sites and taking part in rituals at those sites.

Today we see that all over the world more and more people are travelling to sacred sites (not always sacred to their own religion, even when they have one), taking part in religious festivals and events, and making pilgrimages to their religion's sacred sites. That this is happening at the same time as there are falling congregations in Christian worship in much of the Western world is significant. At the same time it has been observed that there is not the same trend of declining formal participation in other religions. Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim and Christian pilgrimage sites, however, all continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors. Even in areas where it is recognized that there is a higher risk of danger people are not always deterred from visiting sacred sites: recent studies of adventure tourism in Nepal found that pilgrimage to Hindu and Buddhist religious sites was less affected than trekking by the threats to personal safety posed by global and internal security matters (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2005). What is it, then, that motivates people from all walks of life, all religions (and none) and all cultures to undertake travel to sacred sites? Egresi *et al.* (2012) state that:

Religion has been and continues to be a major motivation for travel. Many religions make the visitation of sacred sites a mandatory act for all followers who are healthy and can afford it. However, more recent research suggests that motivation for religious tourism is multifaceted and multilayered.

## **Pilgrimage and Religious Tourism: Defining Terms**

There is considerable debate about what is meant by religious tourism and whether it differs from pilgrimage: are they the same thing, 'new wine in old bottles' as it were, or do they have substantive differences? As a starting point we can turn to the definition of tourism as set out by the World Tourism Organization (WTO): 'The activities of persons travelling to, and staying in, places outside their usual environment for not more than one consecutive year for leisure, business or other purposes' (as cited in Goeldner and Ritchie, 2003, p. 7).

Pilgrims and religious or sacred tourists clearly fit into this definition since both involve the decision to travel from home with the intention of returning to it within a given time period (i.e. less than a year) for 'other purposes'; that is, incorporating religious motivations. The WTO definition is wide enough, therefore, to incorporate both pilgrimage and religious tourism; however, more focused definitions are needed if we are to understand and differentiate between the motivations and expectations of pilgrims and religious tourists. Lefebvre (1980), in Vukonic (1996), defines religious tourism as consisting of a range of spiritual sites and associated services, which are visited for both secular and religious reasons. Within this definition two different kinds of sites can be identified: shrines and pilgrimage sites. Shrines encompass sites where a relic or image is 'venerated' whereas pilgrimage sites are places where it is recognized that a miracle has occurred, still occurs, and may do so again: an example of the latter is Lourdes in France.

Some sites have both elements ascribed to them, and since this definition refers mainly to the Christian context it has limited application. Pilgrimage sites are not so narrowly prescribed within the majority of world religions and can be part of the natural environment, like the River Ganges or the Himalayas, or part of the built environment, like temples and mosques. Festivals with religious associations, like Tamil Nadu's unique religious festival, are also classified as religious tourism attractions. Shackley (2003, p. 161) sets out a broad classification of religion-based attractions:

- Natural phenomena (sacred lakes, mountains, islands, groves).
- Buildings and sites originally constructed for religious purposes.
- Buildings with a religious theme.
- Special events with religious significance held at non-religious sites.
- Sacralized secular sites associated with tragedy or politically significant events (e.g. Nelson Mandela's prison on Robben Island).

There is a growing trend towards developing purpose-built religious tourism attractions on non-sacred sites, like the 'Holy Land Experience' in Florida, creating, in effect, a religious theme park. Visits to this kind of religious tourist attraction are desirable to the home population since they can take place without the inconvenience (long journeys, smells, dirt, illness, crowds, 'unfamiliar' food, etc.) and without exposure to environmental or political danger. The latter can be perceived as applying more to Western tourists in the wake of 'September 11'. Managers of purpose-built religious attractions need to be aware of the conflict between visitors' desires for authentic experiences

and their need for security. This desire for authenticity might include an understanding of, and opportunity for, meaningful contact between indigenous religions and religious travellers; sacred sites, otherwise, are in danger of becoming entertaining religious theme parks.

Religious tourism, therefore, encompasses all kinds of travel that is motivated by religion and where the destination is a religious site. These sites may not necessarily be associated with current religions since there are many religions in the history of the world that have become extinct – some have left behind impressive artefacts (temples, churches, shrines, statues) and cultural heritages. Religious tourism need not incorporate belief in a specific religion, as recent 'Da Vinci Code' tourists demonstrate. King (2000) makes the valid observation that there are secular 'religions' like football, where fans boast that the football club is their religion, and where, far from being a reference to a sacred site, the 'hallowed ground' is a common description of the football pitch. Many major clubs build on these sentiments in organized tours of their grounds and facilities, emulating the characteristics of organized tours to religious sites.

Whatever the similarities and differences between these forms of religious tourism there is a common underlying theme: travel, being a vital component of tourism, can be seen as an integral part of religious tourism since people, whatever their motivation, travel by foot, bicycle, car, bus, train or plane to these sites. Whether the journey itself can be considered as religious tourism is a matter of debate. Some authors exclude the journey from their definition of religious tourism. Religious tourism is said to have five characteristics (da Graça Mouga Poças Santos, 2003, p. 40):

- Voluntary, temporary and unpaid travel.
- Motivated by religion.
- Supplemented by other motivations.
- The destination is a religious site (of local, regional, national or international status).
- Travel to the destination is not a religious practice.

It is intended to take these characteristics, which exclude pilgrimage, as a working understanding of religious tourism, which will be used in the exploration of motivation. These characteristics clearly bring religious festivals and events into its remit. It has been argued elsewhere that pilgrimages and religious tourism can both be seen as sacred journeys (Graburn, 1989). Although some authors argue that tourism and pilgrimage should be placed at the opposite ends on a continuum of travel – between the sacred and the secular – others see them as being more intertwined: religious festivals can be attached to the end of a pilgrimage or operate as a stand-alone event. It is generally believed, however, that the distinguishing feature of pilgrimage is that it incorporates religious involvement *into the journey*.

Singh's (2004) study of pilgrimage in India (Hindu and tribal-Hindu) identified pilgrimage as having been institutionalized over a thousand years ago. Historically and currently, pilgrimage has an integrating function, connecting people from diverse cultures and ethnic groups in India. A distinctive feature of traditional Hindu pilgrimage is its circular, clockwise direction – very different from the linear tradition of most pilgrimages. Pilgrimage is always expected to

involve austerity to a greater or lesser degree (strenuous walking and labour) – records show that early pilgrims (although not always the wealthy) did indeed experience a great deal of hardship. Many pilgrimages in India involve carrying artefacts over some distance – even children share in the experience, carrying miniature versions. Pilgrims to Lhasa's Buddhist temples prostrate themselves flat, standing up at the point reached by their hands, and then repeat these movements in the pilgrimage circuit. Austerity was to be incorporated in all aspects of pilgrimage – choice of food, places to stay en route, social intercourse, etc. Concern for maintaining the natural and social environment was also built into traditional pilgrimage. Pilgrimage should mediate between the natural and the cultural world, and, at the same time, between the natural and the supernatural world. This provides us with a definitive means of distinguishing pilgrimage from religious tourism.

In many cases it is possible to distinguish between pilgrims and religious tourists (as characterized by their destination) by the way they behave. Participant observers of tourists travelling by bus through the mountains to the Garhwal Himalayas noted that pilgrims ritually chanted the Lord's name at what were perceived as critical junctures and dangerous points during the journey, while the tourists did not do so (Singh, 2004). In this case religious ritual was invoked during the pilgrimage. The journey itself, the pilgrimage, can be considered to be a ritual as well as incorporating ritualistic elements.

Traditional views of pilgrimage have identified that the experience should also involve hardship and suffering. Putting these elements together – ritual and austerity – help us to see that simply *travelling* to a sacred site is not sufficient to identify the traveller as a pilgrim. The distinction can become blurred where people taking part in organized pilgrimages are allowed extra time to visit other religious tourist sites.

## Motivation for Religious Tourism

In the current literature there is very limited research that explores the understanding and motivation of religious tourists' patterns of visitation to sacred sites. Raj and Morpeth (2007) identify that there is common agreement on some issues in the investigation of religious tourism, such as the term religious space referring to both the confined space within a shrine, sanctuary, cathedral, etc. and the religious space pilgrims travel through on their pilgrimages. They also point out that a wide scope of potential areas for future research also exists within the general area of study. This ranges from the need to explore and refine the sacred–profane continuum (see Chapter 8 for a useful reinterpretation of this linear model) to the role of guides, interpreters and interpretation at religious sites. In a sense what emerges is the eclectic nature of the study of religious tourism and pilgrimages, not least because of the complex and changing relationships between visitors and the visited on a global stage; while on the one hand a strengthening of religious devotion is evident, on the other there is the fragmentation of religion into new, quasi-religious and secular movements. The recurring issue here is the management of potentially competing sacred and secular uses of religious sites.

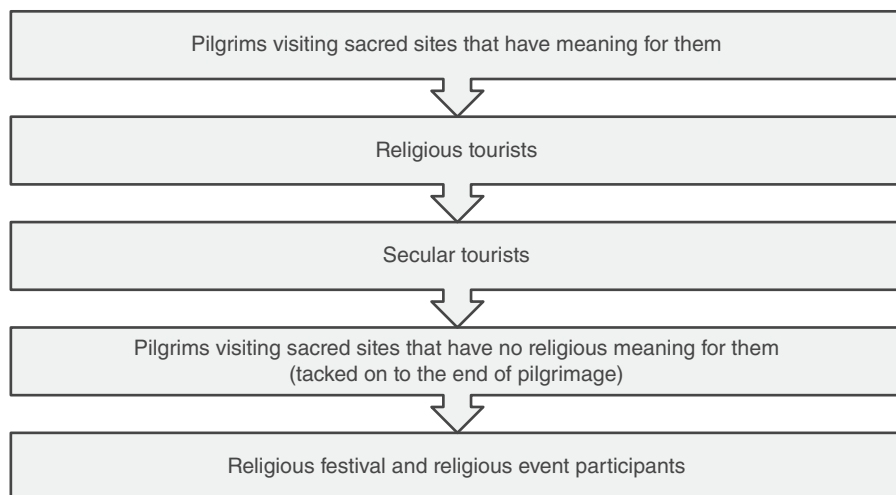


Over the last few decades there have been various attempts to create a typology of sacred journeys for pilgrimage. Indeed, in April 2003, the Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Special Interest Group within the European Association for Tourism and Leisure Education (ATLAS) held its 1st Expert Meeting at Fátima in Portugal. This group most notably produced a stimulating discussion as it considered the research implications of gaining greater understanding of the motivations and needs of visitors at sacred sites; how administrators at religious sites could cater for the needs of holidaymakers and pilgrims; and how '21st Century' (new) pilgrims interacted with devout pilgrims. Cathedrals and churches within a UK context and more globally would fit into this category. In the UK York Minster falls into this hybrid type of visitor attraction and presents a site with dual functions which incorporate both secular and sacred.

MacCannell (1976) argues that 'site sacralization' is the process whereby tourist attractions take on iconoclastic qualities, and are venerated in the same manner as religious sites. Ancient pilgrimage routes linked to religious travel destinations in Europe include Fátima in Portugal, Montenero in Italy, Knock in Ireland, Medjugorje in Croatia, Lourdes in France and Santiago de Compostela in Spain, but visitors to these do not all see themselves as travelling for religious reasons. Santos (2003) reports that the proportion of pilgrims indicating a religious motivation is about 50%, with perhaps a further 20% having a mixed 'religious-cultural' motivation. However, another study indicated that 'spirituality' was a more common motivation (60%). On a global level the hajj and the holy places in Saudi Arabia have a sacred quality in the world of Islam, with this act of pilgrimage a defining moment in lives of adherents. The hajj has a unique spiritual aspect since it brings together people from every part of the world in immense diversity. These people with such vast differences in culture and language form one community and perform the same faith since all are devoted to the worship of their single Creator.

Spiritual destination management involves responsibility for satisfying the needs of pilgrims and religious tourists. Motivations for pilgrimage will differ from those of religious tourism and it is these differences which can have a significant impact on the ability of destination managers to satisfy their 'customers'. We can see that while it is the experience at their destination that has significance for the religious tourist, perceptions will be different for the pilgrim since the destination constitutes only one part of the experience of pilgrimage. Experiences along the pilgrim route are an integral element, affecting the whole travel experience.

Visitors to sacred sites can be classified as illustrated in [Fig. 7.1](#). Motives for visiting the sacred site have been found to affect behaviour in that pilgrims are more likely than any other visitor to subscribe to overt and covert norms at sites that hold religious significance for them. Clothing conventions, in particular, are a frequent cause of conflict: it is not uncommon to see people wearing shorts and vests at religious sites where prominently placed signs ask visitors to cover their heads, shoulders and legs. Taking photographs of religious rites is forbidden in certain areas of the world, yet several incidents of violence have been reported where local custom has been flouted.



**Fig. 7.1.** Classification of visitors to sacred sites.

It is clearly imperative that, given the rise in pilgrimage and religious tourism, the management of religious destinations and pilgrimage routes is informed by an understanding of what motivates these categories of traveller and to what extent, if at all, their expectations can be satisfied. Even though the prime motivation is religious, motivations and expectations change over time: it is claimed, for example, that improved transport facilities and the greater wealth of prospective pilgrims have led to increasing commodification of sacred sites, thus raising expectations of quality.

## Theories of Motivation

Motivation can be defined as something which commits people to a course of action, i.e. the driving force which exists in all individuals. Without appropriate motivation pilgrims and religious tourists would not be able to achieve their goals, whether physical or spiritual. Theories of motivation are commonly drawn from studies of workplace motivation, whereby the focus is on identifying those factors which managers can apply to enhance worker productivity. Much research has been carried out into what motivates people and theories of motivation can be used to help us understand what motivates people to undertake pilgrimages and participate in religious tourism, and how an understanding of the processes of motivation can be used to facilitate and support these forms of tourism.

It is important to be aware that there are many competing theories which aim to explain the nature of motivation. Motivation is a complex concept and there is no simple or universal answer to the question of what motivates people. The following sections will focus on motivation theories that are most relevant to the study of pilgrimage and religious tourism: content theories and process

theories. Content theories focus on *what* actually motivates people, seeking, therefore, to identify and explain factors that motivate the individual. Process theories of motivation, on the other hand, place their emphasis on the actual *process* of motivation, so that they aim to identify the relationship between various dynamic variables which influence individual motivation.

Content theories of motivation

Content theories of motivation focus on what things motivate people to act in a certain way. These theories aim to identify people’s needs, classifying them in order of relative strength, and to identify the goals people follow to satisfy their needs. People have needs, sometimes described as feelings of deprivation, which propel the individual to do something to satisfy the need. One of the most popular content theorists is Abraham Maslow (1954), who focused on need as the basis of motivation.

Maslow’s theory is in two parts: the classification of human needs; and the relationships between the classes of needs. Maslow (1954) contended, in his theory of individual development and motivation (the hierarchy of needs theory), that people’s needs can be divided into five different levels from lower- to higher-order needs, with the lower-order needs having to be satisfied before people are motivated to satisfy the next need in the hierarchy. The hierarchy contains, at its lowest, the deficiency needs – physiological, safety, and social or belonging needs – and, at the higher levels, growth needs – esteem and self-actualization needs. Table 7.1 provides examples of the outcomes of satisfying each level of need, ranging from the lowest (at the bottom of the hierarchy) to the highest order.

Maslow contends that a person starts of the bottom of the hierarchy and initially seeks to satisfy basic physiological needs, such as hunger, thirst and shelter. Once the physiological needs have been met, they no longer act as motivators and the individual is motivated to satisfy the higher-order needs. Maslow stated that although most people’s basic needs do run in this order, the hierarchy of needs should not be seen as a fixed order: in other words, the order may change according to circumstances. It has been argued that the higher-order needs change and extend with the development of societies and

Table 7.1. Hierarchy of needs. (Adapted from Maslow, 1954.)

Types of need	Outcomes
<b>Growth needs</b>	
Self-actualization	Achieve full potential, creativity, development
Esteem	Self-respect, self-esteem, prestige, status
Social	Affection, sense of belonging, friendship, love
<b>Deficiency needs</b>	
Safety	Safety, security, stability, protection
Physiological	Food, water, sleep, healthy environment, sex

the concomitant development and form of social relations – this is because, given their social rather than physiological basis, they are more likely to be influenced by social norms.

Although there is little empirical evidence to support Maslow’s theory, it can nevertheless provide insights into the motivations of pilgrims and religious tourists. People who feel a need for social interaction, to make new friends or feel part of a group of like-minded individuals may seek to satisfy their social needs by taking part in an organized pilgrimage or organized travel to a religious destination; while pilgrims do travel alone or with a small party, frequently they are part of a large group travelling to the sacred site.

Once their lower-order needs have been met, people might be motivated by the need to gain the esteem of their religious community through taking part in a prestigious pilgrimage, such as the hajj, or undertaking a physically demanding pilgrimage, such as the Pilgrimage Circuit of Lhasa or the pilgrimage to Santiago de Compostela. At the highest level of motivation, the experience of pilgrimage itself would be expected to provide satisfaction of self-actualization needs. A cursory study of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*, however, shows us that motives for pilgrimage may always have been mixed: the wife of Bath, for example, had a secular motive (to find another husband) as well as the more traditional spiritual reasons for pilgrimage.

A major influence on theories of motivation is Herzberg (1974) who developed his two-factor theory from research into occupational motivation, represented in [Table 7.2](#). He divided factors influencing people’s motivation into two sets: hygiene factors and motivating factors (mostly known as motivators).

**Table 7.2.** Herzberg’s two-factor theory of motivation applied to pilgrimage and religious tourism. (Adapted from Herzberg, 1974.)

Factor	Application to pilgrimage and religious tourism
<b>Hygiene factors</b>	
Salary	Income to afford travel, accommodation, time off work
Job security	Security of destination, travel arrangements
Working conditions	Quality of travel, destination, accommodation, freedom from conflict
Level/quality of supervision	Couriers, accommodation management
Company policy and administration	Policy affecting religious travel and pilgrimage, administrative efficiency
Interpersonal relations	Local inhabitants, fellow travellers, staff and volunteers at destination, travel company and accommodation
<b>Motivators</b>	
Sense of achievement	Personal satisfaction, overcoming physical hardship of travel
Recognition	Photograph, certificate, participation in ceremony
Responsibility	Responsibility for own religious achievement, responsibility for others en route and at destination
Nature of the work	Pilgrimage, experience at religious destination, participation in ceremony
Personal growth and advancement	Religious experiences en route and at destination, satisfaction of spiritual needs, survival skills acquired and used on pilgrimage

The hygiene factors do not actually motivate people but will lead to feelings of dissatisfaction if they are absent or inadequate, while the motivators are those things that motivate the individual, but will not cause dissatisfaction if absent. Comparison with Maslow's hierarchy of needs suggests that hygiene factors can be approximated to the lower-level needs and the motivators to the higher-level needs.

While there are methodological criticisms of Herzberg's two-factor theory, the consequence of his research has been to encourage a focus on restructuring work to enable people to satisfy higher-level needs through their work. What has this to do with religious motivation? Clearly, his ideas have resonance for our understanding of the motives for pilgrimage and religious tourism, and hence for the management of the process, whether travel is seen as an integral element, as in pilgrimage, or not, as in religious tourism.

The two-factor theory of motivation suggests that religious tourists may be motivated by the opportunity to gain recognition of their achievement, perhaps by a photograph of their participation in a religious ceremony that they can show to friends at home, or by opportunities for personal and spiritual growth realized during a pilgrimage or a religious event. Some hygiene factors may cause dissatisfaction and demotivation: the physical conditions encountered during travel, for example, may discourage some. Others, however, may perceive hardship as an integral part of the experience that, in itself, offers an opportunity for personal growth and the development of survival skills. Crowd surges at the hajj in recent years have led to hundreds of deaths and injuries among participants: there are fears that such incidents will have a demotivating effect. Study of content theory clearly shows that such an outcome would not be unexpected and, therefore, destination managers should focus on ensuring that the lower-level needs (Herzberg's hygiene factors) are met while not stifling opportunities to achieve satisfaction of higher-level motivators.

Content theories are useful in that their focus on need fulfilment helps to understand what actually motivates individuals, but they are open to criticism because they do not enable us to identify which need is most dominant in an individual at any one time. Since each person is different, due to the uniqueness of their experiences, it is difficult to generalize from these theories. It is also claimed that these theories underestimate the effects of social and cultural factors on motivation – cultures, for example, which value the individual over the group may inculcate in their members a belief that self-actualization is desirable, whereas in other cultures, which emphasize the importance of the group above the individual, self-actualization may be considered to be an undesirable selfish goal.

Maslow's work, however, remains useful because it is a pragmatic way of classifying the different needs that people try to fulfil through pilgrimage and religious tourism. Herzberg's research enables us to distinguish between motivators and dissatisfiers: the primary focus needs to be on providing opportunities for the satisfaction of motivators such as a sense of achievement, while at the same time paying attention to hygiene factors, such as security, which of themselves do not motivate but will cause dissatisfaction if they are not attended to.

## Process theories of motivation

As stated earlier, process theories of motivation emphasize the actual *process* of motivation, and, in doing so, focus on identifying the relationship between various dynamic variables which influence the individual's motivation. The process theory most relevant to our understanding of motivations for pilgrimage and religious tourism is Vroom's (1964) expectancy theory.

### *Expectancy theory*

Expectancy theories of motivation were first identified in the 1930s in America and further developed in the 1960s. Expectancy theory asserts that individuals are motivated by the *expectancy* that there will be a particular outcome of their actions, that this outcome will then result in a reward (*instrumentality*), and that the rewards (extrinsic or intrinsic) are such that it justifies the effort put into carrying out the act (*valence*). Valence was defined by Vroom (1964) as the anticipated satisfaction from an outcome – the emphasis here is on the *anticipated* rather than the *actual* satisfaction. Expectancy is the perceived probability that the outcome will happen if the individual works hard to achieve it.

Expectancy theory, therefore, explores the relationship between effort, performance and satisfaction. Expectancy theory can be said to be culturally dependent in that individuals, whether consciously or unconsciously, rate their preferences in a rational way and then decide how much effort to put into achieving goals. People are more likely to act in this way in more individualistic cultures rather than in more collectivist cultures.

Expectancy theory assumes that people are motivated by rewards that they value – for example, if individual A's family offered to pay for a visit to Lourdes, the offer would be taken up only if individual A valued the experience. The role of perceptions is crucial – the individual's perceptions of the link between their effort and the reward. If an individual believed that undergoing the hardships of pilgrimage would be rewarded by spiritual enhancement then their perception of that reward would be motivating to them. To illustrate the application of expectancy theory to pilgrimage we can see that:

- A person has an *expectancy* that by undertaking a pilgrimage their spirituality will be enhanced.
- Taking part in the pilgrimage is *instrumental* to achieving their spiritual goal.
- Intrinsic rewards (enhanced spirituality, self-actualization) plus extrinsic rewards (recognition, increased status within their religious community) create *valence*.

In this example, the individual has to believe that undertaking a pilgrimage will enhance their spirituality. If it is believed that their efforts will be instrumental in achieving their goal then they will be motivated to do their absolute best to achieve it. They must value the reward for achieving this goal above all other competing ways of spending their time and money. Process theories do not make assumptions about what motivates people but focus on how people's needs and wants affect their behaviour, and they are therefore considered to be more universally applicable than content theories. Theories of motivation



can be criticized because they focus on the individual rather than examining the environment in which the person is located; some needs, like self-actualization, are said to be culturally determined. Nevertheless, the theory provides frameworks for our understanding of expectations and behaviour in this context.

## **Motivation for Pilgrimage, Religious Tourism, Festivals and Events**

Religious travel of all kinds has a long history: experts point to pilgrimage being institutionalized in parts of India more than a thousand years ago while some sources trace travel to sacred sites back 30,000 years. Islam has been identified as the religion where the most pilgrimages are made, although most religions require their adherents to visit their sacred places to help relieve spiritual or material troubles. Before the development of mass systems of transportation in the 19th century most religious travellers had to walk to their destination (only the wealthy could afford to travel on horseback or by carriage). Even so, the wealthy were expected to walk at least some of the way during pilgrimage.

Religion has long influenced, and been influenced by, population movements and continues to do so, as we can see today with significant increases in the numbers of pilgrims and religious tourists. Although today there is a growing trend for religious believers to travel in groups organized by or through their religious organization, this is not a modern phenomenon: most travelled in groups in the past, satisfying the desire for companionship and social life alongside the primarily religious motivation, and, at the same time, demonstrating the strength of that religion to outsiders. An essential feature of pilgrimage was the large numbers who gathered together at sacred sites: hundred of thousands, for example, continue the tradition of being together for the celebration of Kumbh Mela in India.

Religious motive is a complex concept with more than one meaning and has different levels of intensity depending on individual belief and social context. It is generally agreed that religion has been, and is, a prime motive for undertaking travel, and, in this context, travel to sacred sites and religious events and festivals. Even where religion is the main motive, other motives can come into play: for example, while it is clear that medieval Crusades to the Holy Land were underpinned by religious motives, they were also seen as opportunities for adventure, advancement and wealth creation. Even modern-day religious pilgrimage can be seen as an opportunity for adventure – many pilgrimage sites are situated in remote areas, requiring several days' travel on foot.

Motivation for pilgrimage, historically, has also been linked with religious conflict: for example, a large pilgrimage aiming to preserve Jerusalem for Christianity followed Pope Urban II's proclamation in 1095 that the Holy City had been desecrated by Turkish occupation. This is not unusual in the history of religions: religious tourism and many pilgrimages have resulted from conflict between religions. Religious practice influences both the motives for pilgrimage and the quality of the experience. The Catholic Church's granting of indulgences in the Middle Ages affected people's motivation for pilgrimage: although the main motivating factor was forgiveness of sin, an unintended effect was a weakening of spiritual motivation (Sumption, 1975).

Motivation for religious tourism and religious pilgrimage, therefore, is complex, multifaceted and multilayered. It can be anticipated that, given the intensity of motivation needed for pilgrimage, expectations will be higher than for the religious tourist. This was demonstrated in Poria *et al.*'s (2003) study of visitors to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem: Jewish pilgrims' motivations were based on their desire for an emotional experience since the site was part of their own heritage, whereas Christians' motivation was primarily due to the site being a historic tourist attraction.

Motivation, furthermore, can change where the individual switches activities – for example, from being a pilgrim to a tourist and vice versa – often without the individual being aware of the change. Several studies show that religion explains people's behaviour as tourists – acting as a motivating force and also as a constraint. The whole spectrum of motivations from eagerly anticipated spiritual experience to idle curiosity, therefore, should be expected at religious sites.

It should not be forgotten that pilgrims and religious tourists need to have their basic needs met on the journey and at the destination – in that way they behave like other tourists. Care should also be taken to avoid conflict with local beliefs – it has been reported that some higher class hotels in Nepal import beef for visitors in a Hindu country where the killing of a cow is believed to be a crime (Bhattarai *et al.*, 2005).

It has been demonstrated by Raj (2012, p. 98) that over the last few decades Muslim and Christian pilgrimage sites have continued to attract increasing numbers of visitors, and that 'The main aim of travellers is to visit pilgrimage sites to enhance their knowledge and find pleasure, love and dedication for themselves'. Therefore, motivation plays an important role in the life of religious people visiting pilgrimage sites. From a Muslim visitor's point of view, visits to pilgrimage sites are to find love and pleasure. Nadwi (2002), cited in Raj (2012), expresses his personal experience of pleasure and love from visiting Madinah (Medina), the grave of the Holy Prophet Muhammad:

Days rolled by and I grew in age. My old eagerness was revived when I read books on the life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (PBUM) and studied the history of Islam, and the urge to perform the Hajj and make the pilgrimage to Makkah and Madinah became so strong that I was never without it.

Then, it so happened that I did reach the place where neither the grass grew nor rivers flowed. Only barren mountains stood on all sides of it like sentinels. Yet, as famous poet Hafeez Jullundri has said:

Neither grass grows here nor flowers bloom,  
yet even heavens bend themselves low to meet it.

(Raj, 2012, p. 100)

## Summary

Globally, religiously motivated travel is increasing (Mintel International Group Ltd, 2005), manifested in religious festivals and events, visits to religious sites and the undertaking of pilgrimages. Religiously motivated travel is affected by factors such as access to free time, finances and travel arrangements.

Religious tourism and pilgrimage have similar features yet are different. Travel to the destination is an inherent element of pilgrimage; austerity and hardship are traditionally expected en route as well as at the destination. Unlike religious tourism, pilgrimage has a mediation function: between the natural and cultural worlds on the one hand, and between the natural and supernatural worlds on the other.

Content theories of motivation focus on what actually motivates people: they provide a way of identifying, classifying and explaining the factors which are most likely to motivate. They distinguish between lower- and higher-level motivators and explain their impact on behaviour. Application of content theories to this context serves to remind us that religiously motivated travellers, like all tourists, have basic needs; attention must be paid to providing the right conditions for satisfying those needs so that more spiritual motivations can be fulfilled.

Process theories of motivation emphasize the *process of motivation*, aiming to identify the relationship between various dynamic variables, such as values and expectations, which influence individual motivation. Studies of religious travel consistently emphasize the importance of identifying and understanding religious values in underpinning motivations for religious travel. Motivation for religious travel is multifaceted and multilayered. Religiously motivated travellers themselves exhibit differences in motivation and expectation. There is a need for further research into these differences to understand and classify the motivations of pilgrims and religious tourists, to inform tourism managers as well as their staff and volunteers and help them to develop systems which will meet the diverse needs of pilgrims and religious tourists on journeys to religious destinations and during their stay at those destinations. It is clearly imperative that, given the rise in religious tourism and pilgrimage, we understand what motivates these travellers and to what extent, if at all, their expectations can be met.

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# 8

## Exploring Pilgrimage and Religious Heritage Tourism Experiences

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### Introduction

For over four decades, religious tourism and pilgrimage scholars have argued that there are two distinct functions of religious sites. The first of these is as a place of worship, while the second is that of a tourist destination. Given these distinct functions, it is further suggested that the *pilgrim* and the *tourist* will have two very different sets of experiences. This dichotomy has dominated pilgrimage research and is based on a conceptual understanding of pilgrimage that scholars now consider as inaccurate and ahistorical (Olsen, 2010).

Recently, researchers such as Olsen (2010), Collins-Kreiner (2010) and Di Giovine (2011) have argued for a shift away from this dichotomy. More particularly, the authors have called for a new way of examining the experiences of visitors to religious heritage sites that does not assume that the modern pilgrim experience conforms to some medieval ideal. In a similar way, researchers have sought an approach to pilgrimage study that does not relegate all other visitors to a single classification of 'tourist'. The discussion here aligns with this debate and provides an alternative lens through which one can interpret the experiences of visitors to religious heritage sites; visitors who come with range of motivations, interests and expectations.

Any discussion about religious tourism experience needs to acknowledge that not only will the experiences of visitors differ from one visit to the next, but also that the kinds of experiences offered at one type of religious site (such as a grand cathedral) will not be the same as those on offer at other types of religious sites (such as a small Marian shrine). Few authors have acknowledged the understanding that the experiences of visitors across different kinds of religious sites will also be different. This gap in the religious tourism literature is significant,

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as it assumes that religious sites offer visitors similar kinds of experiences irrespective of the different functions that individual sites perform. We should recognize, therefore, that presenting a single account of the religious tourism experience is problematic and the best we can hope for is an analysis that recognizes this issue at the onset.

Lastly, it should be highlighted that the term 'experience' has proven a very difficult concept to pin down – indeed a review of the *tourism experience* literature (Packer and Ballantyne, in prep.) has shown that even the most distinguished researchers have not yet reached an agreement as to what indeed we mean when we talk about *experience*; therefore it may be prudent to begin this discussion here.

## How Do We Understand 'Experience'?

Although the visitor experience is commonly recognized as the 'core product of tourism' (Prentice *et al.*, 1998), it is also considered 'the most elusive area in tourism' (Meyersohn, 1981, p. 1) and has proved difficult not only to measure, but also to define (Packer and Ballantyne, in prep.). Experiences are central to the idea of entertainment, from plays and concerts, to movies and television shows (Pine and Gilmore, 1999, 2002). However, experiences do not rely solely on entertainment. Organizations stage an experience whenever they attempt to engage with a person or try to connect with them in any meaningful way (Pine and Gilmore, 1999), and connecting with people in a way that is meaningful is at the heart of both heritage and religious tourism destination management (Shackley, 2001; Raj and Morpeth, 2007).

Tourism is essentially a 'marketplace of experience', and despite persistent arguments to the contrary, visitors to religious sites (like visitors elsewhere) come to shop for 'an experience with certain attributes' (Volo, 2009, p. 119). Increasingly, experiences are considered to be the key element that visitors care about and are willing to pay for this is especially poignant given the average cost of a visit to some of England's cathedrals and shrines: for example, £10.50 for an adult visitor at Canterbury Cathedral. Experience is also the element that promoters use to differentiate their offerings from those of their competitors (Chang and Horng, 2010). It is the experiential dimensions surrounding the provision of goods and services that matter to visitors, customers or guests (Pine and Gilmore, 1999; Schmitt, 2003), and designing such experiences has become the central issue facing attraction managers (Ritchie and Hudson, 2009). This challenge has not gone unnoticed by those responsible for the management of religious sites.

Although the term 'experience' has been readily adopted by the tourism industry, a confusing range of definitions and theoretical meanings are present within the literature (Packer and Ballantyne, in prep.). Otto and Ritchie (1996, p. 166) defined *experience* as the 'subjective mental state felt by participants'. Linking experience with emotion, Bigne and Andreu (2004) suggest that providing the visitor with an emotional experience can maximize the overall visitor satisfaction. Drawing heavily on the work of Pine and Gilmore (1999), Bigne



and Andreu define experiences as 'events that engage individuals in a personal way' (2004, p. 692) and argue that understanding visitor experience is the key to the economic future for heritage sites. The definitions of the nature of experience put forward by these authors are important, because they each recognize that the nature of the experience will vary depending on the level of involvement, participation and attachment a person has with a particular place. This is a critical step away from previous experiential research that has attempted to differentiate visitor experiences purely by demographic variables, such as age, gender or religious affiliation.

According to Beeho and Prentice (1997), the consumed experience combines aspects of the location itself with visitor thoughts, feelings, behaviours, emotional reactions, activities, evaluation and stimulation through sensation. When wandering through a beautiful cathedral or dimly lit catacombs, visitors may encounter a range of experiences. Such experiences can be highly emotional, spiritual, educational or even frightening. Unfortunately, measuring visitor experiences is a difficult task and something that has usually been undertaken in a haphazard and often unsatisfactory manner (Chan, 2009; Cutler and Carmichael, 2010). Visitor research undertaken at religious sites is no exception. Indeed, researchers who have focused on the experiences of religious heritage tourists have often failed to provide a suitable definition of what constitutes an *experience*. This lack of understanding of visitor experience has serious implications for both the spiritual and the tourist development of these sites. Attention, therefore, needs to be focused on how visitors to religious sites consume their experiences and what, if any, benefits from the experience the visitors take with them when they leave.

The need to better understand the spiritual and non-spiritual elements of the religious tourism experience is highlighted by Weidenfeld and Ron (2008), who note that the spiritual and non-spiritual offerings at religious sites need to complement each other in order to provide an inclusive visitor experience. Weidenfeld and Ron further state that little has been written about the inter-relationships between these different experiences and that further studies addressing these relationships are required (2008, p. 358). Although religious needs are deemed less important in a dominantly postmodern secular market, it is noteworthy that visitation of religious sites is increasing, both for those with a religious affiliation (Tirca and Stanciulescu, 2011) and those without (Davie, 2006).

## Understanding the Religious Tourism Experience

Within a country such as England, visitors can choose from a vast range of historic settings, yet it is extraordinary that so many still choose to visit religious sites. Statistics produced from tourism bodies in Britain show that religious heritage sites, such as churches and cathedrals, are attracting large numbers of visitors. For example, visits to Canterbury Cathedral, the Mother Church of the Anglican Community, have increased steadily over the past decade and the cathedral now reports over one million visitors annually (Canterbury Cathedral, 2011).

The significant numbers who have visited religious sites in recent years invites a certain degree of reflection about the motivations of such travellers and suggests that in countries such as England, the interest in sites associated with the Christian tradition is still very much alive.

## Understanding the Diversity of the Religious Tourist Experience

Most scholars agree that the outcome of religious heritage tourism for visitors is predominantly an experiential one (Cohen, 2006; Poria *et al.*, 2009; Buggeln, 2012; Collins-Kreiner, 2012). However, the nature of the visitor experience within religious heritage sites has not been well researched. Studies exploring the experiences and associated benefits of religious tourism focus primarily on spiritual experiences, to the detriment of other experiences such as social, educational or restorative. Cohen (2006) argues that too little time has been dedicated to the importance of cognitive or learning experiences. In addition, the potential for religious sites to provide a space to recover from fatigue, and restore one's physical and emotional energies, has become an important feature of religious tourism research in recent years (Herzog *et al.* 2011; Bond *et al.*, 2014).

When identifying the range of experiences offered by religious heritage sites, studies have tended to separate them into two major categories: sacred or religious experiences, and secular experiences. Researchers in the field of religious tourism have adopted a variety of terms in describing the spiritual aspects of the visitor experience. For example, Voase (2007) identified a range of experiences reported by visitors including closeness to God and a sense of the 'other'. Graburn (1977) described such experiences using the term *reverence*. Shackley (2001, 2002) has discussed spiritual experiences in terms of feeling a sense of spirit of place, communion and a feeling of spiritual merit.

Perhaps the most frequently employed term when discussing spiritual experience is Otto's (1928) concept of the *numinous*. Indeed, this term is frequently referred to in religious tourism literature when discussing the spiritual aspects of the visitor experience (Winter and Gasson, 1996; Slater, 2004; Voase, 2007; Olsen, 2008). According to Otto (1946 [1928]), numinous, a Latin term, translates as a nod or beckoning from the gods (Latham, 2007). While numinous is traditionally used to refer to an emotion or experience one feels when standing in the 'presence of something holy', it has been used outside of the religious context to mean 'a deep engagement, peacefulness, empathy, or spiritual communion with people or events of the past' (Cameron and Gatewood, 2003, p. 57). Numinous experience is also a phrase used within museum studies literature to refer to the deep connections individuals may have with particular objects within a museum collection (Latham, 2007). Yet numinous-type experiences are not the only experiences visitors seek, or report, at religious sites. Indeed, they are often the kinds of experiences visitors are seeking the *least* (Hughes *et al.*, 2013).

This is not to say that visitors do not engage in any spiritual way at religious sites. Being in the presence of objects of significant beauty and value

is an important aspect of the experience, irrespective of whether this space is considered a sacred site or a heritage site. According to Buggeln (2012), the dynamic of the sacred within such a space, therefore, involves the inter-relationships between the architecture and the fabric of the site, including the exterior, which shapes the visitors' expectations; the interior, which directs the experience of viewing the objects; and the inherent qualities of the objects and the nature of the interpretation. Thus, a visitor may simultaneously experience both the generic sacredness of the space and the particular sacredness of the individual object, enjoying a sacred atmosphere and the aura of wonder, while experiencing the greater understanding of resonance.

How visitors themselves describe their visit represents a puzzling dichotomy in the way they talk about the experience and consider the site sacred. In the first instance, the visitor may not consider the site to be personally meaningful in any spiritual way and deny its sacred meanings. On the other hand, visitors to religious sites are often brought to tears by the sheer beauty of some of the religious artworks and sculpture on display. One explanation for this incongruence has recently been put forward by Buggeln (2012, p. 36), who suggests that the aesthetic experience one could have inside a cathedral or church could be considered as a transference of spiritual values from the sacred realm into the 'secular time and space'. What was previously the domain of religious experience – revelation, transcendence, transformation – manifests within the secular context of a visit to what is essentially considered a museum.

## Experiencing a 'Sense of Place'

Religious heritage sites are perceived as places that are beyond time and space; that is, they are representative of a community's past, present and future (Davie, 2000, 2006; Hervieu-Léger, 2000; Bremer, 2006), and as such, they are 'redolent with meaning' (Digance, 2006, p. 36). It is this level of meaningfulness that binds people to such places (Bremer, 2006) and is why so many people experience a strong sense of belonging or a sense of place when inside religious buildings (Hervieu-Léger, 2000; Davie, 2006). Davie (2006) suggests that for countries with a strong religious heritage, religious sites are still very much a part of the population's cultural memory and cultural identity. The objects and images of popular religion can offer an emotional outlet for those in search of a secure identity; that is, a sense of self in an increasingly fragmented world (Bremer, 2006). People want to know who they are and whence they came. Religious tourism is one way in which people choose to engage with this sense of self and/or a connection with the transcendent (Cohen, 1998; Davie, 2002; Bremer, 2006).

King (2009) suggests that where once an individual's cultural identity was secured in a particular place or location, the mobility of individuals today, combined with a sense of cultural alienation, means that this is no longer the case. Through religious tourism, individuals can seek out spaces that provide both sanctuary and a sense of belonging that is frequently unavailable to them in their hectic home environment. Research by Bond *et al.* (2014) at three

English religious sites revealed that many visitors (irrespective of their religious beliefs) reported a desire to reconnect with their cultural past and do so through activities such as watching or engaging in worship activities, lighting candles, leaving prayers on prayer boards, and/or taking part in personal prayer. Connerton (1989) argued that such rituals are culturally encoded and help to sustain social memory. Such actions undertaken by visitors appear to help them gain a sense of connection to their cultural heritage and to put them in touch with their spiritual selves.

While it is unlikely that visitors are looking for a 'quick-fix' substitute for regular religious commitment (Shackley, 2008, p. 261), for at least for some visitors spending a short period of time in a religious heritage site can be an alternative to prayer and worship. Furthermore, in an era of economic, social and religious upheaval, religious heritage sites also provide comfort and a sense of connection and ownership. Davie (2006) suggests that although some people may consider religious sites no more than museums, like museums they are perceived as the embodiment, and the promoters, of cultural memories. The religious tourism experience therefore is a means through which people can create a memory or link back to their cultural and religious heritage.

Religious heritage sites, perhaps more than other heritage sites within England, signify cultural ideals and values. These values, both spiritual and secular, are held high, and are portrayed in the architecture of the buildings, in paintings and sculpture, in stained glass windows, in artefacts and in the numerous ceremonies and performances that take place within their grounds. These sites are important representations of cultural and religious history and instil in visitors a sense of cultural identity and place. Individuals are becoming increasingly dispersed as people seek out new experiences and opportunities internationally. The performance of rituals, and seeking out culturally familiar places and practices, helps to ground people in something that is familiar.

The ability of a religious site to draw visitors is, in part, connected to people's beliefs about the authenticity of the site and what this authenticity represents to them personally (Andriotis, 2011). This is one reason, perhaps, why different religious sites have different kinds of drawing power; that is, they attract groups of people seeking different kinds of experience. For example, grand cathedrals such as Canterbury Cathedral primarily draw those seeking a cultural and historical experience, while shrines and religious festival sites draw visitors who wish to engage in more worship-focused experiences (Bond *et al.*, 2014).

According to Nolan and Nolan (1992), particular sites seem to lose their ability to attract certain groups of visitors (or offer certain kinds of experiences) as perceptions of the site change. Current thinking tends to support this argument. For example, Ron (2009) suggests that visitors seek out some religious sites in search of historical and cultural meaning, not only as places of worship – the results published by Bond *et al.* (2014) also support this conclusion. Compared with visitors at other religious sites (such as a Marian shrine or religious festival), cathedral visitors were less likely to engage with the more spiritually centred experiences and were more interested in the architectural and aesthetic experiences the site had to offer. Cathedral visitors were also more likely to see their visit as a learning experience than any other form of experience.

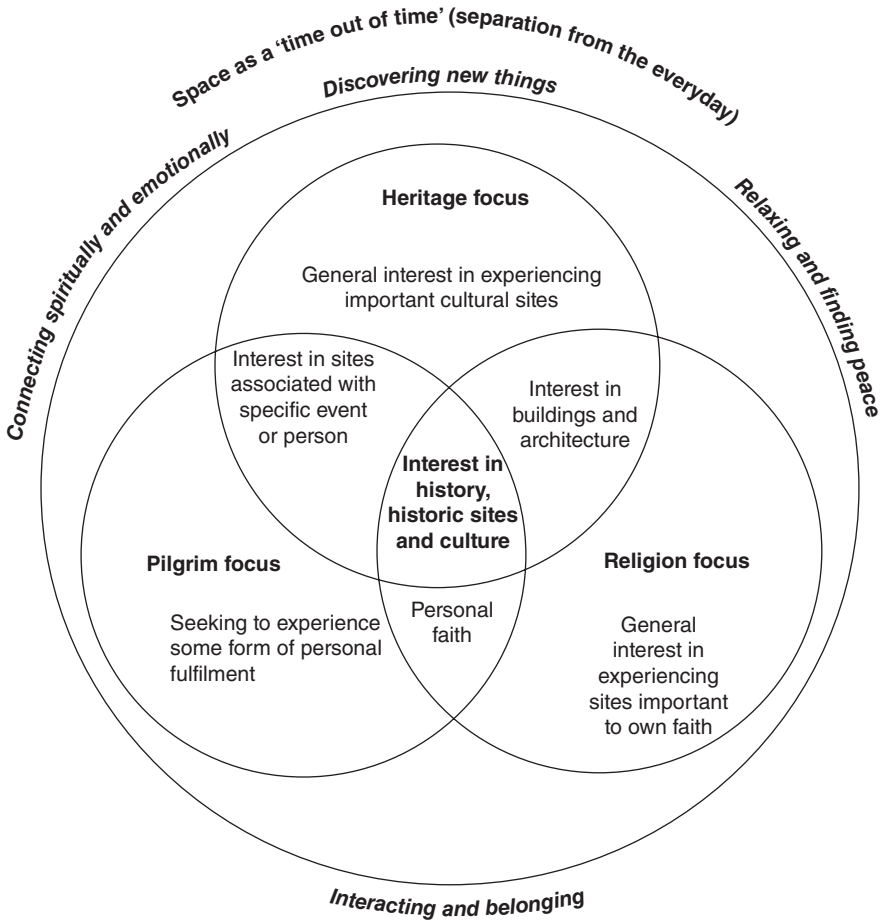
## Conceptualizing the Religious Tourism Experience

The feelings of alienation and the fragmentation of many of the social relationships individuals hold close can act as a catalyst for people to embark on journeys that they hope will connect them with their cultural past – even if the past people seek is a romanticized ideal (Cohen, 2006). Religious heritage sites are an ideal location to seek out such experiences. They provide spaces that are both educational and spiritual and allow visitors to reunify elements of their identity in a way that best suits their individual world views. Few (if any) visitors to religious sites expect a great religious epiphany or miracle from their visit. What people do expect is an intellectually and spiritually rewarding, personally fulfilling experience. What most visitors require is an exploration into their cultural/religious history in a way that enables them to engage, re-engage or reaffirm particular aspects of their identity. For most, this engagement needs to be within the context of the environment to which they intend to return at the end of their journey.

In [Fig. 8.1](#), a model of religious tourism experience is presented. This model is based not on the linear continuum of the traditional pilgrim/tourist frameworks we are familiar with, but rather on a series of overlapping visitor orientations. At the heart of the model is the understanding that the religious or numinous experience is but one aspect of the religious tourism experience, an experience that takes place within a particular socio-spatial context. In this model, religious sites represent a ‘time out of time’ (Falassi, 1987, p. 2). They are spaces that provide visitors with an environment removed from their everyday world; they therefore allow them respite from their usual lives, while also serving as a means to (re)engage with aspects of their lives with which they may have lost touch. This kind of experience is described as a separation experience by Packer and Ballantyne (2010). Separation experiences not only provide space for people to think, feel and behave differently, but also ‘stimulate self-reflection and re-evaluation’ (Packer and Ballantyne, 2010, p. 15). For visitors to religious sites, this experience means taking time out for personal emotional or physical healing or the broader elements of identity such as religious or cultural identity. Within this space, there is the potential for all visitors to achieve some level of transformative experience, be it spiritual, emotional, educational or physical.

Each circle in [Fig. 8.1](#) represents a primary visit orientation or focus rather than a fixed category of visitor (such as a ‘pilgrim’ or a ‘tourist’). The model is based on the premise that these are, at best, different kinds of roles with which the visitors may choose to identify, albeit roles influenced by particular socially constructed norms. The model recognizes that a visitor’s socialization and background, and even their religious knowledge, will influence the kinds of experiences that they will have at a religious site. It suggests that the three visitor orientations, heritage, religion and pilgrim, can be located within the same space at the same time. In this sense, a place could simultaneously represent both a sacred and a secular space.

Each visitor focus has a number of distinct and overlapping motivations and interests, which in turn will shape the nature of the experiences they will have. For example, most visitors will share some experiences; other experiences



**Fig. 8.1.** Conceptualization of religious heritage tourism experience.

will vary depending on the orientation they adopt or focus they have during the course of their visit. Common to all three orientations is an interest in history, culture and heritage sites. However, for the pilgrim focus and the religion focus, faith is the shared interest through which the experiences are mediated. For the heritage focus, a general interest in the world around them and a desire for a novel experience is the factor through which the experience is mediated.

Visitors oriented towards a heritage experience are interested in a range of sites and attractions; the site or the events associated with the site usually hold some degree of cultural resonance. For those of the religious orientation, although their religion is a central focus of the visit, it is not the only focus. In addition, religiously orientated individuals are more likely to have a broader interest in both historical and religious sites. They also seek a more educational experience in an attempt to rationalize their religious heritage with the secular world in which they live. They are expressly interested in sites associated with the history of their personal faith tradition. While they are not



seeking a deeply meaningful spiritual experience, they have the potential to be receptive to the sacred.

Lastly, for those with the pilgrim orientation, the spiritual focus of their visit is much more clearly defined. The specific site is personally meaningful for them and they are more open to achieving a deeper, more meaningful spiritual experience than other visitors. Their goal is to reconnect spiritually and mentally with their faith community. These visitors choose this particular site because the location links to a specific holy person or event associated with their faith tradition. This model therefore suggests that the nature of the space itself influences the kind of orientation the visitor identifies with and the nature of the experience they will have within that space. The visitor experience within the space is also influenced by the attitudes of the organization or authority present. Thus, the aesthetic, sensual and social qualities of the space can affect, but do not determine, the kinds of experiences people have within that space.

This model does not propose to be a fixed visitor typology. As current research illustrates, non-religious and religious tourism are not separate tourism experiences that never intersect; hence in this model there is a partial overlap between the three visitor orientations. The majority of visitors to religious sites are not purely religious, neither are they purely secular, and this important point has failed to be captured in the linear models put forward by researchers such as Smith (1992). All visitors have the potential to experience similar things and to achieve a range of spiritual, social and psychological experiences during the course of their visit. Therefore, at any given time, individual focus of a visit can change. The suggested model emphasizes blending of expectations and interests in the process of social interaction. It allows for the influence of interacting with other visitors with similar orientations to their own and with visitors with completely different orientations.

It is likely that particular visit orientations may only be relevant for the visit under consideration. For example, on one occasion a person may visit as a pilgrim and on another occasion he/she may simply be a local resident showing visiting friends or relatives around a favourite historic site. In each instance, the visitor is likely to experience the site in a slightly different way.

## Summary

There is increasing evidence to demonstrate that visitors to religious sites seek more than a casual encounter with an interesting or historic attraction. Furthermore, it is now evident that even those people who consider themselves pilgrims seek a range of experiences, not simply those pertaining to their faith or religious beliefs. While visitors may differ in their interpretations of the meaning, ownership and use of religious sites, it does not mean that such viewpoints are irreconcilable or incompatible. From a site management perspective, provided the stakeholders are not opposed to the presence of non-worshippers, it is counterproductive to view and treat any of their visitors

differently. By creating a strong spirit of place and presenting a single spiritual narrative to visitors, site managers can increase the likelihood that personal faith will be rediscovered or found in some instances and reinvigorated and confirmed in others. Given the generally historical and tranquil atmosphere of religious heritage sites, one would expect a visitor to any sacred place to take the opportunity to appreciate the architecture and artistry the site offers. However, sacred sites represent more than that. They are the carriers of memories, traditions and hopes.

Individuals construct their own meanings out of their experiences at religious heritage sites, and I would like to suggest that existing models of pilgrimage and tourism do not account for the multidimensional experiences that visitors, irrespective of their motivations, may have. Religious heritage sites enable visitors to feel part of something bigger than themselves and allow them to feel connected to both their histories and to other people in a way that visiting other heritage sites is unable to do. Visiting any place of worship can be emotionally, cognitively, socially and spiritually rewarding. Religious tourism provides an important opportunity to escape from the everyday within an environment that allows people to reconnect with themselves and with their cultural and/or religious heritage. People, irrespective of their attitudes towards faith, find comfort in ritual, history and ceremony of the familiar. Through these experiences, people can re-engage with tradition, to find that sense of belonging, even if it is not accompanied by a desire to believe.

## Discussion Questions

1. How important is it for religious sites to cater for the non-worshipping visitor experience? Should they be expressly catering for them?
2. Discuss how it is possible for any tourist destination to 'create' a visitor experience. Or is the most they can hope for to foster an environment where particular visitor experiences can occur?
3. How can scholars of religious tourism and pilgrimage move on from Turner and Turner's frequently cited axiom 'a pilgrim is half a tourist, if a tourist is half a pilgrim'? What implications does such a view have for those managing the visitor experience at religious sites?
4. Can visiting a religious site as a non-worshipping tourist be an act of vicarious religious practice? How would this impact on the visitor experience?

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# 9

## Sacred Pilgrimage and Tourism as Secular Pilgrimage

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### Introduction

This chapter provides insights into the pilgrim's experiential perspective of the spiritual fundamentals of pilgrimage and the author articulates emic insights into the emotions of the tradition of Christian pilgrimage. This is compared with different academic discourses on the characteristics of pilgrimage. For the author, independently of the academic and analytical perspectives, pilgrimage is viewed as a significant event in the believer's life, which should enrich them with a cognitive and aesthetic experience.

### The Spiritual Fundamentals of Pilgrimage: The Pilgrims' Experiential Perspective

A pilgrimage, when based upon spiritual assumptions, is essentially defined as the approximation of God by man. According to Mattoso (2000), people seek to engage in such acts in order to discover a way to establish contact with hidden forces that they presume preside over all of existence. These are perceived to be concentrated into benign, edifying or protective clusters in specific privileged sites and exist in all, or the vast majority of, civilizations, and are almost always integrated into religious practices and concrete places with defined itineraries and rituals set out for preferred dates.

The Catholic Church's Pontifical Council for the Pastoral of Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (1999) reinforced this idea and highlighted how evangelization is the ultimate reason for the Church advocating and encouraging

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pilgrimage with the objective of rendering a deeper and richer experience of faith. Throughout the centuries, Christians have set off on voyages celebrating places that either make reference to the memory of the Lord or those that represent important moments in the history of the Church. This extended to include sanctuaries honouring the Virgin Mary and those continuing examples set down by the saints. The dislocation was a process of conversion, out of a desire for intimacy with the divine and a confidence that such proximity would result in the granting of material needs. In each and every one of its multiple aspects, the pilgrimage has been a marvellous gift of grace.

Lived as a celebration of faith itself, for the Christian such religious journeying is a cultural manifestation to be undertaken in loyalty to tradition with a profound religious sentiment, acting out a paschal existence.

Its dynamic reveals, with clarity, some of the phases that the pilgrim attains: the departure demonstrates the decision to advance towards the goal and achieve the spiritual objectives of its baptismal vocation, the journey fosters solidarity with fellow participants and the preparation necessary for the meeting with the Lord while the visit to the sanctuary is propitious to hearing the Word of God and the sacramental celebration and the return records their mission in the world, as a witness to salvation and builder of peace.

(Pontifical Council for the Pastoral of Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 1999, pp. 35–36)

For the pilgrimage to lead to such a meeting, the praying, reading and meditation of the faithful should be ongoing throughout the route and after arriving in the sanctuary, so as to put into practice the words of Psalm 119 (verse 105): 'Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path'. In reality, according to the ecclesiastical authorities, all pastoral action in support of pilgrimages was to focus efforts on this approximation of the pilgrim to the Word of God. Firstly, a system of catechism adapted to the circumstances of the lives of the faithful was to be put forward identifying the cultural reality through truly accessible means of communication of proven effectiveness. This catechistic present would also take into consideration the events celebrated in the places visited and their respective striking features, never overlooking the necessary hierarchy in the exposition of the truth of faith nor their place within the liturgical itinerary in which the entire Church was to participate.

Within this framework, the meeting of the pilgrim with the Church and his/her experience as part of the Body of Christ should extend to a renovation of their baptismal vows; in the sanctuary and in confessing their sins, their conscience is challenged, is forgiven and forgives, is reborn through the sacrament of reconciliation and experiences divine grace and mercy. Accordingly, such pilgrimages bring about a reliving of the experience of the prodigal son and recognize the harshness of the test and the penitence, being dedicated to the sacrifices of the journey, fasting and sacrificing but while equally aware of the happiness of embracing the Lord (encharged with mercy), which turns the pilgrim away from death and towards life.

It is out of their acceptance of these assumptions that Chélini and Branthomme (1982) state that while the Church may not have invented pilgrimage, it did



authenticate it, organizing and disciplining such practices with the objective of higher spiritual elevation, with pilgrims 'seek[ing] out God however He allows Himself to be found', as advocated by the prophet Isaiah (55: 6).

However, beyond this approximation to God, the faithful should also re-encounter themselves. Dispersed in the multiplicity of daily concerns and realities, humans have a need for rediscovery, which should be achieved through silence, meditation and prayer; in summary, through an examination of their conscience. Vukonić (1996) also highlights the fact that pilgrimages appeal to every human capacity: emotional, audiovisual and motor.

Within this line of thought, Aucourt (1990) agrees with the definition of pilgrimage proposed by the Association Nationale des Directeurs Diocésains de Pèlerinages (ANDDP – the National Association of Diocesan Pilgrimage Directors), considering it to be an act of the Church, a moment of liberty and availability to see, hear, remember, encounter, bear witness, celebrate and pray in order to become different. Giuriati and Arzenton (1992) also hold that on pilgrimages, participants seek out a life-changing experience (conversion) that enables them to grasp how to obtain salvation and practise this in their daily lives, representing a symbolical path, but thanks to which the pilgrim is able to reach beyond the superfluous to enter into a field rich in authentic values.

As regards those aspects that pilgrimages should include, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral of Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (1999) deemed it was the responsibility of each national Episcopal Conference to set out the pastoral lines most appropriate to various situations and enact the structures necessary to put them into practice. Involving a specific catechetical process, the presentation of the fundamental features of acts of Christian pilgrimage was to open up new perspectives on practices in the life of the Church. Throughout the process, the presence of a spiritual leader plays a particularly relevant role. To engage in this ministry, the individual should have: the duly specific catechetical training (to convey the Word of God clearly and accurately); the appropriate psychological profile for welcoming and dealing with the diversity of pilgrims; and knowledge about the respective history and art so as to be able introduce group members to the wealth and legacy of the works of art visited and which represent continuous witnesses to the faith.

Thus, the effectiveness of sanctuaries would be measured in accordance with their capacity to respond to growing demands, given the increasingly frenetic space of modern life, for silent contact and contemplation both with God and with oneself, with the route travelled and the end of the pilgrimage designed to ensure faith flourishes in conjunction with, and in communion with, the Lord through prayer. According to Guerra (1989), the sanctuary is a place persons always return to with pleasure and miss after long periods of absence.

In practice, the theology of a place of pilgrimage reaches out in three directions, which correspond to the three dimensions of time: memory, presence and the prophecies of God to humans:

In relation to the unique and defined event of salvation, the sanctuary offers a memory of origins about the Lord of the heaven and of earth. As regards the present, it stands as a sign of divinity, a place of alliance where the Christian

community is expressed and regenerates. As regards the future, the sanctuary presents itself as a prophecy of the tomorrow of God.

(Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People, 1999, p. 59)

According to the aforementioned publication, in the biblical tradition, the sanctuary is not simply the fruit of human construction, replete with cosmological and anthropological symbolism, but, above and beyond all else, rather bears witness to the initiative of God in communicating with man with the objective of establishing a pact of salvation. The profound meaning of these sacred places is recorded in the faith of His work, and thus are entered so as to thank Him for His love and to express praise and awe at the miracles carried out by Him, to call on His forgiveness for sins committed and to implore Him for the aid necessary to be a pilgrim in life. In summary, sanctuaries were the appointed place for invoking and welcoming the Holy Spirit before later transporting this into every action of daily life.

For such reasons, in the pastoral service of catechism, the emphasis should be placed on following specific but related aspects: the memory of the site; the particular message of the site; the charisma that the Lord endowed it with; its artistic heritage; and the habits and customs built up there. However, while this set of actions is of importance, it nevertheless remains the case that the greatest attention has to be given to celebrating the Eucharist as this contains and expresses all forms of prayer, is at the centre of religious community life and is the event of grace encapsulating the spiritual treasure of the Church.

Finally, the Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People (1999) also stated that on the one hand it was in the sanctuary that people learned how to open up their heart to everybody and particularly those displaying differences – the guest, the foreigner, the immigrant, the refugee, whoever professes a different religion, non-believers – and on the other hand, while any sanctuary may be deemed to convey a precise message (given that it represents today the event that founded it in the past), the Marian sanctuaries provide a genuine schooling in faith; for example, the maternal example and intercession of Mary. This served to recall that it was within her embrace that there was a first meeting between the divine and the human, and into which the Holy Spirit descended. This was attested to in the words of Pope Pius XII, in his reference to Fátima (Portugal) as a 'blessed oasis, impregnated with the supernatural, where one feels closest to the Immaculate Heart of Mary, beating with immense maternal tenderness and solicitude for us and for the world' (APOAP, undated, p. 152).

Complementary to the content set out throughout this point, we would point to the message of Pope Benedict XVI when speaking to participants at the Second World Congress on the Pastoral Care of Pilgrimages and Shrines, which took place in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), in 2010.

In these historical moments into which we are called, with greater force if possible, to evangelize our world, the riches offered to us by . . . pilgrimage to the shrines should be highlighted. First of all, for their great ability to summon and bring together a growing number of pilgrims and religious tourists, some of whom are

in complicated human and spiritual situations, somewhat distant from living the faith and a weak sense of ecclesiastic affiliation. Christ speaks to all of them with love and hope. The desire for happiness that is imbedded in the soul finds its answer in Him, and human suffering together with Him has a meaning. With His grace, the noblest causes also find their complete fulfilment. As Simeon met with Christ in the temple (cf. Lk. 2, 25–35), so too a pilgrim should have the opportunity to discover the Lord in the shrine.

(ZENIT, 2010)

## Academic Perceptions of Pilgrimage

According to academics, pilgrimages are a phenomenon bound up with the social sciences and to be analytically approached by empirical assumptions and in accordance with those actually participating. Vukonic (1996) maintains that since the most ancient mythologies through to present times, all religions have leveraged the hopes of the believer in proclaiming to them that a visit to a sacred site would alleviate all or many of their problems, whether spiritual or earthly in nature.

Within this process, and depending on the depth of their belief, the faithful are prepared to embark on travels, covering shorter or longer distances so as to satisfy their respective religious needs, which may incorporate the completion of an act of obligation central to their religion. Doctrinal teachings, especially those of Christianity, attempt to explain the pilgrimage as one of the expressions of spirituality within not only a transcendental context but also endowed with earthly characteristics. In particular, Catholics see the practice as a diaspora throughout the world, with a destination involving sanctification, and with dislocations to holy sites as a means of learning about the lives of the saints, about Mary, the earthly existence of Jesus and the revelation of His truth.

Within this line of thinking, Mattoso (2000) is still more incisive as to the valuation attributed to pilgrimages and considers them incompatible with scientific rationality (which seeks to discredit them), as they contain a profound impulse that almost forces a dislocation in space and in time as well as the ritual collective celebration of those who opt to engage. However, this does not mean a simple journey would suffice, as inherent to pilgrimages is an underlying state of spirit that stems from a complex set of conditions, which diverse peoples take on, out of a commitment to determine, in favourable locations, the ambience and the landscape propitious to wonder and contemplation. According to this author, this thereby strengthens the rituals, whether in terms of the naturally created conditions or the self-distancing from daily and artificial life and all of its wearing and tiring processes.

The prayers and rituals that diverse religions have established tend to emphasize a rupture with the trivial. They demand that habits are abandoned, that the impact of the unknown is faced up to, the maternal bosom of the family and support of friends is renounced and the pangs of loneliness and insecurity are coped with even to the extent of staring the risk of death in its face. In summary, they

demand that the profane is left behind along with all of its accumulated illusionary safeties and comforts and where one also lives burdened under by the constant effort to repair the inevitable degradation of existence. Correspondingly, in pilgrimages, the fear of death is inverted, replacing it with a confrontation with risk, the nudity of an exposed and accepted weakness, choosing the experience of vertigo that engulfs whoever voluntarily treads the limits of the human.

(Mattoso, 2000, p. 5)

From the perspective of Voyé (1996), pilgrimages, beyond possessing the capacity to reconcile the body and the spirit, are bearers of an affirmation of national, regional and local identities, capable of highlighting daily proximities and complicities. Against the backdrop of a world undergoing globalization and where functional rules are diluted by abstraction and generality, in their own way pilgrimages contribute towards responding to these expectations with their religious significance accompanied by the awareness that the importance of the social dimension should never be neglected.

In terms of dividing up pilgrims by categories, Chélini and Branthomme (1982) made recourse to Mario Venece (the authors do not include the respective bibliographical reference in their work), in whose classification the motivations behind departure are: *the devoted pilgrim*, destined to the spiritual improvement of his being, constituting the purest of forms, the freest and oriented towards the perfection of the soul and the search for eternal salvation; *the penitential pilgrim*, frequently imposed by a member of the clergy, ecclesiastical court or even a civil judge in the Middle Ages – to a greater or lesser extent a severe means of punishment for serious crimes; and *the supplicant pilgrim*, including, among others, the sick and invalids. Russell (1999) added to the above: those following religious commandments; attending a prayer meeting with a religious leader; witnessing or participating in a religious ceremony or event; and pilgrims visiting a place which they hope in the future will bear miracles.

Within a more pragmatic perspective, Ambrósio (2000) observes that pilgrimage is not linked to either a particular civilizational facet or to any particular way of thinking and certainly not to any socio-economic status. Indeed, this author deems pilgrimage as latent in each human being and covers two aspects, one of a spiritual order and another of a practical nature, with the title of religious tourism attributed to their interconnections: the first is, in its origins, the motivation that drives the will to travel while the latter includes aspects such as the dislocation and frequently of the stay in the area surrounding the sanctuary.

However, Kaszowski (2000), while taking into consideration its complex and interdisciplinary characteristics, focuses upon how in its essence pilgrimage is a religious act and locates it within the field of theological research, in addition to other fields dealing with religion. As a human activity, religion needs to be observed from social, psychological, cultural, economic and legal perspectives as such practices are engaged in across spaces, varying in intensity over time and also incorporating geographic and historical features.

In this article, the author emphasizes the interrelationship between all the characteristics, highlighting the fact that pilgrimage represents a component of human culture as well as an active factor in cultural formation and frequently

serves not only to modify the natural and geographic landscape of the sacred site but also, through this process, changes the behaviours, customs and mentalities of local communities and ends up driving regional differentiation. Through involving mass mobility, pilgrimages also form part of the notion of migration and in the past (and the present) have stimulated the development of localities and patterns of communication in addition to technical and service infrastructures. Finally, as social phenomena, pilgrimages require legal regulation (see Fig. 9.1).

As regards approaches to pilgrimage, Kaszowski divides them into two fields: one theoretical and cognitive, and another practical and applicable (Table 9.1). The first deals with the identification, description and perception/determination of the object under study while the latter approaches the organization and utilization of its meanings. This specialist maintains that, irrespective of the perspective under analysis, pilgrimage needs to be conceived of as a significant event in the life of the believer, a means of enriching it and not only as a mere cognitive and aesthetic experience, reaching beyond fatigue and hardship.

Another means of dealing with pilgrimages is from the perspective of the pilgrim. According to Branthomme (1982), the pilgrim should perceive that he/she is physically and morally progressing along a path that is not of daily life, that the path and the rupture with routines will impose unforeseen events, risks and sacrifices, but that these shall collectively serve to expand the vision beyond

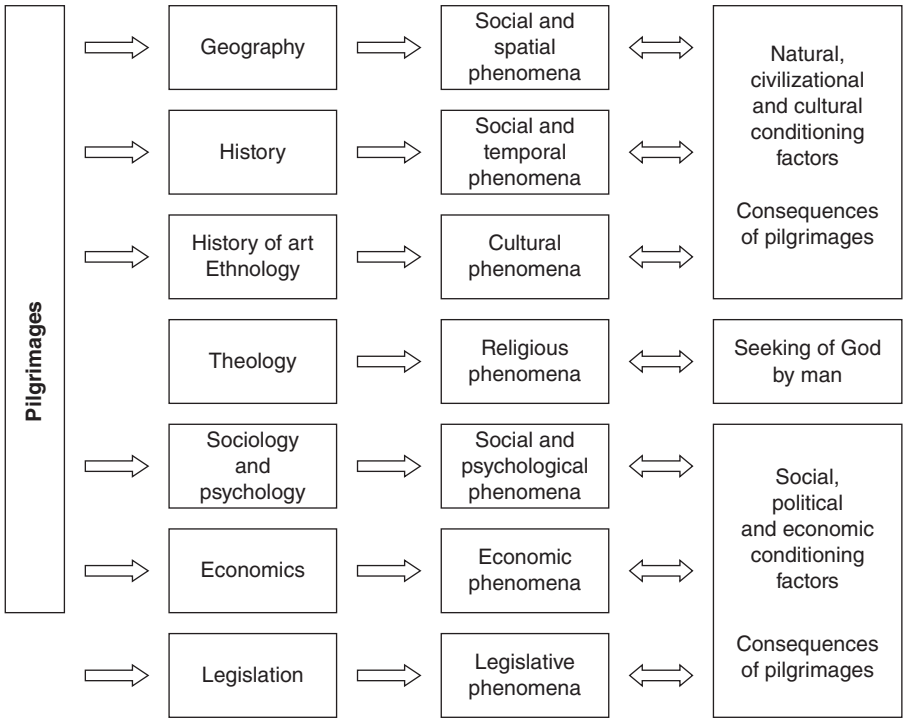


Fig. 9.1. Pilgrimage complexity and interdisciplinary characterization. (From Kaszowski, 2000.)

**Table 9.1.** Approaches to pilgrimage. (Adapted from Kaszowski, 2000.)

Approach	Capacities/Needs (desires)
Theoretical and cognitive	Capacity for identification – recognizing the phenomena inherent to that pilgrimage distinguishing it from others that are similar Capacity for description – characterizing the pilgrimage phenomena, explaining its attributes and secondary characteristics Capacity for determining the context surrounding the phenomena – the foundations and conditions for the pilgrimage, as well as all its diverse and foreseeable consequences
Practice and application	Capacity for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• conceiving/planning a pilgrimage;</li> <li>• preparing/organizing a pilgrimage;</li> <li>• completing the plan and the programme; and</li> <li>• leading the pilgrimage, acting as its guide.</li> </ul> Capacity for using pilgrimages for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• educational purposes (human development); and</li> <li>• educational and cognitive objectives.</li> </ul>

familiar horizons. This experience is to bring about lucidity and self-awareness, with the holy site that is the destination also generating spiritual riches (there, at the foot of saints and God, the body is satisfied as in no other place). Ostrowski (2000) warns as to the difficulties posed in attempting to opt for a pure pilgrimage, completely packed out with religious actions, and instead defends that intervals and pauses should be provided given the intensity of the aforementioned actions. In accordance with many specialists, overload may result in the opposite of what is intended, demanding of the individual physical, psychiatric and spiritual hygiene, as the pilgrimage is also driven by a curiosity, a desire to see new places, meet new persons and really give themselves over to fulfilment. One particular example is that an individual on a pilgrimage lasting many days, especially when on foot, whenever putting into practice the characteristics mentioned, does still remain a pilgrim.

The novel *Terapia*, by Lodge (1997), looked at the pilgrim in accordance with the phase of personal development put forward by Kierkegaard: aesthetic, ethical and religious. To the individual of aesthetic interest, there was the amusement and enjoyment of the picturesque and cultural pleasures encountered along the route. The ethical type would conceive of pilgrimage above all as a test of their spiritual strength and self-discipline, lacking in any strict notion as to correct behaviour; for example, not sleeping in hotels and adopting a highly competitive attitude towards others over the course of the route. The true pilgrim is the religious, but religious in the *Kierkegaardian* sense (according to the philosopher, Christianity was the ‘absurd’ as, if entirely rational, there would be no merit whatsoever in being a believer). In summary, the aesthetic does not pretend to be a true pilgrim, the ethical is always wondering whether he/she is or is not, while the true pilgrim simply gets on with being so.

Finally, pilgrimage has also been analysed from the social group perspective. According to Hitrec (1991), this practice is highly collective, and in



conformity with sociology, pilgrims contribute towards the idea of unification within the same religion. Picking up this idea, Boisvert (1997) affirms that some form of rupture is at the core of pilgrimage through a cutting that establishes connections with a broader dimension, which ensures the individual is no longer overwhelmed by the surrounding ambience to move into an almost and even actually mythical context, beyond time and space, enrooting a tradition jointly shared by the community into the hearts of each believer.

Within this framework, Fortuna and Ferreira (1993), based upon the work of Victor Turner (1969), explain that pilgrimage, in assuming a unifying character, generates the spirit of *communitas* through suspending ways of life and the inequalities in class and cultural difference inscribed into the social conditions the actors set off from. Hence, this may be considered as nurturing an exorcism effect, or some temporary suspension of society, which confers a particular sense of involvement, figurative in nature.

The pilgrimage is not only a physical dislocation from familiar to unfamiliar surroundings but is also a dislocation (ascension) from the centre of daily life (place of residence, employment) in favour of a distant periphery (sanctuary). In this play inverting the senses of pilgrims, the secular centre of daily realities is rendered peripheral and, inversely, the sought after distant periphery is transformed into a central, physical (spiritual) space. The sanctuary is thereby converted into a central periphery, mobilising differentiated and dispersed individual sentiments (Turner and Turner, 1978), but capable, for the same inherent reasons and even if only temporarily so, of inducing a particular sense of collectiveness. Such an ephemeral aggregation of individualities corresponds to what Turner (1969) termed *communitas*.

(Fortuna and Ferreira, 1993, p. 59)

## Pilgrimage versus Tourism

Ecclesiastical and secular studies both make frequent recourse to tourism and pilgrimage definitions: the former to define a border between the respective phenomena and the latter to bring about its osmosis. Based upon these assumptions, this section traces trends and progress in research carried out in recent decades.

In the 1970s, with the development and expansion of tourism, some ecclesiastics became aware of a need to distinguish between the two forms of travelling. Correspondingly, Gendron (1972) stated that a tourist was seeking after his/her own self and release from the pressures imposed by daily life, while the pilgrim sets off to get closer to God. Within this division, the author considers the religious tourist to be like any other and to be travelling to seek release from their day-to-day reality, even if their place of convergence is a divine place, and hence while attracted by the sanctuary, by the proximity to the divine, they may not be exclusively travelling in a search for the Lord.

Taking a similar approach, Roussel (1972) verifies that for a visit to be considered a pilgrimage, it needs to be carried out with devotional intent and not

merely as some stop-off out of curiosity or some tourist excursion to a place of religious interest. The pilgrimage requires a will to venerate, the essential characteristic of spiritual effusion. The author also includes within this categorization, for example, pilgrimages to the tomb of Lenin, or any other essentially lay pilgrimage that contains a clear 'devotional intention'.

In the opposing field, secular theoreticians seek to demonstrate that there are no core dissimilarities between the two terms. Cohen (1974) proposes the thesis that tourism is a type of modern civilizational pilgrimage, at least in its more serious formats. The motives for the voyage become far more substantial than simple recreation and entertainment and therefore analogous with the ecstasies of the pilgrim. The author points out how tourists always move in the direction of their respective destinations as a type of symbol of their desires and needs, just as pilgrims do when heading towards a sanctuary in search for the satisfaction of their religious and spiritual aspirations.

Similarly, MacCannell (1976) defines tourism as a 'ritual of modern society', considering the tourist to be a pilgrim who simply must see the sites incarnating the extraordinary powers in which he/she believes (in Europe that must include Paris and the equally obligatory visit to Notre Dame, the Eiffel Tower and the Louvre). In comparing this with the religious (based upon the characteristic manifestations of both), MacCannell concluded that both sought to distract the mind from the slavery of daily labour and routines. Turner and Turner (1978) also identified the tourist as a semi-pilgrim should the pilgrim be deemed a semi-tourist, adding that whether a person mixes in an anonymous mass crowd on a beach, or in an agglomeration of believers, the individual is searching for a symbolic, almost sacred, form of company, which as a general rule is found beyond the scope of their daily life.

In 1981, Cohen reformulated his opinion in observing that while pilgrimages and tourism are interrelated, they are distinct phenomena. The features shared in common consist of a temporary change in residence, in setting off for a predetermined destination and the search for other ideas. However, they differ in their characteristics; that is, in the activities undertaken during the period of travelling and/or stay at the destination.

In the ecclesiastical field, Guerra (1988) analyses visitors based upon the evangelical purpose of the sanctuary, granting the more honourable term of pilgrim to those able to demonstrate sufficient knowledge about the nature of the sacred place and hence draw on the spiritual returns inherent to such dislocation, while a second category might be entitled sanctuary-goers, joining these pilgrimages exclusively or overwhelmingly to make a request or to complete a vow following a wish being granted. The third category is that of tourists, who do not generally prove to be a major problem to the ambience of the sanctuary as they adopt the role of third person and do not hold any feelings of animosity. In complement, Guerra (1989) furthermore distinguishes pilgrimage from common tourism, arguing that faith is the feature that separates them. Nevertheless, and despite the qualitative characteristics specific to pilgrimages (sufficient to classify them as separate to tourism activities), he does accept their inclusion under the common denomination of religious tourism due to the positive practical implications resulting.

In the 1990s, while some authors did insist on the demarcation between pilgrimage and tourism, many academics (both lay and religious) put forward positions structured around establishing points in common between the two phenomena. The former group includes Bauer (1993), who holds firm to an image of tourism bound up with notions of banality, frivolity and consumption contrasting with a pilgrim associated with seriousness and dedication, and that pilgrimage was not a tourism excursion but rather a spiritual retreat requiring sacrifice and religious motivation to the extent of dealing with transcendental experiences. The author furthermore corroborates Robi Ronza (1992) in apologizing for using the term to the detriment of religious tourism, as tourism and pilgrimage are two opposing conceptions of the world. Within a similar approach, Vukonic (1996) recalls the position of the Church at the time of an international congress on tourism organized by the Christian Conference of Asia (in Manila, 1981), which confirmed that modern tourism was not pilgrimage as the pilgrim stepped gently on to sacred soil while the tourist crossed such places and photographed them; the former travelling with humility and patience while the latter does so with arrogance and urgency.

In a transitional approach, Hitrec (1991) finds that authors such as Hunziker and Krapf (1942) had already discussed and set out the characteristics of certain forms of human migration based upon religious motivations, attempting not only to collate them but also to integrate them into tourism definitions as a modern phenomenon. This position gave rise to the non-academic and frequent comment that tourism represents a form of pilgrimage and the still more common statement that pilgrimage is a type of tourism. With reference to the spiritual framework and the religious conceptions of tourism, the author substantiates his opinion on that of MacCannell (1976), who proposes that while on the one hand sacred places and objects are losing their aura and acquiring touristic characteristics and functions, on the other hand, the tourism experience is the opportunity to seek out an authentic reality and the meaning of human existence. Taking a similar stance, theologians declare that tourism is a means of understanding the organic world and the inorganic of divine creation (able to utilize leisure time for spiritual enrichment and even for moral rebirth), also assuming that the pilgrim gets interested in the natural and built heritage (while benefiting from them as a tourist). In many religious community documents, the utilization of the term religious tourism has become synonymous with pilgrimage, as is the case with item 24 of the Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Tourists.

In turn, Smith (1992) observes that tourism and pilgrimage have been defined as activities based upon three operational features – earnings, free time and the social permission to travel. These determine whether or not a society deems a particular behaviour to be correct, as well as the prevailing philosophy, based upon the socio-economic and political conditions, and thus they strongly influence the way in which leisure time and holidays are spent – encouraging pilgrimage through certain periods and leisure travel in others.

As regards the sanctuaries, as central meeting points between believers and religious tourists Vukonic (1996) defends, in conjunction with Cohen (1992), the fundamental idea of these typically 'out there' centres, eccentric to built agglomerations and the standardized socio-political axes and, consequently, tending to be peripheral and remote – the authors base their observations on the anthropological study of pilgrimage by Victor and Edith Turner (1978). Within this context, when the centre of pilgrimage is concentric, the pilgrim travels in the direction of the socio-cultural core of his/her society, while the tourist is travelling out to the periphery whenever eccentric (localized on the socio-cultural and geographic periphery of the pilgrim's own society). The pilgrimage becomes imbued with touristic facets and thus the greater the distance between the sanctuary and the place of residence, the stronger the touristic component to such voyages. To a similar end, Boisvert (1997) furthermore adds that both pilgrims and tourists create a distance in relation to their place of origin, a distancing that enables them to put into perspective their respective existence. The pilgrim breaks off ties to their community, undertakes a circumnavigation, establishing new references, interpreting experiences in relation to the new collectiveness in which the pilgrim is an active participant, and returning transformed. The tourist only breaks with his/her immediate surrounding environment, and thus does not necessarily create a new community. In addition, Fortuna and Ferreira (1993) affirm, in line with Turner and Turner (1978), that the pilgrim completes a rite of passage whenever breaking away from *societas* so as to approximate *communitas*, before once again returning to the former.

With the expansion of tourism-focused research, especially in terms of management, the literature includes works distancing themselves from spiritual analysis and opting instead for a more pragmatic perspective. A good example is the study by Murray and Graham (1997) on Santiago de Compostela that verified how the pilgrimage flows to that city were based upon a complex dialectic of apparent contradictions and tensions which interpenetrate the behavioural models for the markets observed (pilgrims, tourists, motor driven and walking visitors). According to these authors, the conflicts arise because tourism activities transfigured the essential meaning of the religious icons and the traditional religious values associated with the sanctuary and its pilgrimage history (see [Table 9.2](#)).

Despite alterations, Murray and Graham agree with Nolan and Nolan (1992) and their affirmation that tourism and pilgrimage are not incompatible activities and thus the changes in meaning should not be connoted as negative, as it was tourism that reinvented the Way (El Camino) of Santiago and transformed it from an obsolete pathway into a resource for contemporary society.

With the advent of the new millennium, irrespective of some specialists continuing to insist on a division between pilgrimage and tourism, the majority of studies have set out an intermediate category that attempts to bring the two phenomena together.

Those who opt to maintain a deep distinction between the two tend in the majority to be specialists without any connection to tourism research, such as Mattoso (2000). He insists on travel/pilgrimage to the detriment of a tourism

**Table 9.2.** Santiago de Compostela as a religious product. (From Murray and Graham, 1997.)

Religious product	Religious meaning	Tourism modification
<b>Sanctuary and ceremonies</b>		
Santiago de Compostela	Pilgrimage destination	City of culture
Santiago Cathedral	Prayer, adoration	Heritage attraction
Santiago Day and Botafumeiro	Ritual	Special tourism event
Holy Years	Prayer	Tourism theme
Touching the Relics	Devotion	Good luck
<b>The approaches</b>		
Compostela	Expiation	Certifying genuineness
Pilgrim routes	Penitence, punishment	Personal renewal, adventure
Pilgrim sanctuaries	Prayer, expiation	Architectural heritage
Pilgrim residences	Sanctuary	<i>Parador</i> /heritage hotel
<i>Vieiras</i> /scallops	Pilgrim	Brand logo

understood as something dilettante, where, according to his opinion, the impulse that today leads people to travel beyond their old country, even if just once in life, does not result in the typical phenomena of what modern civilization refers to as tourism given that this does not reach beyond a curious and superficial means of responding to a profound impetus. In fact, travelling does not only result from an appetite for the different (to see new lands, meet the other and move beyond the known or accustomed to), but rather represents a movement that implies physical dislocation and provides the opportunity to witness the polymorphic variety of humanity itself, enabling the traveller to become aware of the scale of the world of which he/she is part.

Liszewski (2000), in comparing pilgrimages with religious tourism, had already moved to integrate the former into the latter even while defending the maintenance of the traditional designation as proven by centuries of existence. Furthermore, he holds that there is no error whatsoever in incorporating this specific type of travel (the pilgrimage) within a broader social phenomenon (tourism), given how the latter also coexists with dislocation and the regeneration of the human physical and psychic condition.

Santos (2003), aware of the complexity of the phenomena under study, turns to Stoddard (1997) in order to put forward a scheme that balances the types of traveller with their motivations, relating both with two genres of movement in space (see Fig. 9.2).

This approach holds the prospect of consensus based on the creation of three fields: two opposite (one for categorizing secular tourism and the other for pilgrimage) and one permutation contemplating religious facets to tourism services.

Tejerina Arias (2010) also finds that while pilgrimage and religious tourism are not absolutely differentiable, in the former the strictly religious component prevails, while in the latter the pleasure or aesthetic dimension is preponderant and the main objective of the visit is the enjoyment of places of historical and/or artistic worth within the framework of a religion.

Genre	Travellers	Motivations
Leisure		Profane
	Secular tourist	
	Religious tourist	
Religious	Pilgrim	Sacred

**Fig. 9.2.** Motivation, types of traveller and dislocation genres. (From Santos, 2003.)

Summary

In comparing different perspectives on the spiritual fundamentals of pilgrimage as a sacred and secular activity, this chapter has provided a range of insights into what it means to be both a pilgrim and tourist in contemporary society. It was acknowledged that pilgrimage within the Christian tradition (and indeed in other religious traditions) is a celebration of faith with the characterization of distinct stages of a journey, both physical and symbolic, in its composition. The departure symbolizes a ‘path’ towards spiritual goals which not only enables pilgrims to establish solidarity with others but crucially prepares them for an encounter with God. In listening to the ‘Word of God’ at a religious shrine, pilgrims return spiritually transformed with the renewal of a baptismal pledge. In providing these insights into the sacred and pious qualities of pilgrimage it was acknowledged that the wider insight to emerge is that while the concept of pilgrimage might have distinct features within different civilizations, its common element is the spiritual foundation of an encounter between man and God.

Therefore, in addition to exploring the different components or stages of pilgrimage, travelling on a symbolic path to reach spiritual goals, this chapter also reviewed different academic perceptions of pilgrimage, emphasizing that pilgrimage has emerging secular qualities. In reviewing academic perceptions of pilgrimage it was acknowledged that there are both theoretical and cognitive elements of pilgrimage, with a matrix of interdisciplinary elements which incorporate the transformation of natural and geographical into ‘sacred landscapes’. Further perspectives include aesthetic, ethical and religious elements of pilgrimage which inform the actions of the individual, with sociological perspectives explaining the shared experience or *communitas* experienced by groups of pilgrims.

There are contrasting interpretations of potential dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism. One interpretation is that in contrast to the tourist, the pious pilgrim needs to engage in some form of adoration at a religious shrine. However, differing interpretations suggest that while the pilgrim is attracted by a shrine and a ‘proximity to the divine’, the visit is not exclusively to worship God. Cohen’s (1992) analysis contrasted the concentricity of pilgrimage ‘centres’ with the peripherality of tourist ‘centres’.

While Guerra (1989) contrasted ‘vulgar tourism’ with pilgrimage and Bauer (1993) characterized the image of tourism underpinned by frivolity, banality and



consumption, and pilgrimage concerned with commitment and seriousness, other authors acknowledge the merging of the sacred and secular qualities of pilgrimage and tourism. Indeed, in this respect MacCannell (1976) characterized tourism as the 'ritual of the modern society' and Turner and Turner (1978) questioned contemporary pilgrims as 'semi-tourists'. In providing the example of El Camino and the path to Santiago de Compostela in Spain the chapter argued for the ancient qualities of pilgrimage and their modern connection as a tourism resource in contemporary society.

In considering a range of academic perspectives on these concepts it is possible to theorize about the unification of tourism and pilgrimage as concepts, but also the distinctiveness of pilgrimage, which retains an ancient lineage as a sacred and spiritual form of travel.

## Discussion Questions

1. What would you consider as the different perspectives on the spiritual fundamentals of pilgrimage as a sacred and secular activity?
2. Discuss Cohen's (1992) concept of contrasting the concentricity of pilgrimage 'centres' with the peripherality of tourist 'centres'.
3. Do you agree with Bauer (1993) who characterizes the image of tourism as underpinned by frivolity, banality and consumption, and pilgrimage as being based on commitment and seriousness?
4. Reflecting on the issues raised in this chapter, explore ways in which spiritual paths may augment the ancient qualities of pilgrimage with a tourism resource that is contemporary for modern society.

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# 10 Social Network Tools as Guides to Religious Sites

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## Introduction

Religious sites, when viewed from the perspective of tourism, are resources that can also be offered to tourists interested in history and culture (Olsen, 2006). Within that group lie many tourist types, motivated by incentives such as religion, religious tourism or pilgrimage.

Shackley (2001) affirms that the nature of the experience a sacred space offers its visitors is highly complex, intangible and includes elements such as nostalgia, divine proximity, atmosphere and spiritual merit. Religious tourists venerate and respect sacred sites; they are in search of an experience which brings them close to divinity and transcendence. However, they share religious sites with other tourist types, and unless the values and expected behaviour from tourists are made explicit by the site, attitudes held by pilgrims and religious tourists and those of other tourists can be conflictive.

This chapter revises the present use of various types of social networks in religious sites, outlining the two major paths that have yet to be explored. These are: (i) broadcasting through new technologies, circulating information and knowledge relating to the religion, site or brand image; and (ii) using this data to build up a profile of tourist types, consumption patterns, or to generate more engagement with the site.

## Sacred Spaces and New Tourists

The religious site must effectively combine the use of its space for different tourist types and at the same time cater to the need for a religious experience.

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Smith (1992), for example, introduces the distinction between religious tourism and pilgrimage. Both pilgrimage and religious tourism require an intensity of motivation that is not easy to find in other tourist typologies.

Thus, sacred spaces attract visitors with different motivations. McGettigan (2003), examining sacred spaces, explores the relationship between cultural tourism, religious tourism and spiritual tourism. Aulet and Hakobyan (2011) define religious tourism as a type of tourism motivated by religion (in combination with other reasons or not), which has as a destination a religious site (local, regional, national or international). This can be linked or not to participating in religious ceremonies and activities, apart from visiting the destination, and the journey itself is not a religious practice. Pilgrimage differs in the sense that the trip is part of a religious practice. The pilgrimage requires a sacrifice and spiritual isolation; pilgrimage is an initiation ritual that consists of three phases (separation, death or rebirth initiation and aggregation) and therefore the phase of the journey or trip is part of this experience (Turner and Turner, 1978). However, both pilgrims and tourists have in religious and sacred spaces an attitude of reverence and respect and seek to have transcendent experiences.

Spiritual tourism is a form of tourism that can be religiously oriented or not, involving satisfaction, emotional involvement, enjoyment and well-being for the spirit (WTO, 2007). It may include visiting architecturally significant temples, participating in retreats or experiencing pilgrimage routes; but it can also be developed in cultural and natural environments and may include activities for relaxation and wellness (Liogier, 2009).

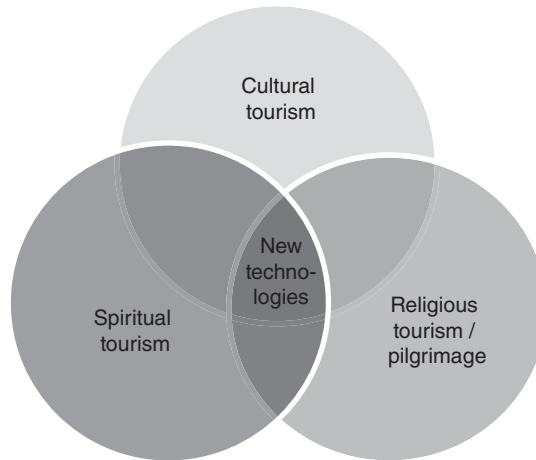
The difference between these typologies and cultural tourism is, again, the motivation. The motivation of the cultural tourist is to learn new information and to have experiences in order to satisfy their cultural needs (Richards, 2007).

If space is commonly used by all these types, what differentiates them is motivation and behaviour. Volozinskis (1991) suggests that churches are empty of devotees while they are filled with tourists; thus, the presence of visitors in sacred spaces leads to new forms of exchange and interaction between religion and the tourist motivations. Shackley (2001) suggests that the way to manage all these varying motivations and to minimize negative impacts and conflicts is through information. New technologies provide a very important opportunity to do this in a manner that is customizable and flexible in accordance with the information needs of each visitor (see [Fig. 10.1](#)).

## Religion and New Media

New communication technologies have been quickly adopted by society, and religion, being part of society, has not been left behind in the digital invasion. However, studies on what impact these new technologies have had on religion are fairly recent. Until now this field has been explored by disciplines such as sociology, semiology, psychology, computing and linguistics (Pace and Giordan, 2012), but not from a tourism perspective.

The first studies in this area were around 2005, but it has only been in the last 5 years that research surrounding what is known as 'digital religion' has



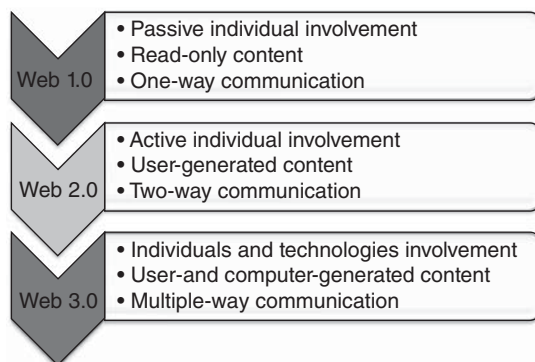
**Fig. 10.1.** Relationship between different tourist motivations in sacred spaces and new technologies. (Adapted from McGettigan, 2003.)

gained attention (Campbell, 2013). But even then, there are still relatively few studies in the field (Campbell *et al.*, 2014), and when they exist tourists interested in religious tourism and pilgrimage show a very low ICT (information and communications technology) adoption (Katsoni, 2014).

These initial studies show that both individuals and religious communities are increasing their use of new communications with a religious purpose (Campbell, 2010). Until now, the majority of previous studies have focused on analysing how these religious communities behave both in the use of and in answer to new communication technologies. With the increase in Internet use, Campbell (2005) pointed out that there was a need to study how this was affecting religion, as religion continued being a relevant part of contemporary society. An interesting division in the relationship between religion and new technologies became apparent, and is what Helland (2005) calls the duality between online religion, where communication is unrestricted, and religion online, which merely provides religious information in a digital environment. In his work Helland also indicates that the digital world in religion is created for communication, and while in an interactive system of communication anything could happen, religion online is so well programmed that nothing happens by accident.

One of the great challenges of the digital world that research has not been able to advance is the control of information. At the beginning, religious centres and groups used simple forms of communication to transmit and explain their message. Following this, they used communication for different purposes, for example to create a brand image. The next natural step would then be to follow the trend and apply new communication technologies, using information generated by the user in their daily activities online, taken from new social tools, to generate new and adapted content to each individual user. This use and control of information is a reality, and there is a continuing debate regarding how it affects users' privacy.

If Web 1.0 was a clear success in the tourism field at the end of the previous millennium and the beginning of the current one, nowadays Web 2.0 has raised multiple forms of virtual tourist community due to the nature of tourism, where experience is at its basis. This is also due to the evolution of digital technology and travellers' willingness to share information (Volo, 2010). Web 3.0 is still incipient in tourism but it will strongly appear in the forthcoming years (see Fig. 10.2).



**Fig. 10.2.** Main characteristics of the web pages.

When translating this relevance of digital tourism to religion, it appears that even with the importance of the Internet in our society, research on religious tourism and the Internet has focused mainly on web pages. Nevertheless, one area that recently has attracted much attention is that of mobile technology and religion, especially apps, which have made an impact on our everyday lives. Wagner (2013) and Campbell *et al.* (2014) define and classify mobile apps into nine separate categories as outlined in Fig. 10.3.

In this classification, those with an explicit travel and tourism element are included within 'others', because of the small number of apps designed specifically for this purpose, with religious tourism being a further subset of this category. This strengthens the theory that the concept of religious tourism is still underdeveloped and has much ground to cover.

It is difficult to explain the reasons for this underdevelopment because it is probably a combination of several. Is the profile of the religious traveller part of it? Age, education level and nationality are options to discuss. A difference in technology adoption appears to exist between religious tourists and other



**Fig. 10.3.** Classification of mobile apps. (From Wagner, 2013.)



segments. Different religions have different approaches to technology that might also affect its use.

In any case we are sure that religious tourism will finally overcome this technological gap. For this reason, the following section aims to go into further detail on the potential for applying new technologies to religious tourism.

## Tourism and New Media

Even though the relationship between tourism and new technologies has not been researched by the academic world in detail, tourism itself as a phenomenon has been well researched, including the effect new technologies have on it. This is especially true in the field of marketing, where there are numerous examples. These are summed up by Evangelous (2012, p. 69) who states that

many marketing managers focus their efforts and activities on exploiting promotional tools ... But in the current social, economic and business environment, marketing managers in tourism need to have Web 2.0 applications and techniques as part of their overall marketing plans.

It is evident from this that modern communication tools are much more interactive and effective.

Researchers have analysed these Web 2.0 social tools, which are valuable to tourism marketing. Examples are the use of travel blogs in creating brand image (Prats and Marin, 2012) or analysing blogs to get a better knowledge of user profiles (Volo, 2010).

New communication technologies applied to tourism are a great source of knowledge and important tools for the management of tourism customers and the interaction between tourists and tourism agents (Prats and Guia, 2005; Prats-Planagumà and Camprubí, 2009). However, social media takes this relationship further and generates communication channels in the areas of business-to-business, business-to-customer and customer-to-customer (Kietzmann *et al.*, 2011; Leung *et al.*, 2013). This information has come to be stored and available in online versions of word of mouth (Pan *et al.*, 2007). It is clear that there has been a significant change – businesses have stopped trying to capture tourists through messages and have instead added elements to their business in order to interact with tourists through social networks (Li and Wang, 2011), creating an exchange of information essential for business.

## Social Network Tools for Religious Tourism

The changes brought about in tourism management by social networks and Web 2.0 suggest that religious sites may also benefit from using them. In this section we research how useful social network tools are for assimilating all types of tourists in religious places.

Through real examples, we discuss how the main social tools are currently used, as well as possible alternative uses and methods to analyse the information

derived from the tools. We explain whether these new means have been used for branding and advertising, or used as a system to gather knowledge about and manage the visitor to religious sites, clearly identifying whether the tool has been created institutionally by the religious site, and therefore contains official information, or if it is created by anonymous users and thus contains unofficial information.

First we look at written communication in social networks, secondly those based on image, whether static or dynamic, and finally mobile apps, of both the interactive and informative type.

### Written communication through web pages

Websites show how little linkage there is between religious tourism and new networking technologies. Although the majority of religious sites now have a web page, there are still many who do not (Aulet, 2012). In fact, only 28.6% of religious spaces in Catalonia have a web page, and then the majority only give general information.

An example of a well-structured web page with content related to religious tourism is the web page of the 'Villes Sanctuaires en France' (<http://www.villes-sanctuaires.com>). This association is made up of 14 French towns that have a sanctuary or well-known pilgrimage site; examples include Lourdes, Rocamadour, Mont Saint Michel and Chartres. Each of the towns has a web space structured under three headings: 'History and message', 'For your stay' and 'For your pilgrimage'. The sector containing information about staying is touristic and therefore gives both religious and non-religious information regarding what to see and do, including information on accommodation, restaurants, guided visits, etc.



Fig. 10.4. Villes Sanctuaires en France website. (<http://www.villes-sanctuaires.com>)

## Blogs

In written communication, one of most prolific types of information tool to have emerged in recent years is the travel blog. It is not easy to find, classify and order blogs related to the world of travel and any attempt to fully document them is impossible as they appear and disappear on a daily basis. The blogosphere dedicated to travel has expanded rapidly, with the first writers documenting great world trips. Nowadays, however, there are more bloggers narrating their everyday travels, directing them at more specific reader types and sharing them with other web users.

There are an estimated 70 million Internet users who follow blogs. The sources they consult contain information specific to visitor interest and are more up to date than other information sources, such as guidebooks. They are useful to read to elicit opinions posted by other travellers to a destination and they do not usually show advertisements.

Blogs are a form of social media, and apart from travellers and travel journalists, there are also specialized travel agencies grouped together by portals, with links to blogs specializing in pilgrimage destinations. One example is <http://www.relitour.com>, a portal specializing in religious travel and pilgrimages, which brings together more than 80 travel agencies in over ten countries. Its web page features its own blog, but there are also links to other blogs on spiritual and religious tourism.

The Camino de Santiago is an example of where a main web page, <http://www.caminosantiago.org>, has links to blogs written by pilgrims who have travelled The Way. Generally speaking, these blogs are a way for people to share



Fig. 10.5. Camino de Santiago website. (<http://www.caminosantiago.org/cpperegrino/enlaces/peregrinos.asp>)

information and get answers to questions, more than a way for authors to voice their experiences.

The Sanctuary of Montserrat, <http://www.montserratvisita.com>, has ten blogs linked to hiking and environmental conservation. Out of these ten, five are directly related to nature, hiking and conservation, four are written by monks from the Montserrat community with content on cultural themes, and the last one belongs to the Montserrat choir. Therefore none of them explicitly have any relation to religious tourism.

### *Facebook*

Many religious sites have a Facebook page, whose content falls between religion and tourism. The number of followers varies depending on the size of the devotion area (the places from where pilgrims come). Curiously, the Vatican, a sanctuary and pilgrimage site, has no Facebook page. Other religious sites such as the Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, the Camino de Santiago, the Sanctuary of Lourdes and the Sanctuary of Fátima do have Facebook pages. Some of these web pages are practically inactive, such as the Lourdes one, where the last modification was in August 2013. This is completely counterproductive; it is better to have no social media page than one which is inactive, as this is like publishing a telephone number and then never answering a call. Other websites make occasional publications, usually giving information about activities or publishing photos of events that have taken place.

What we did find is that the active pages are nothing more than informative, without any interactive communication with users, and any comments or questions posed by users are ignored. In general, these pages allow people to post reviews, and they usually have high ratings of around 4 out of 5. Comments left on the pages are generally of one or two types: on the one hand, comments on a visit, and on the other a prayer or request.

There are only a small number of negative comments, and these usually refer to the over-commercialization of the site. Authors such as Shackley (2001) use the term commodification, meaning the excessive commercialization of products related to the site. This means that religious sites must be careful not to fall into the trap of trivialization (see discussion in Chapter 3).

The Facebook page of Montserrat Monastery is one example that stands out as being different from the rest in that it has links to blogs about the sanctuary, like those we mentioned earlier. However, despite receiving around one million pilgrims per year, the Montserrat site's Facebook page has only c.8500 'likes'. In [Fig. 10.6](#), there is an example of one of the latest posts (23 November 2014) from Montserrat, with an old photograph and announcement that the Holy Mass can be followed on television and radio at 11.00 am.

### *Twitter*

Twitter is considered a barren field in religious tourism. The most representative Twitter case is the Vatican, which began using it in 2011, but not to link religion to tourism; the Pope simply has an account. In general, although many religious sites have Facebook, very few have Twitter. Some events, such as pilgrimages, do appear with a hashtag, but with few followers. This shows that



**Fig. 10.6.** Post on Montserrat Monastery Facebook page. (<https://www.facebook.com/montserratvisita?fref=ts>)

although some religious tourists/pilgrims use Twitter, it is of an independent nature and without any control from the religious sites. It is here that an opportunity is lost to manage very relevant information through low-cost tools such as TweetReach.

## Visual communication

One of the most significant voids today refers to images; there are very few images on social networks, and no channels dealing specifically with images. Research by the authors has focused on social networks such as Instagram, Flickr and Pinterest, and video sites and video blogs such as YouTube or Vimeo.



Visitors upload static images of places and events, which researchers can use to study perceived images of a religious place. There is software to analyse images, and the information obtained can be very useful when managing the site. However, it is not possible to analyse the emitted images of the sites from these sources.

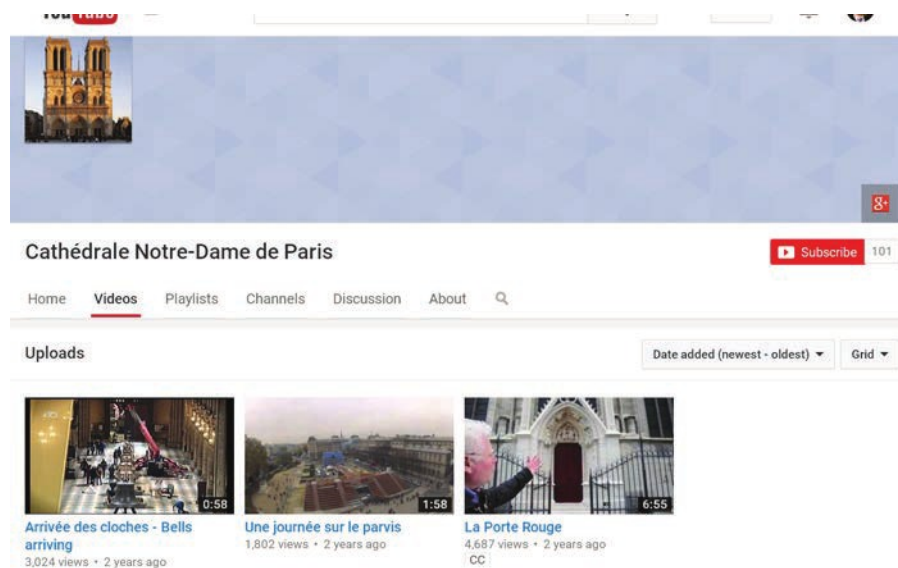
In the case of videos, there are even fewer of these available. Tourists do not use this means to communicate their experience of religious tourism, and religious sites make little use of them either. One of the few examples is again the Monastery of Montserrat, which has its own YouTube channel with videos that have been uploaded and classified. Even so, it only has 214 subscribers and around 95,000 visits, and the content is not of a tourism nature. Another example is the cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris, which has 92 (November 2014) subscribers and only three videos showing the tolling of the bells.

### Mobile applications (apps)

Even though apps are not strictly social networks, we have decided to mention their relevance in relation to religious tourism. The main reason is that apps are a huge source of information regarding users and therefore of interest when planning and managing tourism. A large proportion of the apps analysed have links to other social networks, whether written text, such as Facebook, or showing images, as in the case of Instagram.

### Guidebooks

Guidebooks are a powerful tool to attract tourists, with visitors loyally following their instructions. A guidebook is also an efficient indicator of how tourists



**Fig. 10.7.** YouTube channel of Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Paris. (<https://www.youtube.com/user/cnotredamedeparis/videos>)



see a specific destination. Guides have kept up to date with digital information, first becoming digital guides and then developing multifunction mobile applications, which point towards substituting paper guides. The majority of tourist attractions that are in mobile guides are classified as architecture, whereas very few are classified under religion. For example, the majority of cathedrals are considered important for their architecture or art, rather than for their religious merit. It is in this context that religious places are swept under the wing of culture and regarded as 'cultural tourism'. Volozinskis (1991) proposes that we will soon be able to talk about tourism in a religious space or cultural tourism with a religious theme; however, there is little evidence of this happening yet.

Generally speaking, there is a considerable amount of religious elements in guidebooks, even though the perspective and information given usually weighs more in terms of cultural and artistic values, as opposed to those that are religious. In the field of religious tourism there are various digital guides to religious destinations; for example, the online *Sacred Destinations* guide. Mobile apps include *48 Historical Sacred Sites of the World*, an app called *Sacred Indian Places* and another called *ED Sacred Places*.

These apps are conceived as 'an application for the devotees who travel to holy and historic shrines' (*Sacred Indian Places description*), and have tourist options such as 'You can plot your routes on map and maintain your personal Travelogue' (*ED Sacred Places description*). This last app is closer to a social network, as it allows you to plan your visit and share your experiences in the Travelogue.

Despite advances, there are very few specialized pilgrimage/religious tourism guides in app form, and those that do exist are developed outside the religious site and give a wide range of information on many places around the world. Therefore, there is still much room for development in this area.

## Interpretation Tools

Interpretation tools are the main means to communicate to visitors the characteristics of sacred sites. A visit to a cathedral ought to be an emotive experience and how it is managed should reflect the spirit of the site and smooth any conflicts between tourists and devotees. One way to manage this conflict is through access to information (Shackley, 2001), information which could easily be found using an app.

Within interpretation, we can identify three areas (Castells, 2001):

1. the emotional or sensitive sphere;
2. the ideological sphere; and
3. the instrumental sphere.

These three spheres need to be taken into account when thinking of interpretation tools for sacred places, and new technologies allow us to do this when designing the interpretation programme for a site. However, even though there are examples of new technologies being applied in the area of cultural tourism, there are few examples in the specific field of religious tourism, despite the opportunities that they have to offer. The numerous apps related to religion

focus on theological information, prayers or something similar. None of them are related to the trip or interpreting the sacred place.

One such example is the app for the Basilica of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Atlanta, which allows you to virtually go to the church, pray, find out times of services or even make donations, but has no information about the Basilica itself. The same goes for the app for the Sanctuary of Montserrat, which you can only use to listen to the radio or see live broadcasts of mass. Montserrat also has a guided visit app, which explains all aspects of the Sanctuary to visitors, whether their motivation is cultural or religious. It does not distinguish between tourists and pilgrims, unlike the Taj Mahal, for example, which focuses only on the tourists and the cultural interest visitors might have in visiting it.

In all cases, it is clear that these interpretation tools are developed by the religious site itself, making a clear difference between the two groups of apps defined here – religious/theological apps and apps providing tourist-related information.

## Summary

This chapter deals with the relationship between new technologies and religion, which we can generally say is still insignificant, but growing. Religion has not been completely left behind by the digital age and new technologies, research and studies in this field are relatively recent. In addition, although this has been examined from various perspectives, it has not been looked at from the point of view of tourism.

On the other hand, the impact new technologies have had on tourism has been well explored in recent years, above all from a marketing perspective; for example, there has been research on how social media is used to create a brand image, and studies to get to know users' profiles better.

Even though the relationship between religion, tourism and new technologies is just beginning, and it is clear that religious sites make little use of social tools, there are clear pointers that this relationship will develop and grow in the near future. One indicator is TripAdvisor's top ten visitor attractions in Spain 2014. Of these, five were religious and on a world scale, seven out of the top ten attractions were sacred places.

Taking into account the changes social networks and Web 2.0 have made to tourism management, we have to ask how sacred places could benefit in terms of tourism from using these tools, which they are practically ignoring at the moment. This chapter shows the very limited use made of even widespread tools such as a web page. Some of the most popular social networks, such as Facebook, are completely underused and others like Twitter are practically non-existent. When tools are used, it is in a very simple way, just to spread and explain the message, rather than as an interactive tool. The pages where visitors and pilgrims can leave their comments and opinions usually share practical information – religious experiences are not shared with other readers.

There is a broad range of applications related to the world of religion, such as those listed by Wagner (2013) and Campbell *et al.* (2014), but none of the classifications make reference to either travel or religious tourism. As shown by the literature on tourism and new technologies, religious tourism (or more

specifically, religious tourism sites) has yet to develop the use of these tools and discover the enormous potential they hold. This potential can be seen from two different perspectives. On the one hand, information can be gleaned regarding visitor profiles. As there is very little information surrounding visitor profiles and motivation to visit sacred places, new technologies could be an invaluable way to know visitor profiles and improve their experience at the site. On the other hand, these tools should be able to convey the relevant characteristics and facts of these sites to all visitors. As pointed out by Aulet (2009), sacred places have clear religious values together with other cultural, social, ecological and tourism values. Understanding these values is fundamental if we are to comprehend the role sacred sites hold in tourism.

Any of the tools that can be applied to the area of information and interpretation ought to help to this end. Some of these tools have already been applied to cultural tourism, and include mobile applications, QR codes (which open web-site), augmented reality and sound documents, among others. These and other technological tools should deal with the full range of tourism products, and relate to the whole tourist experience, pre-travel, during the travel and post-travel.

## Discussion Questions

1. Why are new technologies useful in the development and promotion of cultural tourism, spiritual tourism, and religious tourism and pilgrimage?
2. Can you differentiate how ICT has been used by religious tourism in the context of Web 1.0, Web 2.0 and in Web 3.0?
3. According to your opinion explain the underdevelopment of ICT usage in religious tourism.
4. Since it is difficult to use and control all possible social network tools at the same time, which of the proposed social network tools would you recommend to a pilgrimage site to assist in developing their religious tourism? Please explain.

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# 11 Stakeholders and Co-creation in Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage

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## Introduction

Co-creation has become a way of viewing events that recognizes both the producers and consumers as vital to the experience. Both are partners in the co-creation of what happens, bringing resources that help in forming meaning. The mapping of stakeholders began in a traditional model of business but has to recognize the dialectics of the (multi)positionality of the roles undertaken and ascribed to stakeholders in the development processes of co-creation.

Here we will reference the changes and to some extent the contradictions involved in the integration of the religious tourism and pilgrimage experience within the city of Veszprém's tourism offer and indeed with a specific tourism site actually developed by the Church in the heart of the city. The positions adopted by the Church in Veszprém were hostile and antagonistic to the involvement of religion within the tourism development of the historic city (Clarke and Raffay, 2011).

We will explore the driving forces and stakeholder relations behind the opening of the Religious Tourism Visitor Centre, the Szalézianum, at the centre of the oldest part of the city (<http://www.szalezianum.hu>). There are dramatic tensions to be explored within and surrounding these developments.

## Co-creation

We have witnessed a considerable interest in co-creation in the marketing literature (Vargo and Lusch, 2004, 2008), where the emphasis on value creation and

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value extraction focuses on the result of the interactive processes between the companies and their consumers (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Payne *et al.*, 2008). Service-Dominant (S-D) logic is based around the central role of the active consumer in the co-creation of value. This fundamental belief is one that we can identify in many forms within the tourism experience and the value components within tourism. As Payne *et al.* (2008, p. 1) argue, this is predicated on the 'customer's active involvement and interaction with their supplier in every aspect, from product design to product consumption'. Until these recent writings, the traditional concept could be defined as seeing value creation as taking place within a company and the product was viewed as the end of the consumer experience. In the S-D logic, as opposed to the Goods-Dominant (G-D) logic, co-creation experiences are regarded as the basis for value creation.

### A conceptual framework for co-creation

The S-D logic and the study of service draws on the work of authors such as Ramaswamy (2008, p. 9), who indicated that the capability for innovation and the capacity for growth came from the organization's ability to be 'continuously interacting with its customers through engagement platforms, especially those centred on customer experiences'. Moreover, several attempts have been made in the marketing literature to develop a conceptual framework for co-creation by mapping the customer, supplier and encounter processes (Payne *et al.*, 2008). These processes involve the interactions and transactions between customers and enterprises, with the possibility of identifying within this nexus the opportunities for co-creation and innovation.

Until very recently, Li and Petrick (2008) were correct in their observation that little or no attention had been paid to these propositions or S-D logic in the tourism literature. From the perspective of the S-D logic, the customer is always a co-creator of value and this is a key foundational proposition of this logic (Lusch and Vargo, 2008, p. 7). In effect, S-D logic suggests that the value starts with the supplier understanding customer value creation processes and learning how to support, encourage and enhance customers' co-creation activities.

In tourism we can uncover primary examples of co-creation. We can see the ways in which experiences play essential roles in the supply and the consumption of the products and services which make up the sector; the active involvement of the tourist will lead to a deeper experience and, in the context of S-D logic, to a higher value. Interaction between consumers and providers is the foundation for co-creation (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; see [Box 11.1](#)). For co-creation to develop effectively, active customer involvement in the production of the offer must be introduced, maintained and enhanced,

#### **Box 11.1. Co-creation: the definition**

Co-creation entails changing the traditional view of the roles of customers and suppliers as the two groups come together to utilize their resources, knowledge and skills in sharing the making and the consumption of the tourism experience.



thus ensuring that the final value of this experience is increased because the 'customer' can tailor it as they desire (Lusch *et al.*, 2007). This 'co-creation experience', as Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) term it, is linked directly to the achievement of value creation as the result. For businesses, the days of autonomously designing products or developing production processes, tapping new distribution channels or engaging in other marketing activities without involving consumers are disappearing (Prahalad and Ramaswamy, 2004; Cova and Salle, 2008; Kristensson *et al.*, 2008; Ramaswamy, 2008). Co-creation not only leads to an increase in value creation, but may also contribute significantly to innovation (Clarke, 2011).

### **Tourism experiences and co-creation**

Today's tourists have quite a different attitude towards consumption than those of previous generations. Tourists and consumers in general are not only better educated and wealthier, but also have access to more information than ever before. Tourists are looking for unique activities, tailored experiences, special interest focus, experiences in a lifestyle destination setting, living culture, creative spaces and creative spectacles. The need for authentic experiences, not contaminated by the fake or impure, is also increasing (Gilmore and Pine, 2007). Tourism destinations in particular can offer visitors experiences that they do not normally find in their everyday lives.

In research on tourism behaviour, experiences do appear to play a significant role (Morgan and Watson, 2007; Oh *et al.*, 2007). 'Tourism has been at the forefront of staging experiences' and 'Tourism's central productive activity is the creation of the touristic experience' (Sternberg, 1997 in Oh *et al.*, 2007, p. 119). According to this research, tourists are in fact and by definition looking for experiences. Pine and Gilmore (1999, 2002a, 2002b in Oh *et al.*, 2007) distinguish four types of experiences: the aesthetic experience, the entertainment experience, the escapist experience and the educational experience. 'The demand is growing for travel that engages the senses, stimulates the mind, includes unique activities, and connects in personal ways with travellers on an emotional, psychological, spiritual or intellectual level' (Arsenault and Gale, 2004, p. 21).

Little attention has been devoted to the possibilities and forms of co-creation in tourism research and particularly the potential influence of these possibilities and forms on the tourist experience. Arsenault and Gale (2004), for instance, show that contact with local communities, such as cooking, visiting farms and being welcomed into the homes of locals, is particularly appreciated. This also holds true for all sorts of experimental, practical and interactive activities. Tourists do not just want to be spectators. They want to participate, roll up their sleeves and get stuck in. They not only want to view the gardens, but also do some gardening. They want to take a peek behind the scenes; not only go to a performance, but also meet the performers afterwards. Learning experiences, such as photography workshops, going to a wine university or learning to understand the ecosystem of an area of natural beauty, are also growing in popularity. Furthermore, the sharing of experiences, the social dynamics

connected with travel, getting to know new people, reinforcing old friendships and making new ones, and spending time with relatives are also considered important (Arsenault and Gale, 2004).

Co-creation provides a different conceptualization of the whole tourism consumption experience (Li and Petrick, 2008). Co-creation involves tourists' active involvement and interaction with their supplier in every aspect, from product design to product consumption (Payne *et al.*, 2008). In this sense a destination must not only be regarded as a physical space, and this is especially so for religious tourism. Places have intangible, cultural, historical and dynamic aspects too. They are experienced by tourists in a dynamic context of social interaction with a common cultural meaning and with a collective memory (Lichrou *et al.*, 2008). Traditional destination branding approach emphasizes mainly the physical attributes and activity opportunities which means that the destinations are accordingly simply considered as locations. Lichrou *et al.* (2008) believe that visiting a tourism destination is about a process of experience, the dreams and fantasies of consumers, the meeting of people, and interaction between hosts and visitors and with other tourists. It concerns a dynamic context in which destinations are simultaneously produced and consumed. Tourists have an image of a tourism destination even though they have never been there, which is why Lichrou *et al.* (2008) develop the opinion that destinations should be seen, metaphorically, as narratives rather than products. This perspective urges us to work in a way which leaves room for the recognition of interaction, co-creation, and for the notion of the tourist as participant instead of spectator.

## Stakeholder Concepts

Stakeholder theory is described by Freeman *et al.* (2010) as a concept whereby people in business are engaged in value creation and trade, and as a result are responsible to those groups and individuals that can affect or be affected by their actions – that is, their stakeholders. The term 'stakeholder' was invented by the Stanford Research Institute in 1963, where the notion was meant to refer to 'those groups without whose support the organisation would cease to exist' (Freeman, 1984, p. 31; see also [Box 11.2](#)). In accordance with this definition, shareowners, employees, customers, suppliers, lenders and society were regarded as stakeholders, attempting to map 'the relationship of the firm to its external environment, and its behaviour within this environment' (Key, 1999, p. 319).

### Box 11.2. Stakeholders: the definition

Freeman (1984, p. 46) defines stakeholders as 'any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organisation's objectives'. This includes owners, customers, competitors, employees, suppliers, governments, local community organizations, special interest groups, environmentalists, consumer advocates, media, unions, trade associations, the financial community and political groups.

Furthermore, stakeholder theory implies that corporate business is the interest of all groups (customer, employees, suppliers, communities, financiers), and their respective interest is joint in nature (Freeman *et al.*, 2010), but in order to create value, one must focus on how value first gets created for each stakeholder.

It is worth noting here that the original analysis was undertaken on traditional businesses with a single core consideration. We would argue that this creates a very different set of relationships to those found in a multicore business such as tourism and especially religious tourism, where relationships between sectors are essential for the delivery of the experience and the meaning of the practices. Freeman delineates three categories of stake: (i) equity (having an equity interest in the firm, such as owners); (ii) economic (having a market stake as a customer or a supplier); and (iii) influencer (being able to affect the firm even if not directly). The second dimension of the categorization is power. Freeman makes a distinction between; (i) voting power (typical of owners), (ii) economic power (typical of customers and suppliers); and (iii) political power (typical of government). These dimensions are imagined within a linear model that allows for the positioning of the stakeholders in terms of their involvement and participation (see also Box 11.3). The lack of cohesion of different stakeholder groups has become a significant focus in tourism literature (Lester and Weeden, 2004; Sheehan and Ritchie 2005).

Jamal and Getz (1995) refer to legitimate and relevant stakeholders, which suggests that there are key players that may not be seen as legitimate. These arguments leave room for some questions about where claims to legitimacy can be grounded and justified, not to mention who has the power to enforce such definitions on the processes. Markwick (2000, p. 520) observed that in the context of her study of golfing developments in Malta 'A key aspect of this contestation was the legitimization of the farmers' claim to the land. Significantly, such claims were couched in the language of "belonging" as opposed to that of "belongings" and, drawing on concepts of "way of life" and "moral" as opposed to "legal" rights.' The dynamics of this will be explored further with the considerations of discursive constructions of power.

The idea of stakeholders creates two critical changes within the analytical perspective. First, it opens out the range of actors and organizations who can be seen as having an interest in or being affected by tourism development. Secondly, it treats actors and organizations as interests that also have agency;

### Box 11.3. Power, legitimacy and urgency

Mitchell *et al.* (1997) add a greater sophistication to stakeholder theory by suggesting that stakeholders may be identified by relational attributes of power, legitimacy and urgency. *Power* of a stakeholder can be identified in situations when the stakeholder can impose their own will on others through various means such as coercion, pressure, etc. *Legitimacy* relates to the perceptions that the interests or claims of a stakeholder are appropriate or desirable, with these perceptions being based on socially constructed values and beliefs' (de Araujo and Bramwell, 2000, p. 272). *Urgency* arises from 'the degree to which stakeholder claims call for immediate attention' (Mitchell *et al.*, 1997, p. 867).

that is, stakeholders are seen to have the capacity to shape tourism development in specific places. As Markwick (2000, p. 522) concluded: ‘Exploration of the case of development conflict in Malta suggests that the complex intersections of stakeholders’ interests require incisive yet flexible forms of conceptualization and analysis.’

Discursive Constructions of Stakeholder Relations

We can propose a model of stakeholder dynamics that sees stakeholders operating within multiple discourses, not a single one. This means that claims to legitimacy are secured and contested in different discursive constructions, while power is manifest in many different and shifting ways. The following section will critically examine this proposition by mapping the positions of one of the stakeholders in Veszprém. We will present an elaborated analysis of the Church’s position by seeking to locate its involvement in terms of the power that it can claim and the ways in which these claims are warranted in the discourses underpinning tourism development (See [Figure 11.1](#)). Within this example, we hope to show the complexities that operate within and around tourism and how the study of these overlapping, competing and challenging discourses is necessary to make sense of stakeholder positions within tourism.

The Church has a central position within the city of Veszprém, both geographically and politically. The Archbishop and his formal seat are at the centre of the old city. The religious power was significant long before the current regime of local and national politics came into being. It has indeed survived several changes in government and ideology throughout the country (See [Figure 11.2](#)). The Church has a formal basis for its operations but this formal position often leaves it cast adrift from the mainstream discourses of power both in the public and private sector. The formal discourses of public sector authority are ever present but the Church’s position is constructed through different discourses. In terms of the Weberian discourses, the Church can

	Voting	Economic	Political	Legitimacy	Urgency
Equity					
Economic					
Influencer					

Fig. 11.1. Summary of stakeholder claims to power.

	Voting	Economic	Political	Legitimacy	Urgency
Equity					
Economic		x			x
Influencer	?	x	x	x	

Fig. 11.2. Considering the Church’s roles.

produce a strong claim to legitimacy. In the past the remit has not been based upon a claim to deliver tourism, nor does it sit in the conventional constructions of either the public or private sectors.

The Church has a remit which sits well with the discourses of tradition that support many areas of its work in the service of God. The relatively new and apparently frivolous positioning of this work in the context of tourism seems to stretch a long way from the mainstream of the Church's activities, having given it a largely negative and exclusive set of positions. The constraints are apparent in the way that structurally the Church was excluded and excluded itself from policy-making arenas to focus on its religious duties. This exclusion was clearly felt by the private sector and it effectively denied the other stakeholders in tourism from even approaching the Church with ideas related to touristic uses of church buildings and church spaces. The Church wielded great powers to construct sanctions. There is no access to the discourses of negative power in denying development or preventing mention in tourism promotions.

The power position which is structured by the official forms of governance discourses within the Church is one that effectively distances and marginalizes the Church from the tourism development processes. The recent work of the Church constantly challenges this construction because of the very nature of the activities in creating a visitor centre and a more open attitude to touristic visitors as well as religious ones. This means that informal discourses of power are summoned into play to allow the institution to operate.

It is widely thought that the Church does have access to the processes from which it is formally debarred. Its power derives from alternative sources of legitimacy. This is a legitimacy that stems from the interconnectedness of the Church's operations as it recognizes that it may bring its understanding to the interests of the private sector and be able to relay them to others in a way that is more effective than any direct presentation would be because of the assumption of equivalence. Public sector officers recognize the Church as more like one of their own, even though it is a semi-autonomous one and serves a higher electorate. The private sector welcomes an open institution that is increasingly dependent upon them for cooperation but also shares a common tourism development agenda.

This is overlaid by a further construction of the stakeholder which is based on the character and capabilities of the individuals responsible for the Church and the Church's involvement in tourism. The recognition of the leadership's competence, professionalism and insight reinforces the Church's position and is a source of power that gains it access to situations and relationships that its formal position would not. The temptation is to say that this places the Archbishop in the position of a charismatic but this does not accurately represent the construction. He is not seen as particularly charismatic and the discourses of authority, religious certainty, competence and respect dominate the construction of his position rather than the more personal attributes usually used to justify charismatic leadership. This means that the Archbishop is located within and around the agenda-setting discourses of both the public and the private sector organizations within the city. There are clear lessons here for those seeking to develop collaborative capacity as the discourses of respect and recognition construct a recognizable position of power. If the object of

collaboration is too narrowly focused the benefits of such wider constructions of power could be excluded from the discourses.

Although this power may derive from personal attributes and perceptions of those abilities, it clearly extends beyond the individual persona and boosts the position of all those who work for and with the Church. In Clegg’s terms (1989) we are observing the intermeshing of the circuits of power and the competition between different discourses of power. The sources of legitimacy are varied and hard won but they are significant in allowing for the construction of a position of power within the city. It is precisely because the discourses construct both a closed religious authority and an organization increasingly open to tourism that the Church can draw on many discourses of power to create and defend its position within the processes of tourism development.

What this means for the study of power in practice in tourism is that it is no longer adequate to think in terms of a bipolar continuum (See [figure 11.3](#)), with those with power at one end and the powerless at the other. Rather, it is necessary to think of the relationship as being constructed from the positions within several discourses of power, where a stakeholder could be located at different points within the continua but where the summation of power-lines would be read in specific conditions and at particular times ([Figure 11.4](#)). This will include the recognition that certain players may not appear within specific discourses, drawing on others to frame their claims to power. The notion of challenge and the idea that discourses will construct opposition and resistance also informs this model of constructing and analysing power positions and power relations.

Even this more complex representation of the construction of positions of power does not capture the subtleties of the analysis of power in practice suggested by this exercise. This model still suggests that power is a linear construct demarking and differentiating between those who do and those who do not hold power. However, as we have seen in the analysis, negative power is also a relevant concept in the analysis of tourism development. It seems contradictory to describe agents who can wield negative power as powerful in the traditional



**Fig. 11.3.** The continuum of power.

Powerless	Formal	Powerful
	Bureaucratic	
	Relational	
	Professional	
	Religious	
	Negotiational	

**Fig. 11.4.** Discursive constructions of power as reinforcing and challenging domains of influence.



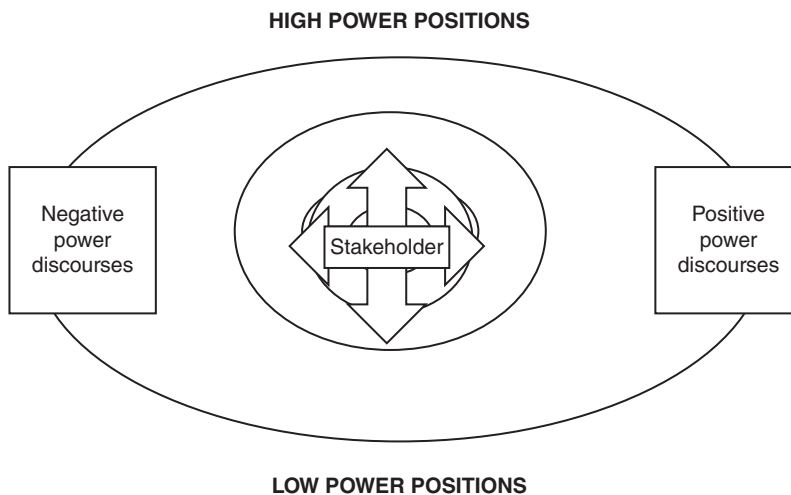
sense, but this then constructs a discourse of positive power that denies and devalues negative power. The analysis suggests that negative power (see [Box 11.4](#)) has to be recognized as impacting on the construction of tourism just as strongly as positive power.

In attempting to visualize this account of the processes, it has not proved possible to create a representation that allows for the variety and fluidity of the urban religious tourism processes to be depicted. The oval lines in [Fig. 11.5](#) must be read as a myriad of individual discourses in play separately but acting collectively to determine a stakeholder's ability to be recognized within specific processes and the overall set of urban tourism development processes. The arrows in the heart of the diagram are supposed to suggest that the stakeholders may move through positions of powerfulness and powerlessness in any or all of the discourses in play. The discursive constructions will both determine and be determined by the interplay of the discourses and the actions of the stakeholders.

The agreement discussed in [Box 11.5](#) opened the way for the use of the space for performances which began with respected art forms and now provides the basis for the International Music Festival including jazz and world music alongside opera and classical music. It also led, indirectly, to the further engagement with tourism as outlined in the case study below.

**Box 11.4. Just say 'NO'!**

Some of the most telling narratives we have collected during the studies in Veszprém are the ones that informed us of how the Church had once said 'no' to a specific proposal and this was taken to exclude any further discussions or negotiations. The discourse had such power that not only could it not be questioned but it also denied the space within which to pose the question. The Archbishop had created an untouchable position for the Church in the city but denied its tourism.



**Fig. 11.5.** Mapping power discourses.

**Box 11.5. The importance of table tennis**

The narrative of the Church's involvement in tourism turns on the bravery of one entrepreneur to question the veto of the Church on non-religious activities. There was a need to find a location for the award ceremony for the Veszprém in Bloom competition and there was a famous Hungarian band, Republic, who were wanting to perform in Veszprém. The promoter saw the potential of producing an open-air concert in the square in front of the Archbishop's Palace. The informal dimension of stakeholder relationships becomes clear here, as the entrepreneur regularly played table tennis with the Archbishop. He was surprised to be given an opening for the hearing of the local authority's delegation, even more so when the only question asked was whether the band praised the antichrist. They felt they had to make sure the acceptance was based on mutual understanding and pointed out that the band would be very loud. The Archbishop replied that most of the people who lived in the Palace were the retired priests who were already hard of hearing!

**Case Study: The Szalézianum**

The most recent addition to the religious tourism infrastructure in Veszprém is the opening of the Szalézianum, effectively a religious tourism visitor centre in the very heart of the old city (<http://www.szalezianum.hu>). The new development was proposed as a response to whether the Archbishop's Palace should be open to visitors, especially over the periods of the year where there were many visitors in the city, such as Christmas and the New Year, when the Palace was closed. In the visitor centre virtual presentations give the visitors a chance to see a glimpse of the treasures which are housed in the Palace and it is hoped that this virtual taster will be enough to motivate a return visit from these people. The Szalézianum Archbishopric Tourist Centre features interactive exhibition halls, a glass-bottomed herb room, splendid interiors decorated with baroque-style wall paintings, treasures of the liturgy, a working violin maker's workshop, a herb garden with great views, wafer and candle making workshops, a cinema room, a children's activity area, and various temporary exhibitions. This could be seen as both more and better than being able to look up at the outside of the baroque architecture.

The introduction of the visitor centre also saw the Church recognizing that the staff involved needed to be familiar with the ways of tourism. As a result the manager contacted the city's Tourism Destination Management Organization (TDMO) to arrange courses for their staff to ensure that they understood the meaning of tourism, consumer behaviour and the principles of visitor management. They also undertook study visits to secular attractions in order to see how these attractions managed and developed tourism. It was a recognition that there was power in the discourses of tourism as well as those of the religious orthodoxy the project had emerged within.

Even this innovation should not be seen as a full conversion to the development of tourism. There are still many within the Church who are resisting the move towards tourism and, for example, the access to the cathedral is still restricted to the side door. The Archbishopric maintains two chapels, which are locked and the keys held with a single caretaker. Effectively this means that if one is being visited the other cannot be. It should also be noted that the caretaker is exactly that and not a tourist guide.

The Archbishop's Palace was first opened for the celebrations of the year of the millennium, which in Hungary refers to the 1000 years of the state of Hungary, and with the links to the king, St István, has clear religious overtones. The millennium celebrations were supported by state funding and this, along with the entrance fees, proved to be a very popular source of income.

*Continued*

**Case Study: Continued.**

The Church offered to allow the Palace to remain open as long as there was an ongoing subsidy of the opening from the local authority of around 1.5 million HUF for maintenance and cleaning. In terms of the analysis, this demonstrates how the religious power discourses were used to perform more touristic activities. It was not constructed as blackmail, but the possibility of closing the Palace offered a tourism development of hell and damnation.

Destination stakeholders may vary depending on the type of destination as well as the discourses underpinned by the power relations among the different players. However, the list of stakeholders will no doubt include the local people among the players affected by but not necessary interested in tourism. Therefore their engagement poses a challenge to all destinations where tourism is not the only or the primary employment opportunity for the local people, but can be refocused by adopting a co-creation perspective towards the development of the tourism experience (Clarke, 2011).

**Summary**

This chapter questions the traditional approaches taken to stakeholder analysis in tourism, arguing that the concept has produced limited gains in our understanding of the roles involved in tourism development, especially when seen as co-creation. The concept derived from the American management literature, where industries are single core focused, has limited applicability in the complex domain of religious tourism. It is proposed that most suggestions for stakeholder mapping produce static representations of the complexities involved. To capture this dynamic it is necessary to characterize the stakeholder as an agent within the development processes rather than as merely a player in the process. We propose that an analysis of discursive politics can help to represent the nature of stakeholder relations within these processes. It is important to acknowledge the different claims to authority and legitimacy that are made and the ways in which these claims are authenticated and challenged. We present an analysis of one case study which allows for the examination of the claims and counterclaims of stakeholders to be taken seriously and which demonstrates the levels of involvement that follow from these claims.

We have attempted to demonstrate that the mapping of stakeholder politics is a complex activity that requires the recognition of the way that tourism development processes are produced and reproduced through discursive politics. Positions and power relations will be created and recreated within the play of a wide range of the discourses in and around tourism. There are many competing and conflicting points of resistances and reinforcements within these discourses. Achieving a dynamic understanding of complex relational roles and positions is possible through the analysis of the positioning in and through the range of discourses involved. As we attempted to demonstrate with the elaborated example of one role within urban religious tourism in Veszprém, the complexities involved in the play of discourses create a challenge for managerial understanding and operational involvement. However, despite the difficulties

involved in creating this map of power relations, the benefits to understanding and insights are very powerful in exploring the range of negotiations which underpin religious tourism development processes.

## Discussion Questions

1. What questions must be asked once a stakeholder approach has been adopted?
2. How can claims to 'legitimacy' be justified?
3. Do all experiences rely on co-creation?
4. Why is religious tourism a particularly good example of co-creation, bringing together a range of different values and expectations?

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## Case Study 1: Pilgrimage Experience and Consumption of Travel to the City of Makkah for the Hajj Ritual

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### Introduction

Events and festivals have played an important part in human life since the days of Adam. Events and festivals provide humans with an opportunity to assert their identities, both for themselves and to share with other people in our modern society, which is increasingly secular and culturally motivated.

The hajj is considered as the culmination of each Muslim's religious duties and aspirations. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that every physically and financially able Muslim should make the hajj to the Holy City of Makkah once in his or her lifetime. In Islamic belief, the hajj honours a number of events in the life of Prophet Abraham and his family in Makkah. Prophet Abraham is the leading figure of Christianity, Judaism and Islam.

Several leading authors – Eade (1992), Nolan and Nolan (1992), Shackley (2001) and Raj (2012) – have often wondered what Muslims do during their pilgrimage. Pilgrims come for hajj from all parts of the globe – from the Middle East, South East Asia, Africa, Europe, America and Australia. Hajj is a pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, which constitutes the fifth and last of the acts of worship prescribed by Islam. The hajj is one of the Five Pillars of Islam.

Hajj takes place during the first days of the lunar month of Dhul-Hijjah, the 12th month of the Islamic year, and lasts for as long as 6 days. Makkah marks the spot where, according to tradition, the prophet Abraham first built a shrine to worship God. It was a caravan crossroads through rocky outcroppings in the desert, which grew into a modern, noisy, bustling centre for the Muslim pilgrimage.

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The hajj is obligatory once in a lifetime for those Muslims who can afford it, provided that adequate arrangements have been made for the journey and for the welfare of those remaining at home. The hajj constitutes a form of worship with the whole of the Muslim's being: with their body, mind and soul, with their time, possessions and the temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts and conveniences the person normally enjoys. The person should assume for a few days the condition of a pilgrim wholly at God's service and disposal.

This chapter will explore how people perform hajj and what the experience of hajj is for the individual participant. It will discuss the principal rites and experiences of hajj and their meaning to an individual. Finally, the chapter will offer discussions on the topic of pilgrims engaging in religious rituals at the hajj but will suggest that it is inappropriate to confuse pilgrimage with tourist activity and to equate the hajj with religious touristic events.

## Performing the Rituals of Hajj

Hajj is pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, which constitutes the fifth and last of the acts of worship prescribed by Islam. Hajj brings together people from different communities of the Muslim world to renew their faith, spiritual energy and commitment, and sends individuals back to their communities to spread the blessings far and wide. Hajj provides a most powerful message to individual pilgrims about Tauheed (monotheism) and Akhirat (the hereafter), two of the pillars of faith. Hajj is a battle for individuals to remember their death and resurrection. The Ihram, the two unstitched pieces of white cloth that replace dress for men during the journey of hajj, reminds us of the burial shroud. The pilgrim gathering on the 9th Dhul-Hijjah on the Plain of Arafat reminds every individual of the time when everyone will be resurrected in the hereafter to stand before Allah and give detailed account of the deeds they did during their life. According to Baig (2003), hajj was the fundamental point of creating an Islamic country:

Hajj is associated with major turning points and milestones in Islamic History. In fact the history of the Islamic state begins with Hajj. It was here in the 11th year of Prophethood (July 620 C.E) that the first pledge of Aqaba took place, followed two years later by the second pledge that was the basis for Hijrah and the establishment of the Islamic state in Madinah.

([http://www.albalagh.net/food\\_for\\_thought/road\\_makkah.shtml](http://www.albalagh.net/food_for_thought/road_makkah.shtml))

The hajj is one of the major forms of worship, and it is the fifth pillar of Islam that Allah sent Muhammad. The hajj is considered the culmination of each Muslim's religious duties and aspirations. It is stated in the Holy Qur'an that every physically and financially able Muslim should make the hajj to the Holy City of Makkah once in his or her lifetime.

And (remember) when we prepared for Abraham the site of the (sacred) House, (saying): 'Do not ascribe anything as associate with me, and sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it and those who stand and those who bow and those prostrate themselves (there).

And proclaim the hajj to men; they will come to thee on foot and (mounted) on every camel, lean on account of Journeys through deep and distant mountain highways.

(Qur'an 22: 26–27)

Abu Hurairah reports that Muhammad said:

Whoever performs hajj for the sake of pleasing Allah and therein utters no word of evil, nor commits any evil deed, he returns from it as free from sin as the day on which his mother gave birth to him.

(Hadith 1)

In the Hadith, many important edicts about the hajj appear:

1. Hajj should be performed to please Allah (God), and there should be no worldly object and no ulterior motive prompting this holy deed; neither should it be for the show of things, nor for personal fame. Prophet Muhammad once said:

Near the time of Judgement day the rich ones from amongst my people will perform hajj for the sake of travel and holidays [like having a holiday in Saudi Arabia instead of one in London or Paris]. The middle class will perform hajj for commercial purposes, thereby transporting goods from here to there while bringing commercial goods from there to here. The scholars will perform hajj for the sake of show and fame. The poor will perform hajj for the purpose of begging.

(Hadith)

2. In another Hadith it is mentioned: 'Perform hajj and become rich, travel and become healthy.' In other words, the change of air, places and weather often bring about better health. This has been experienced time and again.

3. In a third Hadith it is stated that: 'Continuous hajj and umrah keeps away poverty and sin in the same way that fire removes rust from iron.'

## **Principal Rites of Hajj**

As the pilgrims reach Makkah, they enter into a state of consecration known as Ihram. One takes on Ihram by expressing one's intention of entering into that state, and putting on the pilgrim's dress (which is called Ihram). The dress for male pilgrims is a garment unique to the hajj, which consists of two pieces of white, unsewn cloth covering the lower and upper parts of the body; because no specific garment is prescribed for women, they enter into Ihram wearing normal garments.

## **Types of Pilgrimage**

Al-Uthaimin (1999, p. 2) states that there are three forms of hajj, which are all mentioned in the Hadith.

### **Tamattu'**

A pilgrim wears Ihram for umrah only during the months of hajj, which means that when he reaches Makkah, he makes Tawaf and Sa'yi for umrah. He then shaves or clips his hair. On the day of Talbiyah, which is the 8th of Dhul-Hijjah, he puts on his Ihram for hajj only and carries out all of its requirements.

### **Ifraad**

A pilgrim wears Ihram for hajj only. When he reaches Makkah, he performs Tawaf for his arrival and Sa'yi for hajj. He does not shave or clip his hair as he does not disengage from Ihram. Instead, he remains in Ihram till after he stones Jamrah Al-Aqaba on the Eid day. It is permissible for him to postpone his Sa'yi for hajj until after his Tawaf for hajj.

### **Qiran**

A pilgrim either wears Ihram for both umrah and hajj or wears Ihram first for umrah, then makes intentions for hajj before his Tawaf for hajj. The obligations on one performing Ifraad are the same as those on one performing Qiran, except that the latter must slaughter whereas the former is not obligated to do so. The best of the three forms is Tamattu', which is the form that the Prophet encouraged his followers to perform.

Even if a pilgrim makes intentions to perform Qiran or Ifraad, he/she is allowed to change his intentions to Tamattu'; he/she can do this even if Tawaf and Sa'yi have been performed. Moreover, pilgrims need to have a clear understanding of the following obligations stated by Islam:

1. Hajj is obligatory on every adult Muslim who can afford to go to Makkah during the hajj season, whether on foot or by any other carriage.
2. Hajj is obligatory on a person even though he is unable to travel to city of Madinah (Medina), the resting place of Muhammad.
3. A Muslim woman cannot travel for hajj unless she is accompanied by a mahram (i.e. husband or relative of a prohibited degree like son, father, brother, etc.) If she does not find any mahram to accompany her, hajj is not obligatory on her until she finds one. However, she must make a will that in case she dies before performing hajj, her heirs should arrange for her hajj-e-badal out of her leftover property.
4. Hajj is obligated only once in one's life. After performing the obligatory hajj, one is not required to perform it again. However, one can perform the nafl (optional hajj) as many times as one wishes.

## **Hajj Journey of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him)**

In 632 CE Prophet Muhammad returned to Makkah from exile in Madinah. Prophet Muhammad started the journey from Madinah toward Makkah with

thousands of his followers, and he took over Makkah with little resistance. He visited the Kabbah (Ka'aba) and destroyed the idols and restored the principal of hajj rites to their original purity and devotion to one God alone.

The year 632 CE was the farewell hajj for Prophet Muhammad. That year, he delivered the last sermon to his followers on Mount Arafat and stated that it is essential for pilgrims to be present at Arafat and that those who had been present at Arafat would have performed the hajj. In addition, he stated that even if a pilgrim arrived too late to perform the initial rites at the Grand Mosque in Makkah, as long as he or she had taken part in the assembly at Arafat, the hajj would be accepted by God.

## Essential Acts That Need to be Avoided in the State of Ihram

Once a person enters in to Ihram and makes the intention (Niyah) he or she must avoid the following acts: making marriage proposals or marriage contracts, cutting hair, clipping nails, putting perfumes on the body after putting on Ihram, killing or hunting animals, sexual intercourse with one's wife, shaving any parts of the body. Men must not wear any underwear or cover their heads and must not get in disputes. The sole purpose of the individual should be the hajj.

## Intention (Niyah)

Once the pilgrim has made the intention to perform umrah or hajj, they need to say:

*Labbayk Allahumma Umrah* ('Oh Allah here I am performing Umrah')

*Labbayk Allahumma Hajjan* ('Oh Allah here I am performing hajj')

Once the pilgrim has made the intention to perform hajj, as the Hadith mentions, the pilgrim should start saying the following words:

*Labbaik Allahumma Labaik* ('I am here Oh Allah, I am here')

*Labbayk. La shareeka laka* ('There is no partner unto You')

*Innal-hamda wan-n'imata laka wal-mulk* ('All praise and blessings and sovereignty belong to You')

*La shareeka lak* ('There is no partner unto You')

From the moment the pilgrim dons his Ihram, he profusely makes this pronouncement during all waking hours until he has stoned the Shaytan on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah.

## The Kabbah

As pilgrims reach Makkah, after having found suitable accommodation and taken care of the physical necessities, their first obligation is to visit the Kabbah and perform certain prescribed acts of worship, following the example of the



**Fig. 12.1.** Kabbah. Source: <http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba> "[http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba#/media/File:Kaaba\\_-\\_Mecca\\_-\\_Saudi\\_Arabia-1Aug2008.jpg](http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaaba#/media/File:Kaaba_-_Mecca_-_Saudi_Arabia-1Aug2008.jpg)

Prophet Muhammad. Figs. 12.1 and 12.2 show the Kabbah, an oblong stone building located approximately in the centre of the quadrangle of the Grand Mosque in the Holy City of Makkah. The front and back walls are 40 feet (12 m) in length, the side walls are 35 feet (10.7 m) and the height is 50 feet (15.2 m). The story of the building of the Kabbah is told in the Holy Qur'an:

And remember Abraham and Ishmael raised the foundations of the (sacred) House, (saying): 'Our Lord, accept it from us, for Thou art the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing. Our Lord, make us those who submit to Thee and of our descendants a people who submit to Thee. And show us our rites, and forgive us. Indeed, Thou art the forgiving, the mercy-giving.

(Qur'an 2: 127–128)

And again:

Remember We made the House a place of gathering for men, and of security. And you take the station of Abraham as place for prayer. And We covenanted with Abraham and Ishmael that they should sanctify My House for those who circumambulate it or use it as a retreat, or bow or prostrate themselves (there in worship).

(Qur'an 2: 125)

Figure 12.3 illustrates the position of the Black Stone and the area around the Kabbah where pilgrims undertake Tawaf. Set in a silver surround (Figure 12.5) in the east corner of the Kabbah, some 4 feet (1.2 m) above ground level, is the Black Stone. This sacred stone, the focal point of the hajj, is the only remnant of the shrine that Abraham built when it was given to Abraham by the angel Gabriel. The stone (which may be of meteoric origin) is believed to date from even earlier times – to that of the first man, Adam.



**Fig. 12.2.** Pilgrims performing Tawaf. Source: <https://umrahpackagesukblog.files.wordpress.com/2014/11/umrah-and-hajj.jpg>

The Kabbah (Figure 12.4) is covered by a black cloth known as ‘Kiswa’, which is produced and changed every year. It costs approximately SR 17 million. The cloth is made of 670 kg of silver dyed black, about 120 kg of pure gold and 50 kg of silver used in writing the Qur’anic verses over the cloth. The total area of the cloth is 658 square metres.

## The Pilgrimage Route

To perform hajj, the pilgrims have to go through a number of stages during the 6 days of hajj. The climax of the hajj occurs on the 9th day of the Dhul-Hijjah (the 12th month of the Islamic year), the Arafah. Pilgrims perform the following duties during the 6 days of the Dhul-Hijjah. On the first day of hajj, they pour out of Makkah towards Mina, a small, uninhabited village east of the city.

During the second day (the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah), they leave Mina, via Muzdalifah, for the Plain of Arafat for the wuquf (the standing), the central rite of hajj (see Fig. 12.6).

### Plain of Arafat

The 9th day of the Dhul-Hijjah is called Youmul, or Arafah (the Day of Arafah). This is the date when the hajj pilgrims assemble on the barren, treeless Plain







Fig. 12.5. Hajar Aswad (Black Stone) Source: <http://aswjmedia.com.au>

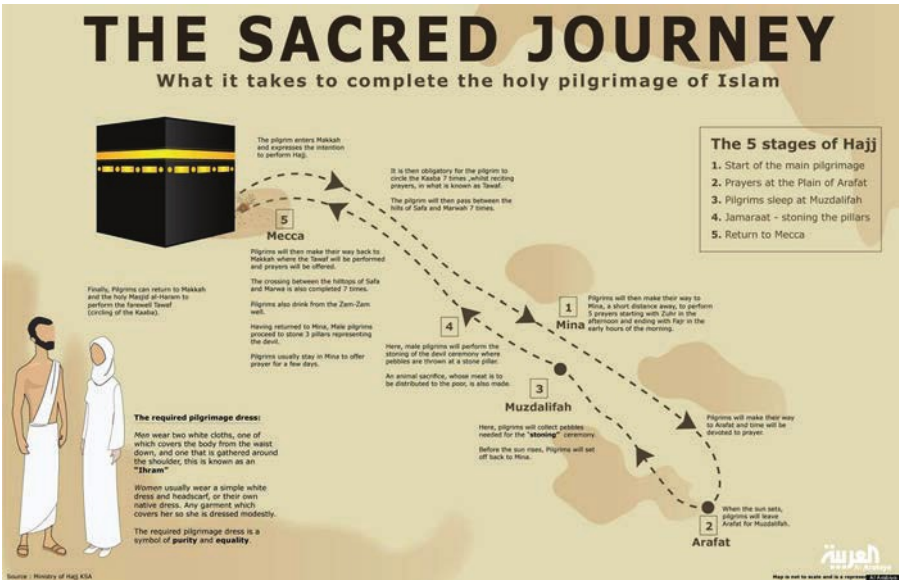


Fig. 12.6. The hajj pilgrimage route Source: Ministry of Hajj.

of Arafat, 6 miles away from Makkah, where they perform the most essential part of the prescribed duties of hajj, namely, the wuquf of Arafat (the stay in Arafat). The Prophet stressed the essential nature of this day's observance by saying that one who had been present at Arafat would have performed hajj.

**Table 12.1.** Pilgrimage activities for 6 days.

Day	Activities
Morning – 8th of Dhul-Hijjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Before wearing Ihram, pilgrims should take a shower</li> <li>• Pilgrims wear Ihram garments</li> <li>• Make intention for hajj</li> <li>• Recite Talbiyah</li> <li>• Avoid forbidden acts of Ihram</li> <li>• Travel to Mina</li> <li>• Remain in Mina during the day and night (the 8th day of Dhul-Hijjah)</li> <li>• Perform five prayers starting from the Dhuhr prayer and ending with the Fajr prayer on the next day (the 9th day of Dhul-Hijjah)</li> </ul>
Morning – 9th of Dhul-Hijjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Travel to Arafat</li> <li>• Leave Mina for Arafat on the morning of the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah and stay until sunset (start of 10th of Dhul-Hijjah)</li> </ul>
The Day of Arafat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay inside the boundaries of Arafat</li> <li>• Glorify Allah, repeat supplication, repent to Allah, and ask for forgiveness</li> <li>• Pray Dhuhr and Asr shortened</li> <li>• Leave Arafat for Muzdalifah soon after sunset</li> </ul>
Evening – 9th of Dhul-Hijjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perform the Maghrib and the Isha prayer combined (Isha is shortened to two Ra'kahs)</li> <li>• Seventy pebbles are collected to use for stoning the Jamarat</li> </ul>
Night in Muzdalifah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilgrims stay overnight and perform the Fajr prayer in Muzdalifah</li> <li>• Leave Muzdalifah after Fajr prayer</li> </ul>
Morning – 10th of Dhul-Hijjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leave Muzdalifah for Mina after Fajr prayer</li> <li>• Return to tents (accommodation)</li> <li>• Stone the large Jamarat (use seven pebbles only)</li> </ul>
Day of Sacrifice (Qurbani)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sacrifice an animal</li> <li>• Shave or trim the hair</li> <li>• Remove the Ihram</li> <li>• Go to Makkah and perform Tawaf Al-Ifaadah</li> <li>• Return to Mina after performing Tawaf</li> <li>• Stay the night in Mina</li> </ul>
11th/12th/13th of Dhul-Hijjah Stoning of Jamarats (Devil)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stay in Mina</li> <li>• After Dhuhr of each day, stone the three Jamarats</li> <li>• Throw seven pebbles at each Jamarat only</li> <li>• Start from the small Jamarat and finish with the large Jamarat</li> <li>• Pilgrims make Dua' after the first and second Jamarat, facing the Kabbah.</li> </ul> <p>The pilgrims leave Mina on the 12th Dhul-Hijjah after stoning the Jamarats if they wish before sunset.</p>
12th/13th of Dhul-Hijjah	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Return to Makkah after stoning of Jamarats</li> <li>• Perform Farewell Tawaf – Tawaf-e-Wida</li> <li>• Perform two Ra'kahs of Tawaf</li> <li>• Tawaf is the last thing the pilgrim should do in Makkah, before returning to their home country</li> </ul>



Fig. 12.7. Mountain of Mercy. Source: <http://farm4.staticflickr.com>

### Takbir of Tashriq

The pilgrims should recite Takbir of Tashriq from the dawn (Salat al-Fajr) of the 9th Dhul-Hijjah up to the afternoon (Salat al-Asr) prayer of the 13th and it is also obligatory for each Muslim to recite the Takbir of Tashriq after every fard prayer in the following words:

*Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar* ('Allah is the greatest, Allah is the greatest')

*La Ilaha Illallahu, Wallahu Akbar* ('There is no god but Allah and Allah is the greatest')

*Allahu Akbar wa lillahilhamd* ('Allah is the greatest and to Allah belongs all praise')

This is the most important day for the pilgrims: every person who is performing the hajj has to take part in the assembly at Arafat, and their hajj will be accepted by God. The pilgrims spend this day of the Dhul-Hijjah on the Plain of Arafat until sunset, after which they retrace their steps to their next station, Muzdalifah.

### Plain of Muzdalifah

The pilgrims will spend the night at Muzdalifah. Here, they will gather 49 pebbles that they will use for stoning the three stone columns representing Satan (the devil), which have stood since ancient times in the village of Mina. These



stone pillars stand at sites in the remote Plain of Mina, where Satan appeared to Abraham and Ishmael, tempting them to disobey God when Abraham was taking his son to be sacrificed at God's command.

### **Village of Mina**

Pilgrims will then spend the next 3 days at the village of Mina, after their brief stop at Muzdalifah, to complete their pilgrims' rites and then disperse. On each of the 3 days of their stay in Mina, pilgrims go to the columns, stoning them with the pebbles they have collected in order to symbolize their rejection of Satan, in the same way that Abraham once rejected Satan. After the first day's stoning, most of the restrictions applicable to the pilgrim in the state of Ihram are now lifted.

### **The Principles and Rules of Sacrifice of an Animal (Qurbani)**

The sacrifice of an animal has always been treated as a recognized form of worship in all religious orders originating from a divine book. Even in pagan societies, the sacrifice of an animal is recognized as a form of worship, but it is done in the name of various idols and not in the name of Allah, a practice totally rejected by Islam.

Sacrifice of an animal (Qurbani) is a demonstration of total submission to Allah and a proof of complete obedience to Allah's will or command. When a Muslim offers a Qurbani, this is exactly what they intend to prove. Thus, the Qurbani offered by a Muslim signifies that he/she is a slave of Allah at best and that they would not hesitate, even for a moment, once they receive an absolute command from the Creator, to surrender before it, and to obey it willingly, even if it be at the price of his/her life and possessions.

This practice is to commemorate the unparalleled sacrifice offered by the prophet Abraham when he, in pursuance of a command from Allah conveyed to him in a dream, prepared himself to slaughter his beloved son, Ishmael, and actually did so. However, Allah Almighty, after testing his submission, sent down a sheep and saved his son from the fate of slaughter. It is from that time onwards that the sacrifice of an animal became an obligatory duty to be performed by every well-to-do Muslim.

When a true and perfect Muslim receives a command from Allah, they do not make their obedience dependent upon the command's reasonableness, as perceived through their limited understanding. He/she knows that Allah is all-knowing, all-wise and that their own reason cannot encompass the knowledge and wisdom underlying the divine command. He/she, therefore, submits to the divine command, even if they cannot grasp the reason or wisdom behind it.

This is exactly what the prophet Abraham did. Apparently, there was no reason why a father should slaughter his innocent son. But, when the command came from Allah, he never asked about the reason for that command, nor did he hesitate to follow it. Even his son, when asked by his father about the dream he had seen, never questioned the legitimacy of the command, nor did

he pine or whine about it, nor did he ask for one good reason why he was being slaughtered. The one and only response he made was: 'Father, do what you have been ordered to do. You shall find me, God willing, among the patient' (Qur'an).

The present-day Qurbani is offered in memory of this great model of submission set before us by the great father and the great son. So Qurbani must be offered in our time, emulating the same ideal and attitude of submission.

Muhammad stated that sacrifice of an animal can only be performed during the 3 days of Eid, namely the 10th, 11th and 12th of Dhul-Hijjah. It is only during those days that slaughtering of an animal is recognized as an act of worship. No sacrifice can be performed on any other days of the year. Although sacrifice is permissible on each of the three aforesaid days, it is preferable to perform it on the first day, i.e. the 10th, of Dhul-Hijjah.

No sacrifice is allowed before the Eid prayer is over. However, in small villages where the Eid prayer is not to be performed, sacrifice can be offered any time after the break of dawn on the 10th of Dhul-Hijjah. Sacrifice can also be performed in the two nights following the Eid day, but it is more advisable to perform it during daytime.

### **Who needs to perform sacrifice of an animal (Qurbani)?**

Every adult Muslim, male or female, who owns 614 g of silver – or its equivalent in money, personal ornaments, stock-in-trade or any other form of wealth that is surplus to basic needs – is under an obligation to offer a Qurbani.

Each adult member of a family who owns the above-mentioned amount must perform their own Qurbani separately. If the husband owns the required quantity, but the wife does not, the Qurbani is obligatory on the husband only, and vice versa. If both of them have the prescribed amount of wealth, both should perform the Qurbani separately.

If adult children live with their parents, Qurbani is obligatory on each one of them possessing the prescribed amount. The Qurbani offered by a husband for himself does not fulfil the obligation of his wife, nor can the Qurbani offered by a father discharge his son or daughter from their obligation. Each one of them is responsible for their own. However, if a husband or a father – apart from offering his own Qurbani – gives another Qurbani on behalf of his wife or his son, he can do so with their permission.

During this period, pilgrims also return briefly to Makkah to perform their final act of worship of Kabbah. This is another essential rite of hajj: the Tawaf, the sevenfold circling of the Kabbah, with a prayer recited during each circuit. Their circumambulation of the Kabbah, the symbol of God's oneness, implies that all human activity must have God at its centre. It also symbolizes the unity of God and man.

### **Pilgrims' Experience of Hajj**

Every year, over three million Muslims from more than 70 countries make the journey by land, sea and air to the Holy City of Makkah for spiritual pilgrimage.



The pilgrims gain a number of benefits from hajj. Pilgrims share the unanimous view that nothing can quite prepare them for the sheer beauty of the experience and the overwhelming feeling of humbleness that overcomes them. They enjoy the sense of purification, repentance and spiritual renewal during the journey of hajj. Malcolm X (Malik el-Shabazz) stated in his autobiography:

Every one of the thousands at the airport, about to leave for Jeddah, was dressed this way. You could be a king or a peasant and no one would know. Some powerful personages, who were discreetly pointed out to me, had on the same thing I had on. Once thus dressed, we all had begun intermittently calling out ‘Labbayka! (Allahumma) Labbayka!’ (Here I come, O Lord!) Packed in the plane were white, black, brown, red, and yellow people, blue eyes and blond hair, and my kinky red hair – all together, brothers! All honoring the same God, all in turn giving equal honor to each other . . .

Never have I witnessed such sincere hospitality and the overwhelming spirit of true brotherhood as is practiced by people of all colors and races here in this ancient Holy Land, the House of Abraham, Muhammad, and all the other Prophets of the Holy Scriptures. For the past week, I have been utterly speechless and spellbound by the graciousness I see displayed all around me by people of all colors.

[http://www.colostate.edu/Orgs/MSA/find\\_more/m\\_x.html](http://www.colostate.edu/Orgs/MSA/find_more/m_x.html)

Figure 12.8 shows how individual pilgrims feel during the journey of hajj, while Table 12.2 provides clear experiences of pilgrimage journeys to Makkah and Madinah only for the reason of following in the footsteps of the pilgrims’ beloved Prophet Muhammad. One of the major reasons why Muslims go on pilgrimage is to pray in the holiest mosques in Makkah, Madinah and Jerusalem. The reward rises exponentially if the person offers Salat in Makkah (Masjid-e-Haram), Madinah (Masjid-e-Nabawi) and Jerusalem (Masjid-e-Aqsa).

Therefore, hajj is not a tourist phenomenon; it is part of the Islamic faith for a Muslim to perform the hajj as stated according to the Holy Qur’an and Hadiths. It is not like any other pilgrimage in the world, where people visit pilgrimage sites with overtones of tourism.

Hajj is a unique spiritual event, bringing together people from every part of the world – such an immense diversity of human beings. These people represent vast differences in culture and language, forming one community and performing the same faith, and all are devoted to the worship of their single Creator. For this reason, Michael Majid Wolfe, an Islamic scholar, commented:

- ❖ Hardship/sweetness/love
  - ❖ Unity, equality and love
  - ❖ Spirituality/people touched so spiritually they cry
  - ❖ I felt the presence of God and the uplifting spiritual desire to be closer to God
  - ❖ I have been praying in the direction of the Haram my whole life and my father passed away without seeing it

Fig. 12.8. Individual spiritual journeys of hajj. (From Raj and Bozonelos, 2013.)

**Table 12.2.** Pilgrimage experience. (From Raj and Bozonelos, 2013.)

Statement	For each statement below, indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your experience during your visit to this religious place				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	No view
I felt out of place while walking around	42%	16%	33%	0%	8%
I felt I was in a haven from everyday life	27%	42%	18%	0%	9%
I felt a strong religious/spiritual sense of place	45%	55%	0%	0%	0%
The architecture was awe-inspiring	50%	40%	0%	0%	10%
I experienced a real sense of a historical place	40%	60%	0%	0%	0%
I had an uplifting religious/spiritual experience	25%	75%	0%	0%	0%
I felt better in myself because of the visit	33%	67%	0%	0%	0%
I felt 'humbled' while walking around	50%	50%	0%	0%	0%

This is one of the images that sticks with me most powerfully about the Hajj. The idea of praying five times a day all over the world is a very orderly idea. To see this idea enacted by almost 3 million people in one space at the same time is awesome. When the prayer takes place in Makkah with this many people it's so quiet you can hear clothing rustle as the people change their postures. It is a stunning event.

(<http://edition.cnn.com/COMMUNITY/transcripts/2001/03/05/wolfe/>)

Muhammad Sohail, a financial consultant from Bradford, UK, stated that:

The hajj was an opportunity for me to enhance an established belief and commitment to Islam. I now value differences much more than before, and appreciate the magnitude and magnificence of the religion; its diversity across all colours and races.

In a gathering of millions from across the Globe, I networked extensively, gauging the world view within a whisper. A fabulous experience which demonstrated to me how in today's troubled world we so need a uniting force which overlooks all differences as blessing. We need Islam.

Individual experience shows how human beings treat one another during hajj. They show kindness and consideration to their fellow pilgrims and without any barriers such as race, colour and social status shown by the individual pilgrim. As Wolfe has stated above, it sets the standards for the individual pilgrim to respect the values and cultural differences of every other pilgrim who has come to Makkah to perform hajj.

## Hajj Pilgrimage versus Western View of Pilgrimage

The Muslim performs hajj as part of his religious beliefs, and not as an escape for leisure and entertainment. The fifth and last Pillar of Islam is hajj, and that is the reason people travel to the Holy City of Makkah. Every physically and financially able Muslim should – as stated in the Holy Qur'an – perform hajj once in his or her lifetime.

MacCannell (1976) states that pilgrimage used for secular activities provides the additional motivation of escape for leisure and entertainment. This secular viewpoint is not appropriate for hajj, which is an exclusively religious experience. In his view:

Traditional religious institutions are everywhere accommodating the movements of tourists. In 'The Holy Land,' the tour has followed in the path of the religious pilgrimage and is replacing it. Throughout the world, churches, cathedrals, mosques, and temples are being converted from religious to touristic functions.

(MacCannell, 1976, p. 43)

He argues that 'site sacralization' is the process whereby tourist attractions take on iconoclastic qualities, and are venerated in the same manner as religious site festivals. On a global level, in contrast, the hajj and the holy places in Saudi Arabia have a sacred quality in the world of Islam, with this act of pilgrimage a defining moment in the life of pilgrims.

Hajj is an event that takes Muslims in the footsteps of Muhammad to the barren Plain of Mina and the slopes of Mount Arafat; it is one of the biggest yearly mass movement of people on the planet. Hajj is not a tourist phenomenon for pilgrims – it is the journey of a lifetime for the individual pilgrim to visit Makkah and perform hajj. In this respect, performing hajj is also an education, almost challenging convention.

Many verses in the Holy Qur'an have been illustrated in connection with the rules of hajj and its virtues. The books of Hadith are also filled with traditions of the Prophet Muhammad on the topics of hajj. The Muslim follows the rites of hajj to carry out the duties laid down by the Islamic faith and to follow in the footsteps of Abrahamic origin, as outlined in the following statement:

The rites of the Hajj, which are of Abrahamic origin, include circling the Ka'ba seven times, and going seven times between the mountains of Safa and Marwa as did Hagar during her search for water. Then the pilgrims stand together on the wide plain of Arafat and join in prayers for God's forgiveness, in what is often thought of as a preview of the Last Judgment.

(<http://islamicity.com/mosque/pillars.shtml>)

Kandhalvi (1980) and Al-Qahtanee (1997a, 1997b) state that, for Muslims, hajj represents judgement day: a symbolic representation of what is to come to each of us.

The pilgrims are there to perform hajj as their main priority, although they can buy religious souvenirs once they have performed it. The two religious souvenirs pilgrims bring back with them most frequently are the water of Zamzam, which is provided free of charge, and dates. Pilgrims spend the majority of their time on pilgrimage in the act of worship of God during their stay in Makkah and Madinah; there are limited opportunities for cultural exchange.

Therefore, while other pilgrimages, such as those to Santiago de Compostela and St Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, are used for secular activities and provide

additional motivations of escape for leisure and entertainment, from a Muslim perspective these comparisons are not appropriate for hajj, which is exclusively a religious experience.

It is clear from the above research that hajj is a very important element of the Muslim faith. The pilgrims who perform hajj are not tourists; they are individuals who are carrying out a religious act while showing great humbleness and devotion during the pilgrimage.

## Summary

The findings of this research show us that hajj is an event that leads Muslims in the footsteps of Prophet Muhammad to the barren Plain of Mina and the slopes of Mount Arafat and is one of the biggest yearly mass movement of people on the planet. The hajj contains unique spiritual aspects, and brings together people from an immense diversity of mankind.

Hajj is a pilgrimage to Makkah in Saudi Arabia, which constitutes the fifth and last of the acts of worship prescribed by Islam. The hajj is obligatory once in a lifetime for those Muslims who can afford it, provided that: (i) the practicalities of the journey have been addressed; and (ii) adequate provision has been made for all dependants left at home.

Hajj constitutes a form of worship with the whole of the Muslim's being: with his body, mind and soul, with his time, possessions and the temporary sacrifice of all ordinary comforts and conveniences a person normally enjoys. The person should assume, for those few days, the condition of a pilgrim wholly at God's service and disposal.

The hajj pilgrims feel unanimous in their view that nothing can quite prepare them for the sheer beauty of the experience and the overwhelming feeling of humbleness that overcomes one during the pilgrimage of hajj. Hajj is not a tourist phenomenon for pilgrims; it is the journey of a lifetime for the individual pilgrim to visit Makkah to perform hajj.

Finally, let us now offer a prayer: May God in his infinite Mercy impart some of His humble blessing on the writer of these words and its publisher.

And our last call shall be: Praise be to God the Sustainer of all the worlds.  
And may God's choicest blessings and peace be upon the most virtuous of all Prophets; and upon his family, and his Companions and his followers till the day of Judgement. We beg this O God, through your Mercy, O You Most Merciful one.  
(Holy Qur'an)

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss pilgrimage experience and motivation behind the hajj journey to Makkah.
2. Explore the hajj journey of Prophet Muhammad and what brings together people from an immense diversity of different communities.

3. Review the concept of hajj pilgrimage versus the Western view of pilgrimage.
4. Discuss how hajj is considered as the culmination of each Muslim's religious duties and aspirations, compared to other religious tourism sites.

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# 13

## Case Study 2: Religious Tourism Experiences in South East Asia

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### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce religious tourism in South East Asia, examine the tourist motivations to visit religious (Buddhist) sites and address the role of religious tourism in regional development among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). South East Asia is home to numerous religious sites, pilgrim centres and religious festivals. However, while South East Asian nations have strong geographical, cultural, historical and archaeological links and social similarities, there are strong political, ethnic and religious boundaries. The chapter concludes by exploring the strategies required to overcome barriers to develop religious tourism in the region. Such strategies include the need for transparent objectives, community consultation and integrated national and regional plans.

Religion has inspired, and continues to inspire, the construction of spectacular festivals, monuments, geographic movements, forms of art and architecture across the world. Countries and destinations from across the globe have been seeking to leverage cultural heritage to attract religious or faith-based tourists. While the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2011) estimates that 300 to 330 million tourists visit the world's key pilgrimage sites every year, religious tourism has broadened to encompass faith-based conventions, religious cruising and visits to religious tourist attractions.

From Western spiritual tourists in Varanasi to pilgrims on routes to Santiago de Compostela, religious tourism has attracted the attention of authors, consultants, destination marketing organizations, planners, movie makers and academics. While the phenomenon has manifested itself very visibly in Europe

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and the Middle East, through documentaries such as *The Way* (2010), which honours the Camino de Santiago, or *Next Year Jerusalem* (2013), religious tourism to South East Asia has received far less attention. This is despite South East Asia (SEA) being home to numerous religious attractions associated with world religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. From the Borobudur Temple Compounds in Indonesia to the Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary in Vietnam and the town of Luang Prabang in Laos, the region has numerous spectacular religious sites. It is also the home to pilgrim centres such as the San Agustin Church in the Philippines and religious festivals such as the Tamil Hindu celebration of Thaipusam in Malaysia.

As the geopolitical, cultural and economic organization called the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) prepares to become a single market in 2015, this chapter explores religious tourism in South East Asia by introducing the region and its boundaries, before exploring the recent development of religious tourism. The chapter then, by way of a case study, explores the development of religious tourism in Thailand, before investigating the opportunities and challenges for the future integration and growth of this important niche.

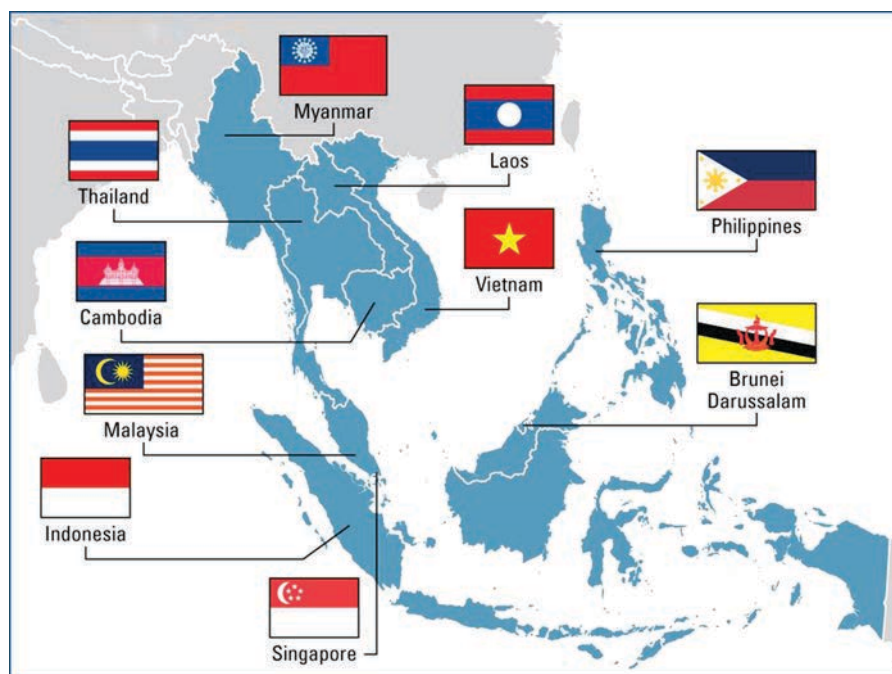
## South East Asia

Before seeking to understand what 'religion' in South East Asia is, we must first lay out the boundaries of what we mean by South East Asia (SEA). We use SEA to describe a geographic region that includes: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, the Philippines, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, Brunei and Vietnam.

This is notwithstanding the fact that SEA is often incorporated into other regional blocks. The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), for example, includes SEA in a broader 'East Asia and the Pacific' region that includes Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Fiji, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, China, Japan, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste, Vanuatu, Hong Kong and Macao.

Given the regional context of this chapter, juxtaposing the tourism experiences of SEA into a coherent whole, we argue this perspective underlies the degree of movement toward broader regional integration among the aforementioned countries. Although the region has long been divided by religion, language, ethnicity, political and economic systems, as well as historical rivalries, inter-regional movement through new roads, bridges and railways, the rise of inexpensive air travel, new means of communication and the emergence of transnational organizations such as ASEAN have meant it is again becoming the 'crossroads of Asia'.

ASEAN was formed in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Brunei, and has expanded to include all South East Asian countries except Timor-Leste (see [Fig. 13.1](#)). With a population of 593 million in 2010, 99.8% of South East Asia's population lives in ASEAN countries (Jones, 2013), making it the third largest population block in the world, after China and India. A cornerstone of regional economic progress as well as political and social cohesion, ASEAN has sought to develop a common market



**Fig. 13.1.** Map of South East Asia, along with ASEAN membership.

in the region, which includes the free movement of people for the purposes of travel and tourism. Developments such as the ASEAN Single Aviation Market (ASEAN-SAM), regular meetings between ASEAN tourism ministers and the development of a regional common visa have meant tourism has become a pillar industry across the region despite disparities in GDP, infrastructural development and visitor numbers. This success was built on the Manila Declaration of 15 December 1987, which expressed ASEAN's determination to encourage intra-ASEAN travel and strengthen ASEAN's tourism industry. The ASEAN Tourism Agreement signed on 4 November 2002 in Phnom Penh, Cambodia by the heads of state/government included objectives such as cooperating in facilitating travel into and within ASEAN and enhancing the development and promotion of ASEAN as a single tourism destination (ASEAN, 2002). This was strengthened by the introduction and current implementation of the ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (ATSP) 2011–2015. There has also been development through the ASEAN Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA) and the ASEAN Tourism Qualifications Equivalent Matrix to facilitate the free flow of services and skilled labour within ASEAN member countries.

## Tourism in South East Asia

Greater regional economic progress as well as political and social cohesion has led to greater domestic, regional and inbound tourism. Indeed, tourism

as a sector has been used to analyse regionalism in SEA, given that it can be seen as a catalyst for regional integration and cooperation (Chheang, 2013). Work towards regional standards for green hotels, homestays, spa services and community-based tourism alongside joint promotion and marketing is enhancing tourism through increasing the quality of tourism facilities, human resources and services. Success has followed this regional approach, with ASEAN member countries benefiting from strong intra-regional and international demand. In 2013, ASEAN had 99.2 million tourists, an increase of 11.73% from 2012 (see Fig. 13.2). According to Mazumder *et al.* (2013), double-digit growth in tourist arrivals during 2001–2011 was achieved in Myanmar (26%), Thailand, Cambodia (20%) and Vietnam (19%), Singapore, Brunei Darussalam (13%) and the Philippines (11%). During the same time period, Malaysia received the highest number of visitor arrivals (203.2 million), followed by Thailand (145.5 million) and Singapore (93.8 million). Other country shares were Indonesia 62.7 million, Vietnam 35.8 million, the Philippines 29.9 million, Cambodia 16.8 million, Laos 13.5 million, Myanmar 2.5 million and Brunei Darussalam 1.7 million.

## Religious Tourism in South East Asia

While tourism in general has emerged to be one of the driving forces in creating *de facto* regionalism in SEA, the increase in domestic, regional and inbound tourism includes cultural tourism, and more specifically religious-oriented travel and tourism. Its role in contemporary SEA will intensify as the overall demand for religious travel by people of faith increases. However, research, development and promotion of religious tourism are still at an early stage in the region. While academic study has traditionally focused on religious tourism in Europe, the Middle East and South Asia, in the past half-decade SEA has been a focus



Fig. 13.2. ASEAN international visitor arrivals 1991–2013.

for conferences and investigations by academics, practitioners, policy makers, consultants and researchers. From UNWTO's 2011 *Religious Tourism in Asia and the Pacific* document (UNWTO, 2011), which outlined a diverse religious landscape, to the 'Dynamics of Religion in Southeast Asia' lecture series at Humboldt University in Berlin (23 October 2013), questions regarding the challenges of linking tourism and religion in a broad regional framework have arisen. From domestic tourism to sites of sacred power and national remembrance to regional pilgrimages by international 'spiritual' tourists, religious tourism in SEA is broad, diverse and often contradictory. It is a shifting entity, its broad roots and dynamics making the use of the term 'religion' in SEA slippery to approach both empirically and conceptually. To provide an entry into this aspect of the chapter, we must first seek to understand the wide variety of beliefs, ideas, discourses and interests that underpin the term 'religion' in SEA, given it is often freely and broadly applied (and misapplied).

Talal Asad (1993, p. 29) rejects a universal anthropological definition of religion by arguing 'there cannot be a universal definition of religion, not only because its constitutive elements and relationships are historically specific, but because that definition is in itself the historical product of discursive processes'. The argument that the anthropological definition of religion is a historical product of European (Western) Christian discursive processes has been highly influential, challenging researchers seeking a working, if only heuristic and provisional, definition that can be used as a unit of analysis and a basis for scholarship to incorporate a more holistic understanding of religion and religiosity. The study of religion in SEA cannot be separated from its history, and in particular the role of Western imperialism and colonialism (DuBois, 2009), with Western religious ideas continuing to influence our understanding of both religion and religious tourism. However, this chapter uses a transdisciplinary approach to outline the peculiar dynamics of religiosity in South East Asia and the ways in which these dynamics mediate change and continuity in tourism experiences. We follow UNWTO (2011) in noting that the philosophies of the four major religions (Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam and Christianity) are not conflicting if we examine their spiritual aspects and bases. Therefore, this section incorporates a broader religiosity that includes spiritual tourism and some of the minor religions in the region.

There is a perception that because of internal rivalries, territorial disputes, history and authoritarian elements, ASEAN members are not integrated in the way that the European Union is. South East Asia is indeed a diverse area fused together by Buddhist, Hindu, Islamic and Christian religions, which in turn reflect Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Dutch, British, French and American cultural influences. It is a history that spawned many religious tourism sites, festivals and pilgrimages, but also created historical differences and rivalries. Recent sectarian violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar and between Christians and Muslims in the Philippines, and tension between Malay Muslims and ethnic Chinese in Malaysia, highlights how history is never far from the surface when politics and religion go hand in hand.

At first glance, religious-oriented travel and tourism in SEA would seem to be a large but segmented market, given that within the region there are

nominally Marxist countries, Laos and Vietnam, who do not expressly market religious tourism, as well as Thailand, which has successfully diversified its economy through offering everything from high-end to volunteer-oriented religious tourism, and Muslim majority countries such as Indonesia and Malaysia. Within each of these countries, various 'ethnic religions' interact with so-called 'world religions' such as Buddhism and Hinduism in various ways and places. Although ASEAN has strengthened trade links, improved infrastructure, including roads, railways, airports and ports, and encouraged cross-border cooperation, there is no pan-South East Asian religious identity. While individual countries seek greater tourism numbers and the valuable foreign exchange earnings that come with tourism, valuable tourism resources linked to religion are often not targeted. The ASEAN Tourism Strategic Plan (2011–2015), for example, does not mention religion, while statistics on religious tourism are hidden, limited and vague. This is partly because of the close links between culture (national identity) and religion, where it is often difficult to separate distinct motivations. According to UNWTO (2011), the exception may be in the specific case of pilgrimages and religious festivals. As practically all Asian archaeological monuments have some connotation for religion, there is a need for more precise information on religious tourism as opposed to cultural tourism (UNWTO, 2011).

In 2015, the member countries of ASEAN will form a single market and production base under the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). Similar to the increased flow of citizens in the European Union, the opening of these borders will encourage religious adherents, pilgrims and travellers to cross national borders. Clearly, religious tourism and regionalism are intertwined, with dynamics of movement and place-making facilitating connectivity, intertwining circuits and similarity. UNWTO (2011) argues, for example, that the importance of Asia and the Pacific in religious tourism is seen by the fact that of an estimated 600 million religious and spiritual voyages, 40% were in Europe and around half in Asia. To highlight the opportunities for growth, we present the case of Buddhist tourism in Thailand, and the emergence of Buddhist circuits in South East Asia.

## Short Introduction to Buddhism

Before discussing why Buddhist temples and meditation centres in SEA have become popular tourism destinations, we need to learn about what Buddhism is. While considering the history and principles, we can think about why Buddhism has been successful in facilitating tourism in the region. Buddhism originated in India, then spread widely in Asia (Reat, 1994). It can be broadly divided into Theravada and Mahayana traditions. Mahayana originated in India later than Theravada (Jones, 2003). Theravada Buddhism became popular in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Laos and Thailand while the Mahayana tradition became popular in China, Korea, Vietnam, Japan, Tibet and Nepal (Reat, 1994).

While Theravada and Mahayana retain a unity in core Buddhist teachings, 'they evolved distinctive forms and philosophies' (Jones, 2003, p. 11). For example, the Theravada school only emphasizes 'self-liberation', but the Mahayana school stresses helping other sentient beings as well as one's self-liberation (Dhammananda *et al.*, 1987). Theravada means 'the doctrine of the elders'

(Gellner, 2001, p. 45). As one form of pre-Mahayana Buddhism, Theravada has been the most conservative school (Gellner, 2001). Compared to Mahayana, Theravada does not strongly emphasize intellectual meditation. Meanwhile, Mahayana means 'Great Vehicle' or 'Great Way' (Jones, 2003), and the philosophy of Mahayana is often considered as 'the intellection of advanced meditative insight, accessing a profound level of consciousness' (Jones, 2003, p. 11). It provides 'a vital foundation for a socially engaged Buddhism, in terms of both intellectual understanding and insightful action' (Jones, 2003, p. 11). However, in both traditions, a primary principle is *Karma*, which is the accumulation of good and evil that we have done in this life and previous ones, and which determines one's fate in life or rebirth (Spiro, 1966). Buddhism stands 'in its place as one of the universally acknowledged moral, intellectual and spiritual systems guiding all humanity into the third millennium of the common era' (Reat, 1994, p. 293).

Buddhism reached SEA both directly from India and indirectly from Central Asia and China. People in SEA learned Buddhism as a result of increased contact with the Indian merchants who came to the region for trading. Under their influence, the local people started to practise a mixture of Buddhism and Hinduism, while retaining at the same time many of their old beliefs and customs. From the 9th to the 13th centuries, the Mahayana Buddhist and Hindu Khmer Empire dominated much of the South East Asian region. Under the Khmer, temples were built across Cambodia and in neighbouring Thailand. Angkor was at the centre of this development, with a temple complex which had, at its height, over a million inhabitants, making it the world's biggest city at the time.

Currently, there are around 200 million Buddhists in SEA, making it the second largest religion in the area after Islam, which has 240 million adherents living across the region in Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and the Philippines. Therefore, around 35 to 38% of the global Buddhist population resides in SEA. Most countries (i.e. Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar) follow the Theravada tradition. Singapore and Vietnam, in comparison, follow Mahayana Buddhism, which is accompanied by Daoism and Chinese folk religion in most Chinese communities. Buddhist principles are based on reasoning and the main purpose is achieving nirvana, through intellectual meditation. In Buddhism, individuals should follow their own path. There are no entities like the Catholic pope, the Christian Bible or baptism. Buddhism therefore gives adherents a high level of freedom and this lack of a central orthodoxy or doctrine attracts some westerners (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Practising meditation does not require one to be Buddhist (Kabat-Zinn, 1994); thus, non-Buddhist westerners visiting temples or meditation centres in Asia may not be motivated by religious reasons but by the desire for spiritual growth, self-fulfilment, ethical value or philosophy. Unlike other religions, Buddhism and its temples are more open to non-adherents. These unique characteristics can be an attraction and motivation to many Western tourists who want to mentally relax and recharge their spirituality.

Following Vukonic's (1996) assertion that people increasingly want to satisfy their spiritual needs, Possamai (2000) notes that urban, educated and middle-class people are increasingly involved in alternative religious activities, and engage in yoga, meditation and consultation with alternative health practitioners. Western people who feel *dislocated and rootless* often seek to find new orientation in life, and may seek the true meaning of their life through



spiritual tourism. In fact, spiritual tourism can be considered as 'the oldest and most prevalent type of travel in human history' (Kaelber, 2006, p. 49), and it has grown substantially over the last few decades (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Destination marketing organizations (DMOs) are promoting tourism at religious sites with the goal of diversifying their tourism product offerings, rejuvenating failing economies and generating funding for preservation and conservation (Russell, 1999). DMOs have opened their doors to Buddhist culture, through campaigns aimed at Western markets promoting Buddhist tourism in Thailand, Cambodia and Myanmar (Philp and Mercer, 1999; Agrawal *et al.*, 2010; UNWTO, 2011; Ministry of Hotels and Tourism, 2013). These countries offer not only Buddhist temples but also yoga, traditional healing, spas and meditation centres to visitors with an interest in spiritual well-being. In addition, the history, iconography and art associated with Buddhism are found in numerous important archaeological sites in these countries, and are becoming major attractions for Western tourists (Rasul and Manandhar, 2009; Choe *et al.*, 2015).

## Buddhist Tourism in Thailand

Some established Buddhist sites, such as Borobudur, a historic Buddhist temple complex and the largest Buddhist monument in Indonesia, have become flagship tourist attractions in the region. This site and Angkor in Cambodia are similar in their cognizance of the fact that their continued success is based somewhat on fulfilling tourists' spiritual thirst and cultural curiosity. However, Thailand has developed the most proactive winning strategy to promote religious tourism (UNWTO, 2011) by being one of the few Asian countries in the region that facilitates a range of religious tourism experiences. Information on religious attractions and festivals is relatively easy to obtain through guidebooks, websites and pamphlets. While essentially Buddhist (94.6%) and home to a number of destinations, temples, stupas, festivals and statues, it has also succeeded in including meditation and wellness tourism into the gamut of religious products (UNWTO, 2011).

Despite recent political crises, the number of international tourists visiting Buddhist temples in Thailand has shown steady growth of 10–20% annually (Chinmaneevong, 2008). Identifying the scope for regional and international tourism opportunities, the Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) has focused on places of importance for Buddhist sites, and has partnered in joint promotion with Thai Airways to offer Buddhist Circuit Tours. In 2014, together with Buddhadasa Indapanno Archives (India), they organized a religious tour for Buddhists to celebrate Makha Bucha Day, which fell on 14 February. However, TAT religious tourism products are not only limited to Buddhist temples, but also offer yoga centres, meditation centres and even massage places. Thai massage, for example, has attracted tourists for the quality of massage, and it is considered as a spiritual practice based on Buddhist philosophy (James, 1984; Kogiso, 2012).

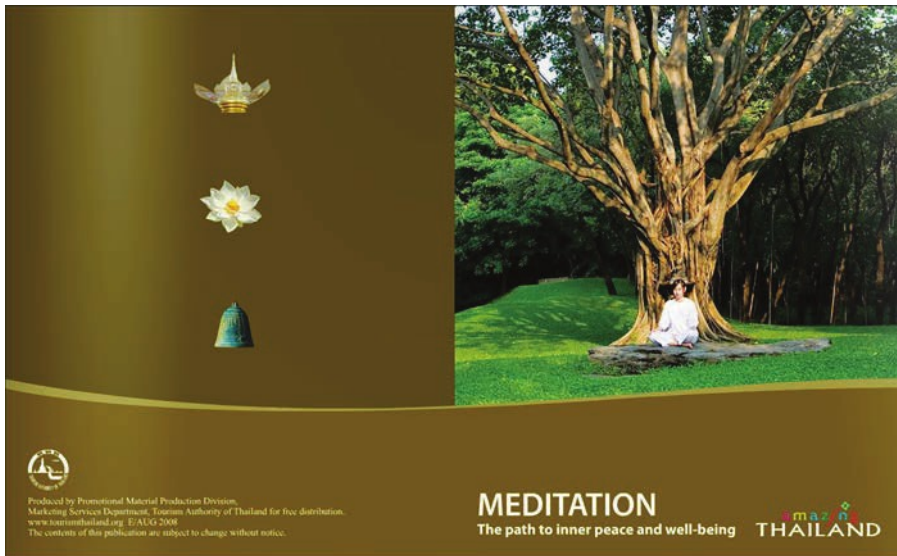
Chiang Mai, Thailand's northern capital, is considered as the 'city of a hundred temples', of which 12 to 15 are included in Buddhist tourist circuits.

The range of temples includes Doi Suthep, Wat Phra Kaeo (Temple of the Emerald Buddha), Wat Phra Chetuphon (Wat Pho), Wat Arun and Wat Suthat. Thus, Chiang Mai has turned into a major religious tourism destination owing to its high number of Buddhist temples and the opportunity it provides to approach monks, talk to them and learn about Buddhism practices (UNWTO, 2011). In 2011, Chiang Mai represented Thailand by becoming a UNESCO cultural city. Among the numerous temples, Wat Phra That Doi Suthep or 'Doi Suthep' is particularly popular because of its association with a 7th-century Lawa chieftain called King Luang Viranga, who converted to Buddhism and became a monk (see Fig. 13.3). It remains an important Buddhist monastery, and local people revere the mountain temple as a destination of spiritual significance and have seen it become an important pilgrimage site (Pholpoke, 1998). Because of its location and significance, many international tourists visit the temple as part of Buddhist circuit tours to Thailand.

In recent years, TAT has increasingly promoted 'meditation tourism', with its tourist literature drawing heavily on modern Buddhist discourses (Schedneck, 2011). Brochures in English list meditation centres such as the Young Buddhists Association of Thailand, the Dhamma Kamala Meditation Centre, the International Buddhist Meditation Centre, Wat Mahathat Yuwaratransarit and Wat Pathumawanaram in Bangkok, as well as meditation centres in Chon Buri, Kanchanaburi, Nonthaburi, Lop Buri, Ubon Ratchathani, Surat Thani and Chiang Mai (see Fig. 13.4). The TAT website also contains a list of all meditation centres



Fig. 13.3. Sacred white elephant, Wat Phra That Doi Suthep, Chiang Mai.



**Fig. 13.4.** Tourism Authority of Thailand Booklet, 2008: 'Meditation in Thailand: The Path to Inner Peace and Well-being'. (<http://issuu.com/diethelmtravel/docs/meditation>)

and agencies specialized in yoga and meditation as well as attractions and temples that might interest international travellers (UNWTO, 2011).

Other countries have sought to replicate Thailand's success, with Indonesia currently leveraging Borobudur, a World Heritage Site which still retains spiritual significance for many Buddhists in the region. While Borobudur is the Buddhist temple complex, Prambanan Temple highlights its links with Hinduism, which continues to flourish in some of the Indonesian islands with Bali as the most representative example (UNWTO, 2011). However, discrimination, sectarianism, religious and ethnic hostilities have stifled efforts to develop broad-based religious tourism outside Thailand. Furthermore, links between countries remain poor, and do not seem to extend beyond the ASEAN Tourism website (<http://www.asean-tourism.travel>). From distrust to poor strategic choices, the potential to develop new tourism products based on religious heritage has failed, including initiatives which have faltered like the 'Malay Kingdoms and Sultanates' promotion which would have included Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia (UNWTO, 2011).

Thailand has advantages, including its physical infrastructure, education and social services, and its international standard airports and roads, the development of new products around Buddhism and spirituality, an ambitious marketing budget and a 'scientific' approach have helped transform religion into an important tourism (economic) asset. The infrastructure, societal tolerance and relative stability of Thailand have also attracted international tour operators. Thailand has also been at the forefront of creating transnational Buddhist tourist circuits with India, Myanmar, Cambodia and Laos. Given the aforementioned advantages, it has also sought to attract Muslims, and promote itself as a place

where food is prepared according to Islamic precepts, where 'halal spas' offer separate facilities for women and men and shopping malls have Muslim prayer rooms. A 2010 video, 'Muslim Friendly Thailand' (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Tol7nuKmQDM>), was developed by the Thai tourism authority's Dubai office to promote travel to Thailand.

## **Cooperative Regional Religious Tourism Development**

So successfully has spiritual and religious tourism competed in an increasingly global competitive and cluttered tourism environment that international localities, regions and nations have, after assessment of their inventory of resources, joined marketing campaigns. Examples include the Cultural Routes programme in the European Union, which promotes the cultural, religious and humanist heritage of Europe, despite its diversity. This is an approach that could diversify, differentiate and rejuvenate tourism in SEA, providing a competitive edge, and kick-start a tourism industry in ASEAN members such as Myanmar and Vietnam. By designing a product to meet the needs of religious tourists, destinations can successfully diversify their tourism industry, if a destination, attraction or event can 'fit'. As religious tourism develops across the globe, the demand to develop a more regional approach that creates connections across the territory will increase.

Regionalization can lead to the development of a regional approach and thereby facilitate intra-regional and international tourism. However, there are issues regarding overt competition and sometimes antagonism between ASEAN countries and destinations. The expansion and economic impact of religious tourism relies on countries within ASEAN cooperating rather than competing with each other. Tourism, like any other economic activity, is scale sensitive, with cooperation among geographically proximate countries potentially exploiting economies of scale in the supply of tourist goods and services. This will, in the long term, enhance competitiveness by reducing costs and enhancing efficiency (Rasul and Manandhar, 2009). Collaboration enables resources and risks to be shared, facilitates coordinated policies, improves trust, confidence and mutual understanding and exploits commonalities and complementarities. By capitalizing on 'collaborative advantages' rather than on individual 'competitive advantages' (Bramwell and Sharman, 1999; Bramwell and Lane, 2000), collaboration can also help reduce adversarial conflicts. The benefits of a successful partnership approach could lead to greater cost-effective cross-border marketing and promotional programmes, tourism clusters spanning different countries and cross-border mobility of skilled tourism professionals. From the strong Theravada Buddhist traditions in Cambodia and Thailand, and celebrations like the Makha Bucha, which commemorates the ordainment of Buddha's first 1250 disciples, to Islamic feasts such as the birthday of the Prophet Muhammad and Eid Ul-Adha, the opportunities for a more regional approach to events and religious sites are apparent.

The lack of will, internal conflict and lack any form of strategic outlook for religious tourism development in some ASEAN countries clearly reflect the lack of integration. While strong infrastructural investment has made Thailand,

along with Singapore and Malaysia, favoured destinations, poor road and rail links and a lack of investment in airports have hindered tourism development in other countries such as Myanmar and Laos. At a regional level, some member countries have taken initiatives to reform the tourism sector, but must do more to promote integration and assist ASEAN nations trying to kick-start religious tourism. However, full realization of this reform needs time to mobilize resources in the face of broad resource constraints in some member countries. The structure of the tourism industry in SEA needs to be refined and linked to all the stakeholders. ASEAN, as a geopolitical player, needs to take a leading role in reducing geopolitical tensions and rivalries and formulating precise policies and implementing them in a manner similar to the European Union. Therefore, it needs a cooperative and integrated approach to develop, plan, manage and promote religious tourism to reduce the economic and social imbalances that exist between different members (Pearce, 1989). In addition, governments, private sectors and other stakeholders should also work together in formulating policies and strategies to enhance the economic impacts to be felt at all levels of the economies (Wong *et al.*, 2011a, 2011b), a strategy that will help maintain and enhance their cultural and religious heritage.

## Summary

The SEA region has an incredible number of religious events, pilgrim centres and religious festivals attracting domestic, regional and international tourists. Its centuries-old civilizations, rich and unique cultural diversity, splendid archaeological monuments and historic sites of religious significance make the region a very attractive place for intra-regional as well as international tourists. The purpose of this chapter was to introduce religious tourism in South East Asia, examine the international tourists' motivations and attraction to religious (Buddhist) sites and address the role of religious tourism in regional development among members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). The chapter also explored the strategies required to overcome barriers to develop religious tourism collectively in South East Asia. While South East Asian nations have strong geographical, cultural, historical and archaeological links and social similarities, there are strong political, ethnic and religious boundaries. Our assessment suggests ASEAN countries need to formulate transparent objectives through community consultation, integrate these objectives into national plans and develop a bottom-up approach. As the area becomes a single market, the role of ASEAN should extend beyond an economic market, to pay attention to the interplay of different religions, ethnicities and cultures. Religious tourism could play an important role as a tool in the subsequent regionalization of this territory.

South East Asia has numerous spectacular religious sites from the Borobudur Temple Compounds in Indonesia to the Mỹ Sơn Sanctuary in Vietnam and the town of Luang Prabang in Laos. The region offers not only Buddhist temples but also yoga, traditional healing, spas and meditation centres with an interest in spiritual well-being. The history, iconography and art associated with religions are becoming major attractions for Western tourists. Non-Buddhist westerners visiting temples may not be motivated by religious reasons but by the desire for



spiritual growth, self-fulfilment, ethical value or philosophy. Unlike other religions, Buddhism and its temples are very open to non-adherents.

Thailand has developed the most proactive winning strategy to promote religious tourism by being one of the few Asian countries in the region that facilitates a range of religious tourism experiences. Its advantages include physical infrastructure, education and social services. Its international standard airports and roads, the development of new products, an ambitious marketing budget and a 'scientific' approach have helped transform religion into an important tourism (economic) asset.

ASEAN needs a cooperative and integrated approach to develop, plan, manage and promote religious tourism to reduce the economic and social imbalances that exist between different members.

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the unique characteristics of Buddhism that can attract non-Buddhist westerners?
2. Why have non-Buddhist westerners increasingly visited temples in South East Asia? What are their motivations?
3. Discuss how Thailand has been more successful in religious tourism development than its neighbouring ASEAN countries.
4. Why do ASEAN members need to cooperate to develop their own religious tourism products?
5. If you planned to visit South East Asia this summer, which religious sites would you visit, and why?

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# 14

## Case Study 3: Nordic Pilgrimage to Israel: A Case of Christian Zionism

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### Introduction

This chapter will discuss the contemporary Nordic Protestant pilgrimage to Israel with special attention paid to *Christian Zionism* (CZ). ‘Christian Zionism’ is a generic term applied by both its practitioners and scholars to describe a religiously motivated (faith-based) political support for the State of Israel (Ariel, 1991; Gunner, 2006; Leppäkari, 2006).

It is generally agreed upon by scholars that *pilgrimage* is a journey deriving from religious causes to a sacred site. Pilgrimage consists of two central elements: the external journey to the sacred site, and the internal journey as a transformative spiritual experience (Bowman, 1991; Dallen and Olsen, 2006; Blackwell, 2007, 2010; Coleman, 2010). This chapter seeks to understand the underlying motivational factors for contemporary Nordic Christian pilgrimage to Israel/Palestine. Sometimes travel debouches into political stances, which from time to time lead to exclusivity, procrastination and eventually hard-core xenophobic attitudes (Leppäkari, 2013). The examples presented here address the way motivational factors for travel are expressed and highlight consequences they come with, political-theological implications and standpoints in relation to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tourism to Israel/Palestine is significant for local people and it affects and polarizes people worldwide. It divides Christianity theologically and gives rise to various forms of religious-political activism. These social motivational factors are here studied with the aid of systematic theoretical analysis of various representations of Israel and Jerusalem that are formed within this pilgrimage context.

*Nordic Pilgrimage* refers to tourists from Scandinavia travelling to Israel with a specific Christian religious precondition. Selected case studies highlight

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the interplay and relevance of religious-political representations of 'Holy Land' and 'Holy City'. CZ puts the Bible and political aims together when anticipating an upcoming Battle of Armageddon on the spot, therefore arguing for political support of the State of Israel. This leads to tension between the camps of Christian Palestinians, Christian Zionists and visiting Christians from various denominations and churches.

The ethnographic data in this chapter were collected from 1998 until 2014. They include studies of literature and other printed products, participant observations in Finland and Jerusalem, e-mail correspondence, semi-structured thematic interviews and in-depth interviews conducted by the author during a time period of 1998 until 2007. The data have been updated with current material found on the Internet; the ingathering of personal travel narratives collected through a call in *Kyrkpressen* 16–17/2014; and a study of 285 archived customer satisfaction questionnaires at the Finnish travel agency Toiviomatkat.

## Pilgrimage and Religious Travel to Israel

The vast majority of sacred shrines and holy sites host pilgrims united by strong degrees of cultural homogeneity. But Jerusalem differs on this point. The city draws pilgrims from a vast multitude of nations and cultural traditions since the city is considered holy by three major religious traditions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. The representatives of these traditions go partly to different places at different times where they engage in different forms of worship. Jerusalem does not appear so much as a holy city but as a *multitude* of holy cities – as many as are the religious communities which worship at the site built over the same spot, operating at the same moment, and contending for hegemony (Bowman, 1991).

In Christian tradition pilgrimage is voluntary. The Latin term for pilgrimage, *peregrinatio*, refers to the wandering of people across the fields (*per agere*), thus indicating vagabondage. Adopted by early Christianity, the term was changed from the pejorative to positive, meaning the journey of the faithful who left their families and ordinary life in order to seek salvation and union with God. The wanderings of the early Church's *peregrini* were, however, not directed toward any concrete point. They were supposed to imitate vagrancy of the prophets described in the Old Testament and the behaviour of anchorites who retired to the desert in search of salvation (Grabois, 1988).

St Augustine, one of the early Church Fathers (354–430 CE) who had an impact on the formation of Western Christianity, used the term *peregrinus* for faithful wanderers. The word also connotes 'traveller'; *peregrinus* was simply someone who was away from home on a journey that eventually would lead the person to return to his or her native city (Dougherty, 1980). Gradually, early Christian pilgrims abandoned such practices of wandering and went to specific sanctuaries and shrines for their devotional exercises. As part of this process, Christian pilgrimage to Israel, more specifically Jerusalem, developed.

The diverse types of Jewish, Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic pilgrimage to Jerusalem are not discussed in this chapter. Here the focus is placed upon a specific style of contemporary pilgrimage, namely Protestant. What makes Israel

and especially the city of Jerusalem holy today for some Nordic Protestants and their American evangelical fellows is not so much something found in the city, but rather something brought to it from outside, and matched up there in the presence of monuments and everyday life as markers of sacredness. Though Christians around the world share the same biblical sources, their interpretations of them differ. The various 'Jerusalems' are markers in the diverse discourses on religion, power and identity of the visiting groups and individuals (Bowman, 1991).

Distinctions can be made between primary and secondary space and time. The 'New Jerusalem' might be built up in various places or discovered in people's enterprises but yet there can be a consciousness that the 'original' Jerusalem is not there (Smart, 1997). We need, however, to keep in mind that 'New Jerusalems' are not always limited to a construction of the past. In apocalyptic-millenarian settings it points towards the future and towards an expectation of a city that no one has yet seen or foreseen. The *sacred* is therefore not to be understood as some natural and pre-existent condition of certain things, but rather something that that people have labelled 'sacred' because they believe in such constructions.

Early Nordic pilgrims visiting Jerusalem gave the Viking name Jorsala for the city. Obviously, the Swedish Knight Templar Arn Magnusson depicted in Jan Guillou's novels is a fictional character; none the less, crusaders from Scandinavia travelled with the Bible and political aims to the Holy Land: both King Olaf of Norway and King Canute of Denmark are depicted in the Nativity church in Bethlehem. In the late 19th century, peasants from Nås in Dalarna in Sweden travelled to Jerusalem to meet up with Jesus at his Second Coming and make preparations for the upcoming end-time Battle of Armageddon. They ended up joining Anna Spafford in the American Colony. Today, religious enthusiasts tend again to put the Bible and political aims on religious grounds. They belong to a specific Protestant camp and refer to themselves, in general terms, as Christian Friends of Israel, or Christian Zionism. According to André Swanström, the roots of Finnish CZ go back in time to early encounters between Jews and Christians in the 19th century. On one hand, decades of traditional conservative evangelical missionary work both in Finland and in Israel proceeded with minimal results, but on the other, it gave birth to a new practical trend when the Finnish kibbutz movement emerged (Swanström, 2007).

Travellers to Israel carry with them a mental baggage that includes images of the Holy Land and the Holy City of Jerusalem in the past and in the present and visions about how the land and city will look in the future. During the visit the actual experience and the mental representations might just crash into each other, when what is imagined does not correspond to the reality experienced. In other words, representations of the 'heavenly' Jerusalem crash into everyday reality; i.e. when meeting the 'earthly' Jerusalem with traffic jams, rush hours, hamburger bars, supermarkets, religious trends and ideological flows and all that comes with it. The fact that 'Israel' and 'Jerusalem' simultaneously function both as a mythical image and a real-life city makes it from time to time difficult for the religiously motivated traveller to digest.

## Christian Zionism

Who are the Christian Zionists? In order to answer that question we need to have a look at broader concepts of evangelical Christianity, which is neither a united nor a uniform camp. As a social phenomenon it is composed of hundreds of different denominations, as well as of thousands of independent churches (Ariel, 2013). A specific theological formation within this Church family is here referred to as CZ. The empirical material used in this chapter refers to participants and sympathizers of groups such as the *International Christian Embassy Jerusalem* (ICEJ), the *International Christian Zionist Center* in Jerusalem (ICZC), and the *Word of Life Congregation* in the Nordic countries, and sympathizers to groups such as *Swedish Friends of Israel* and *Finnish Friends of Israel*. As cases, they serve to exemplify and illuminate a specific religious approach to the religious-political discourse in the Near East. Similar ideological trends can, however, be found in various other predominantly religious groups and among individuals who in a general manner call themselves ‘Friends of Israel’ (but who do not necessarily identify themselves as Christian Zionist).

Christian Zionists maintain that Jerusalem, as we know the city, will in the relatively near future go through dramatic changes due to divine intervention. In the groups’ religious interpretive frames these changes are supposed not only to take place in the metaphysical environment, but also in our social environment. In other words, Christian Zionists have a clear-cut vision of how present-day life in Jerusalem is about to go through some more or less dramatic changes. The movement consists of a growing number of evangelicals who on religious grounds are organized to support the current Israeli administration and what is identified as the Jewish cause, motivated by fulfilment of biblical prophecy (cf. Gormly, 2005).

As noted before, Christian Zionist groups come in various forms. They are all, more or less, preoccupied with the concept of redemption of individuals and the whole of mankind. Therefore, Christian Zionists share some common features in their religious world views. In brief, their religious world view can be summarized as follows:

- Certain biblical literal preconditions are ascribed to Israel in relation to the restoration of the land and the people, including anticipation of Armageddon, a final battle for concurring evil forces and a reunion with a super-human agency on earth.
- Expectation of a spiritual revolution through divine intervention in the near future and the establishment of messianic leadership. A new millenarian Kingdom of God in Israel to be established in Jerusalem, presumed to challenge the rules of the world as we know it.
- Promoting blessing and support of Israel on religious grounds, including promotion of travel and pilgrimage to Israel, raising awareness about the Holocaust and combating anti-Semitism.
- A longing for a Third Jewish Temple to be rebuilt on the ancient temple site, a belief shared with some Jewish temple activist groups.
- Islam is perceived as a threat to current world order and therefore treated as an obstacle in the redemption process.

Hence we end up with people who visit Israel and who are caught in the middle between a social reality and an envisioned future of a millenarian Kingdom of God. The blessing of Israel is a key ritual feature that can be identified among Christian Zionists. Such a blessing of Israel is a ritualistic element and is expressed in many forms: in prayers, worship, liturgical dance and drama, in sermons, theological books and articles, pilgrimage, and in contemporary political and socio-economic stances. If we turn our focus to pilgrimage, certain characteristics stand out.

## **Pilgrimage in Nordic Christian Zionism**

According to statistics presented by the Association of Finnish Travel Agents (AFTA), there has been a small increase (2.8%) in travel to Israel from Finland during recent years. In the year 2012, altogether 9605 persons travelled with a group to Israel. In 2013 the number of travellers was 9870 (AFTA, 2014). These numbers do, however, not include individual travellers who purchase their private ticket online. Unfortunately, numbers do not tell the reader anything about the motives behind an individual's choice for travel, his or her experiences or whether the journey had an ideological impact or not.

During a web search in spring 2014, eight Finnish travel agencies arranging tours and travels to Israel could be listed: Apollo, Aurinkomatkat, KingTours, Kinneret Tours, Lomamatkat, Teemamatkat, Toiviomatkat and Starlight Tours. In addition to these companies there are several private organizations that operate as tour organizers in collaboration with larger agencies. Apollo, Aurinkomatkat and Lomamatkat are among the top five leisure travel agencies in Finland. The larger ones specialize in leisure travel, thus focusing on beach vacations in Eilat with organized tours including cultural elements such as visits to the Dead Sea and Jerusalem.

Toiviomatkat is considered the oldest and most recognized pilgrimage travel agency in the country. The company started its travel arrangements and direct flights to Israel in 1976. Altogether it has carried out 170,000 journeys from Finland to Israel (Kurki-Suonio, 2013). According to Toiviomatkat's customer feedback in spring 2014, 50% of travellers in 2014 were new customers, 32% had visited Israel before two to three times, 16% up to nine times and 2% over ten times. Most customers (62%) were aged between 50 and 69 years, while 20% were under 50 years. Toiviomatkat's customer feedback clearly indicates the nature of the company's religious brand profile: i.e. morning and evening prayer meetings and worship; the reading of biblical passages during excursions; personal reflections in relation to biblical texts; significance of contemporary Israel and its relation to historical places; etc. A critical reflection made by a participant places Toiviomatkat's tours under the thematic umbrella of CZ:

Toiviomatkat's brochure could more clearly state that tours have a spiritual emphasis. The prayer programme came as a surprise. In the beginning it was



hard to adjust to it and to participate, though I consider myself a religious person. It was very uncomfortable for my husband. Strong political positions and the support of Israel came as a surprise.

(Customer feedback, Toiviomatkat, 7 May 2014,  
translated by author)

Two types of travel to Israel can be identified: leisure travel and pilgrimage. Due to the scope and thematic limitations of this chapter, I focus on pilgrimage, motivated by a religious world view while promoting a specific religious agenda. Since the establishment of ICEJ in 1980, an umbrella organization for Christian Zionists with its global headquarters in Jerusalem, and further the establishment of its Finnish branch in 1984, pilgrimage from the Nordic countries to Israel has to a large extent been coordinated by ICEJ. In 2014 they collaborate, arrange seminars and visit local denominations such as Pentecostal, Baptist, Free Church and in some locations Lutheran parishes. During such occasions they promote the 'blessing of Israel'. One can also participate in this blessing via the Internet by supporting their work through prayer and monetary contributions to their social welfare projects.

We can compare the Finnish case with the Swedish where the ICEJ is not established nor organized. In Sweden an organization named Swedish Friends of Israel (Israels vänner rf), founded in 1923, describes itself as a Christian ecumenical organization and its members formulate Christian Zionist theological statements, and they host most Christian Zionist pilgrimage travel to Israel. There is a similar organization too in Finland, called the Finnish Friends of Israel (Israelin ystävät ry), founded in 1908. Both organizations support Israel on religious grounds and are oriented towards the Lausanne Movement, but some preliminary variations can be observed: the Swedish Friends of Israel theologically align closer to the charismatic evangelical ICEJ, while the Finnish Friends of Israel is more conservative evangelical in its character. Both organizations support Zionism, missionary work among Jews and Jewish evangelical congregations (cf. Ariel, 2013). In this sense both organizations fall under the broad umbrella definition of CZ. With their eyes on eternity, they promote and practise pilgrimage to Israel. For members of the above mentioned groups, pilgrimage is a way to express gratitude and a ritual to bless Israel.

## Christian Zionists 'Blessing Israel' Through Pilgrimage

Christian Zionists promote pilgrimage as a form of ritualistic travel. The motives behind it embark from a literal religious-political position where a person bases his or her decision to travel to Israel on explicit religious-political motives. With such motives CZ not only encourages people to travel to Israel, but also to make a pilgrimage. In this specific context and in light of contemporary domestic and international political events, pilgrimage is understood as a religious-political ritualistic statement. It is an expression of faithfulness to the God of Israel. As the leader of the ICZC, Jan Willem van der Hoeven, puts it to his listeners in a local Finnish Word of Life Congregation (Livets Ord)

when encouraging participants to take part in the celebrations of the Feast of the Tabernacles arranged by Christian Zionist representatives in Israel:

Let's go to Zion! Don't come as a tourist to Israel. I don't read in the Bible: come and be a tourist . . . You are sons and daughters of the living God of Israel. Come as Levites, walk before the army. These coming weeks as Israel is facing maybe a war, we do not know, it might well be.

(Jan Willem van der Hoeven, Turku, Finland,  
17 March 2000, personal communication)

The Protestant celebrations in Jerusalem during the Jewish Feast of Tabernacles (in Hebrew *Sukkot*) are a major annual pilgrimage event that gathers thousands of Christian Zionist sympathizers from all over the world, including pilgrims from the Nordic countries. The celebrations take place in Jerusalem in the month of October. Nowadays, the feast serves as a trademark for the ICEJ, and is seen as a foretaste of what the future will bring with it. It is presented on the ICEJ web page as follows:

Since its inception in 1980, the Christian celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, sponsored by the International Christian Embassy Jerusalem, has been a vital and central part of our ministry of comforting Israel (Isaiah 40:1) . . . Up to 5,000 Christians from over 100 countries have come up to Jerusalem each year (regardless of the political climate) . . . [making the Feast of Tabernacles] the largest and most popular annual Christian tourist event in Israel.

Pilgrims come . . . to worship the Lord, pray for the peace of Jerusalem, and to bless Israel . . . We believe that celebrating the Feast each year honours the Lord in anticipation of the fulfillment of the words spoken by Zechariah.

The Feast takes place at several outstanding venues across Jerusalem. There are specific seminar tracks available and focused bible teaching throughout the week. Each evening concludes with a time of dynamic worship and praise led by an international worship team.

(ICEJ, 2014a)

The celebrations during the week gather Christian Zionists to Jerusalem 'to comfort the Jews and witness the work of God'. On the ICEJ website you are informed that the Feast of Tabernacle tour in 2014 is taking place on 10 to 15 of October, and the festival is described in the following way:

The Feast of Tabernacles is always a wonderful foretaste of that future time when all peoples will come up to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot. It is a prophetic statement that our Lord is indeed coming soon. And it declares to Israel and the nations that a new day is dawning. The King is coming, and we are here to rejoice in His transforming power and soon arrival.

It is also a time to stand with Israel and assure them that the God who delivered them out of Egypt will also deliver them today. The God of Israel will come and tabernacle with His people. Thus it is a time of great rejoicing, great hope, and great miracles!

(ICEJ, 2014b)

Ulf Ekman, founder and former leader of the Swedish Word of Life congregation (who in spring 2014 converted to Catholicism), was interviewed in

2004 when an upswing of CZ theology was trending in the congregation. Since 1987, Ekman made approximately 45 trips to Israel before he decided to move to Jerusalem. Christians are, in Ekman's words, not only encouraged to visit Israel but *obliged* to promote Israel in their social environment and fight anti-Semitism wherever it occurs:

Christians who are positive towards Israel are often foggy about her right to her own territory. They haven't seen that God really promised the Jews this tiny piece of land, forever. But when they [Christians] realize it, Christians are under the obligation to put things right and to denounce and start opposing anti-Semitism wherever they find it.

(Ulf Ekman, Jerusalem, 22 April 2004,  
personal communication)

In summer 2014 the Finnish branch of ICEJ hosted two trips to Israel, one during 15–25 July aimed at young adults, and the second the annual ICEJ Feast of Tabernacles from 6 to 17 of October. This trip is in collaboration with the ICEJ and a Finnish national religious radio channel *Radio Dei*. A brief analysis of the contents of the 10-day-long programme allows us to identify certain important themes. Parts of the programme have theological significance in relation to what is among the believers commonly referred to as 'blessing Israel'. These are: participation in prayer meetings and seminars; the Festival; the Jerusalem march arranged by the ICEJ and visits to holy places; and promotion of Israeli products, including a visit to Ahava Dead Sea cosmetics. An alternative to the day off is a visit to the Holocaust museum.

## Religious Role-identification During Pilgrimage

Apocalyptic-millenarian representations comprise various forms of imagination and anticipations of the end of the world. They are somewhat of a key feature when trying to understand underlying motives and sympathy towards the State of Israel among Christian Zionists. These representations of contemporary social reality and future are, in this context, closely linked to political events. Christian Zionists not only refer to historic biblical exegeses rooted in the region, but also place their focus upon an idealized Kingdom of God in the future. When religious imagination is blurred into a social political reality it may inspire and motivate to activism. Various apocalyptic-millenarian representations might be coloured by the notion of the end of time, but contrary to what is commonly held, the end is not ultimately what is at stake here. Scholars argue that religion can motivate people to act for what is perceived as a better future because religious beliefs, symbols and motifs have the power to motivate people to take action (Strozier and Boyd, 2012; Leppäkari, 2013). Still, it is not religion alone that makes people choose the means for their action. Presuming that apocalyptic disaster motivates people to act, it is natural to think that gratitude motivates to action as well.

Humans create, interpret and transmit meanings through the use of symbols. The intra-psycho processes of an individual, their personality as a whole with experiences and emotions, affect the way socially transmitted symbols and

representations are interpreted. In this sense, personal experiences become unique. Each individual gives a personal touch to how the social reality is experienced and sets the ground for variations to the larger picture. Moments of experience are marked by an interaction between what is socially learned and personally experienced. When personal symbols find correspondence in the collectively given religious imagery, role-taking occurs on a deeply individual plane (Holm, 2006). This sort of role-identification allows the individual to feel meaning and hope in life. It is therefore safe to say that symbols matter when role-identification takes place in the pilgrimage process. Such identification can evoke both positive and negative reactions. Further, it determinates how people in various encounters apply the religious symbolic language when experiencing situations at hand.

For Christian Zionists the actual place bears significance for the individual pilgrimage experience. The religious significance ascribed by CZ to Jerusalem can be identified in the empirical material by observing the multiple cultural representations Jerusalem generates, especially when looking at the place's role in the apocalyptic drama. This underlines the dynamic impact that Jerusalem can have as a symbol. To understand this symbolic significance we need to place it in a context. The city signifies something for someone in a specific situation. Intense individual experiences of the city seem to hold on to traditional and culturally cognizable imagery. As a symbol 'Jerusalem' is closely tied to cultural representations of global destruction and redemption. Such images set the ground for the individual Christian Zionist's pilgrimage experience. Familiar and shared imagery of both destruction and paradise create interpretive frames for individuals. In the case of Nordic Christian Zionist pilgrimage to Israel, the religious role-play is generated through a familiar and culturally cognizable apocalyptic tradition, which tends to make a strong emotional impact.

## Significance of Physical Place for Religious Experience and Interpretation

Jerusalem is a city which has attracted religious pilgrimages and seekers throughout the course of history. Every now and then there are tourists visiting Jerusalem who are diagnosed suffering from the so-called 'Jerusalem syndrome'; that is, tourists who momentarily become emotionally unstable and subject to a religious overdose during their stay in Israel. No documentation is currently found for how those involved in this encounter with the land and culture themselves describe the emotional overload. However, individuals who are described as 'suffering from the Jerusalem syndrome' are exposed to something that could be called a clash of religious symbols. Such intense religious role-identification takes various forms and can be described in many ways. In most cases, it seems to derive from an overwhelming negative encounter of ideals crashing into a social reality.

The usage of the term 'Jerusalem syndrome' is not unproblematic. Who are these travellers and what type of motives lies behind their journey? These were

questions that psychiatrists Eliezer Witztum and Moshe Kalian asked when they wanted to study the 'Jerusalem syndrome'. Kalian and Witztum embark from a concept they call *the psychopathology of tourism* and focus on how alteration of routines can affect mental health. According to them, there is no such thing as 'Jerusalem syndrome' (Kalian and Witztum, 1998). However, they still maintain the fact that *the place* matters and bears significance for those individuals who experience a mental breakdown while visiting Jerusalem. This correlation between the psychotic episodes and the significance ascribed to the city as a central place and symbol in a religious world view supports the argument that the apocalyptic-millenarian representations have an impact on human behaviour and interpretation of reality during pilgrimage.

Clarence Crafoord accounts for the significance of physical spaces for experience and interpretation. Contrary to the negative effects of spaces as addressed above, the positive effects of visiting a place are emphasized (Crafoord, 2000). This fits well with the positive ways that Christian Zionist pilgrims describe their experiences during pilgrimage. We should bear in mind that meetings with a specific space can accentuate situations that may give rise to both negative and positive reactions: at its worst a crisis, as the psychiatrists pointed out (Greenberg and Witztum, 2001), and at its best, expressions of gratitude. The relationship between religious expressions and mental well-being is very complex, which is why it is hard to draw any general conclusions. In situations where dissonance occurs, it is common for people to apply familiar coping strategies. With the help of such conscious and unconscious models, people can manage with the situation at hand and find ways out of experienced anxiety.

Setha M. Low and Denise Lawrence-Zuniga refer to embodied space as 'the location where human experience and consciousness take on material and spatial form' (Low and Lawrence-Zuniga, 2003). If gazing upon Christian Zionist pilgrimage experience through the theoretical lenses of such embodied spaces, correlations between real places and imagined apocalyptic ideals can be observed. In such a perspective the spatial orientation is the place. Here the place is Israel; the movement is pilgrimage; and the language is symbolism embedded with apocalyptic-millenarian representations of the city in the past, in the present and in the future.

## Summary

For many religiously motivated travellers to Israel pilgrimage is a way to reinforce their religious identity. In the case of Nordic Christian Zionist pilgrimage, the individual traveller's experience of the Holy Land and Jerusalem comes less from the physical environment than from learned religious symbols of the land and city transmitted through generations. This takes place when a literalist interpretation of the Bible is put together with political aims while anticipating an upcoming Battle of Armageddon. When making political claims with literalist biblical arguments in support for current Israeli government policies it leads to theological tension between religious camps of Christian

Palestinians, Christian Zionists and visiting Christians from various denominations and churches.

Israel is a place where CZ pilgrims can embody apocalyptic-millennarian representations of the Holy Land and the Holy City by engaging a symbolic understanding of them as aspects of contemporary social reality. Such symbols and representations continue to serve as a *force majeure* for Christian Zionists to make a pilgrimage to Israel (cf. Leppäkari, 2003). Here Jerusalem as a mythical city and symbol disseminates multiple representations created in people's minds, their physical environment and cultural heritage. Such religious symbols become reinforced when people participate in rituals like pilgrimage.

Intense religious experiences are utterly complex. In this chapter they have been treated as an example of a person's religious emotional role-play when trying to fill up an emotional gap between Jerusalem imagined and Jerusalem experienced. Strong emotional reactions can be a way of coping with an emotional situation at hand, and it is a way for Nordic CZ pilgrims to interpret and understand their religious world view.

Though the anticipated apocalyptic end is described dramatically, it still includes positive elements such as visions of a positive outcome for mankind and redemption for the individual. These positive elements may comfort a Christian Zionist. A literalist reading of the biblical texts assures them that they have been 'chosen' and 'awarded' to become part of a promised future superhuman and eternal community. In this way, representations of a 'New Jerusalem' function as a coping strategy, shared by a religious community where each individual participant has individual experiences and personal preferences when interpreting their social reality. For participants in pilgrimage ritual, representations of a 'New Jerusalem' may foster emotional stabilization and resilience. When a faith-based literalist apocalyptic-millennarian interpretation of biblical texts is applied to a social reality, it becomes a way of attempting to create order in a chaotic milieu.

## Discussion Questions

1. Who are the Christian Zionists and what do they believe?
2. What is characteristic for Nordic Christian Zionist pilgrimage?
3. Describe why the author thinks that Christian Zionist pilgrimage can be problematic.
4. According to author, what makes Israel and Jerusalem unique pilgrimage sites?
5. Describe the ways the ritualistic elements of pilgrimage come to play in practice.

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# 15

## Case Study 4: The Consumption and Management of Religious Tourism Sites in Africa

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### Introduction

Today, tourism is the world's biggest industry; indeed, the biggest the planet has ever seen, according to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO, 2007) in their *Tourism 2020 Vision*. In their long-term forecast and assessment for the development of tourism, the status and growth of tourism will continue throughout the first 20 years of the new millennium. Essential outcomes of the *Tourism 2020 Vision* are quantitative forecasts, covering a 25-year period, with 1995 as the base year and forecasts for 2010 and 2020. By 2020, the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts that 1.5 billion tourists will be spending US\$2 trillion a year or over US\$5 billion every day. Tourism is a significant and sometimes dominant contributor to the GDP of many countries. It is one of the five top export categories for 83% of countries and the main one for 38% of them. Tourism employs 3% of the total global workforce. It is estimated that tourism accounts for a quarter of the total economy of the Caribbean and provides a fifth of its entire jobs. However, much of the income generated by tourism leaks back to the so-called developed societies, mostly to foreign airlines, hotel owners and suppliers of imported food and beverages consumed by tourists.

It is significant to mention that in contemporary times, tourism has assumed a wide scope which is inclusive of multiple spheres – business, religious, ecological/nature, medical/health, heritage/historical, wine/food, cultural and space tourism, among others (Aliyu, 2004). Tourism resources are divided into two major categories: natural and anthropogenic. These two categories exist separately; however, they complement each other in their value to tourism. Natural tourism resources are mainly geographical features which are subject

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to visual observation and assessment. They are therefore described as objects and phenomena of nature, such as landscapes, or different forms of earth surfaces, vegetation, the oceans and beaches, rivers and riversides, climate and changes in climatic conditions. The anthropogenic resources are man-made resources. They are creative objects of man and include resources like architecture and ethnographic elements, history and archaeology, culture and religion. Tourism in any destination therefore depends on the existing tourism resources of the place (Spotts, 1997; Okech, 2000). These resources form the basis of the existing contemporary tourism categories. Religious tourism resources can be both natural and anthropogenic; however, the resources studied in this chapter could primarily be classified as anthropogenic. Religion is part of cultural heritage, and religious tourism is, therefore, an aspect of cultural tourism. It is by far the richest part of African heritage. This chapter reviews issues in the consumption and management of religious tourism sites in Africa.

## **The Consumption and Management of Religious Tourism**

Religion is a powerful force which has long caused people to travel to religious sites in many parts of the world (Franklin, 2003). Travel to the ancient cities of Palestine and Christendom, Mecca, Madinah (Medina) and Bangkok is not new. Pilgrimages by the Buddhists to Lhasa, by the Jews to Jerusalem and by the Hindus to Pashupatinath have existed for centuries. Although tourists of Western Europe do not often travel for spiritual reasons to their aspired burial place, they are often motivated to travel because of religious affiliations or curiosity. The peak tourist periods in Jerusalem and Damascus during Easter and the time of the Passover are partly a result of the spiritual devotion of Western Christians. Rome, or more specifically the Vatican, attracts Catholics from all parts of the world. The cathedrals of England have become such popular tourist attractions that their very fabric is threatened by pressures from consumers.

Relationships between tourism and religion have changed from their traditional form. Holy places, such as Jerusalem, Mecca and Madinah, have become tourist destinations for consumers lacking a strong spiritual motivation. Anti-Western sentiment has increased in such places because of political factors and because locals and devout pilgrims find their living conditions and religious experiences have been marred because of frequent photography, the proliferation of signs and rowdy behaviour. Thus, conflict is rising between locals, the religiously devout tourist and the curious visitor. There is concern that holy places are being developed for tourism and that it is detracting from the religious significance that has made them famous (Okech, 2000).

Despite the very high consumption rate by religious tourists in many African countries, research on religious tourism in these countries is yet to be adequately explored (Rinschede, 1992; Aliyu, 2004; Uko, 2008). Existing literature in Nigeria, such as that of Akande and Gasu (2009) and Omisore and Akande (2006), identified factors like age, gender, income, occupation and household size as factors that influence the consumption of religious tourism sites; however, the relationship between consumption of religious tourism in

Africa and the socio-economic characteristics of consumers has been much neglected, as have strategies for the management of sites.

## Conceptual Clarification of Religious Tourism

Religious tourism usually includes visiting places with religious significance, such as shrines, or attending events such as saint's day festivals. Religious tourism undoubtedly existed long before Christianity. Devotion to a religion motivated trips by ancient peoples, including the Egyptians, Greeks and Jews. Travel for religious reasons existed in India and Asia, for example, before Christ was born. Many early religions, which motivated pilgrimages in ancient times, are now much less influential, such as the Fire Worshippers or Zoroastrians (Okech, 2000).

Wright (2007) defined religious tourism as a form of tourism whereby people of faith travel individually or in groups for pilgrimage, missionary, leisure or fellowship purposes. Blackwell (2007) defined religious tourism as encompassing all kinds of travel that is motivated by religion, where the destination is a religious site. Citrinot (2011) categorized religious tourism into three types of visit: to temples; to religious monuments; and to religious activities. Cochrane (2011) affirmed that religious tourism in Indonesia is a strong driver of the local economy. From the foregoing review, this chapter defines religious tourism as a voluntary or temporary travel by a person or group of persons from a usual place of residence to a religious site.

## The Consumption of Tourism Sites

Consumption means visit and revisit of persons (consumers) to a commercial establishment. Therefore consumption of tourism sites in this chapter means to visit or stay in a destination as a guest. In this case, it is visits to religious tourism sites. Empirical studies on issues of consumption of tourism sites are numerous; for example, Abbott (2004) worked with Tourism Victoria and Arts Victoria to develop a strategic approach to growing cultural tourism and patronage of cultural and heritage tourism sites. The report found that there is significant potential to build on current visitation levels, and that the tourism sites have a largely unexploited role to play as a key driver of tourism.

Marion and Farrell (2006) have carried out a study on ecotourism consumption in protected areas. Their study focused on managing the effects of protected area consumption, comprising local, regional, national and international use. Some of the key points raised include that visitor use can negatively affect vegetation, soil, water and wildlife resources, as well as the quality of visitor experience. Another study, on tourist visitation to Ebenezer Mission, was conducted by Clark and McRae-Williams (2014) and documents the findings in regard to the number of visitors frequenting the site, how they found out about the site, and their opinions regarding the experience they had while consuming. Jauhari and Sanjeev (2010) reveal high revisit intentions by tourists to religious sites in India.

North American religious tourists comprise an estimated US\$10 billion industry. According to Wright (2007), 'Faith tourism is no longer a niche, but a full-blown industry.' Reflecting on the first religious tourism trade show which he organized, Wright said:

The tremendous response from global tourism leaders and organizations to our first trade show and conference clearly demonstrates that our partners around the world are committed to developing and promoting meaningful products and services that meet the needs of today's faith-based travellers.

(Wright, 2008a)

In a study conducted by Wright (2008b), it appears that 50,000 churches in the United States are engaged in religious travel programmes and 25% of general US travellers said they were currently interested in taking a spiritual vacation. Religious tourism is increasingly developing with the establishment of associations like the World Religious Travel Association (WRTA), and in academia investigations by the likes of the *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage*, and religious tourism book series being announced by publishers such as Routledge and CAB International.

## Concepts in Management

Management, according to Jones *et al.* (2000), is the planning, organizing, leading and controlling of resources to achieve organizational goals effectively and efficiently. Resources are assets such as people, machinery, raw materials, information, skills and financial capital. Managers and individuals responsible for supervising the use of an organization's resources need to achieve its goals.

One of the most important goals that organizations and their members try to achieve is to provide goods and services that customers desire. This is also one of the principal goals of religious tourism sites in Africa. The extent of the ability and capability of managers to manage these sites are determinant factors in the consumption and satisfaction level of the consumer in the religious sites. Stoner *et al.* (2001) see planning as the process of establishing goals and suitable courses of action for achieving them; organizing involves the art of turning plans into action; controlling ensures that actual activities conform to plan activities; while leading and motivating is the process of directing and influencing the task-related activities of group members or an entire organization. It therefore becomes clear that the success or failure of religious sites in Africa hinges on adequate management.

## Theoretical Framework

The approach adopted in this chapter is the Growth Pole Theory, which was postulated by Francis Perroux in 1955. He argued that a growth pole is a place of passage of forces. It attracts people and objects to itself and also repels them.



He further claimed that it is a centre from which centrifugal and centripetal forces operate. In the context of spatial development, a regional growth pole, according to Hermansen (1970), is a set of expanding industries located in an urban area and includes further development of economic and social activities throughout its zone of influence.

Kuklinski (1972) extended the theory of growth poles to include, more comprehensively, the geographical dimension. However, he based his observation and consequent recognition on the fact that development does not appear everywhere all at once. It appears at points or development poles with variable intensities; it spreads along diverse channels and has varying terminal effects for the whole of the economy. Of interest to Perroux were basically economic activities. That is, industries and commercial enterprises were used as his main elements of attraction for creating the pole. The concerns which arise from the rather ready acceptance of the growth pole as a basis for policy making are the problems generated by rapid metropolitan growth. Over-concentration of economic activities and social services in one or a few large metropolitan centres has stymied efforts to decentralize industries and government employment in relation to a country's population and natural resources, and has prevented even economic development.

In contributing to industrial theory, Myrdal (1957) believes that a growth pole results in a 'circular and cumulative causation'. He states that once a particular region has the virtue of a large industry, new increments of activity and growth will concentrate in the region because of the derived advantage. Once growth has begun in a place, spatial flows of labour, capital and commodities develop spontaneously to support it. There are 'trickle-down effects' or 'spread effects' even to other parts of the region with respect to these developments.

It is suggested in this chapter that religious tourism sites can be referred to as 'development impulses' or 'growth poles' from which development can 'trickle down' into other parts of the host metropolis. This chapter postulates that development of existing religious sites can bring an improvement in the tourism industry, and an overall improvement in the socio-economic development of the host community.

## The Study Area

Africa is the world's second largest and second most populous continent, after Asia. The climate of Africa ranges from tropical to subarctic on its highest peaks. Its central and southern areas contain both savannah plains and very dense jungle (rainforest) regions (Aliyu, 2004). In between, there is a convergence where vegetation patterns such as Sahel and steppe dominate. Africa boasts the world's largest density and diversity of 'free-range' wild animal populations, with wild populations of large carnivores (such as lions, hyenas and cheetahs) and herbivores (such as buffalo, deer, elephants, camels and giraffes) ranging freely, primarily on open non-private plains. It is also home to a variety of jungle creatures such as snakes and primates and aquatic life like crocodiles and amphibians.

This chapter examines, as a case study, the consumption and management of religious tourism sites in Africa in general, with a particular emphasis on UNESCO

World Heritage Sites of a religious nature Fig. 15.1). Africa has a rich past that is divided into historical, cultural and religious heritage. Religion is part of the cultural heritage, and is found in all areas of human life. It has dominated the thinking of African peoples to such an extent that it has shaped their culture, social life, political organizations and economic activities. Because of its great importance in the life of Africans, religion should be developed and studied carefully and thoroughly. Much of African heritage that has been exported to the outside world was cultural and religious. African music, for example, became very popular in the Arab countries in the 7th century AD (the time when Islam began). African music has influenced the evolution of popular music and dance in South and North America, and the famous 'Negro Spirituals' of the United States of America are based on African musical heritage and religious feeling. African religion is part of the African heritage. It is the product of the thinking and experiences of forefathers and mothers who formed religious ideas and beliefs, who observed religious ceremonies and rituals, told proverbs and myths that carried religious meanings, and evolved laws and customs that safeguarded the life of the individual and



**Fig. 15.1.** Map of Africa showing the study countries in dark shading. (From Wikipedia, [http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/African\\_continent-en.svg](http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/b/b7/African_continent-en.svg))

their community. African religion is found in rituals, ceremonies, festivals, shrines, sacred places, religious objects, art, symbols, music, dance, proverbs, riddles, wise sayings, names of people, places, myths, legends, beliefs and customs. The following section gives details of some of the main UNESCO African heritage sites (Okech, 2000).

## Religious Tourism Sites in Africa

Africa is home to some of the most ancient and beautiful sacred sites in the world. Many of them consist of temples that date back thousands of years, and are still popular destinations today. Africa is where the beginnings of civilization are believed to have occurred. There are hundreds of sacred and religious sites on the continent and the following are some of the most popular UNESCO African sites.

### Sites in Egypt

#### *The Great Pyramid*

The Great Pyramid is one of the largest structures of its kind in the world, and certainly one of the most shrouded in mystery. It is made of white limestone, and hollowed out by many inner chambers. It is believed that the main chamber is the central area for gathering and amplifying energy from the heavens and the earth, to benefit humans.

#### *The Sphinx*

The Sphinx is now believed to be older than originally thought. Archaeologists believe it was constructed prior to the 4th dynasty, and restored at that time by the Pharaoh Chephren (Khafre). Computer programs capable of sophisticated mathematical formulas have shown that every several thousand years, around the spring equinox, the Sphinx would be directly facing the constellation Leo.

#### *Dendera's Temple of Hathor*

This structure is of pre-dynastic times. It was used as a hospital where miraculous cures were said to be bestowed by the goddess.

#### *Luxor and Karnak*

The Temple of Karnak is believed to have been built prior to 3200 BC. The central temple is aligned to allow light of the setting sun to enter at summer solstice. The Temple of Luxor was built by the 18th- and 19th-dynasty pharaohs Amenhotep III and Ramses II. This sacred site is of particular interest to scientists past and present and pilgrims alike, for its construction that corresponds to the seven major chakras of the body. Visitors to the temple report experiencing energetic stimulation throughout the site.

#### *Mt Sinai and Monastery of St Catherine*

This mountain is the location of the biblical encounters of Moses and God. It includes the Burning Bush, Elijah's Plateau and the Monastery of St Catherine, the 4th-century Christian martyr.

## Sites in Ethiopia

### *Church of St Mary of Zion*

This church is located in Axum, and is believed to have been home to the Arc of the Covenant some time after the 4th century AD until the 1500s when it was moved to yet another secret location.

### *Churches of Lalibela*

These churches were built during the reign of King Lalibela in the 12th century. Over the course of 25 years, he had 12 of them constructed, after receiving divine instruction from angels and St Gabriel (see [Fig. 15.2](#)). What makes these buildings so unique is that they are carved entirely out of the bedrock of the earth. The most remarkable of the churches is Bete Giyorgis, dedicated to St George, the patron saint of Ethiopia.

## Sites in Mali

### *Mosque of Djenne*

Located in Mali, this mosque is built entirely of mud and palm wood. A yearly festival occurs in the spring to replaster the walls with a mixture made of mud and rice husks.

### *Tomb of Askia*

This tomb in Mali, dating to the end of the 15th century, is a wonderful example of African monumental mud building. The site includes the pyramidal tomb (see [Fig. 15.3](#)), two flat-roofed mosque buildings, the mosque cemetery and the open-air assembly ground.

## Sites in Morocco

### *Almoravid Koubba*

Located in Marrakech, this building is the oldest and only remaining site built by the 12th-century Almoravids (see [Fig. 15.4](#)). They were a warrior tribe from Mauritania who conquered their homeland before expanding to Morocco.

## Sites in Tunisia

### *The Great Mosque of Kairouan*

Construction of this edifice began in AD 670 at a desert location where a spring is said to have miraculously appeared and to have originated from the sacred Zamzam well in Mecca.

### *Ghriba Jewish synagogue*

Located in Djerba, the synagogue houses the oldest hand-written scroll editions of the Torah (see [Fig. 15.5](#)). It is built on the spot of an ancient Jewish place of worship. It is also the oldest synagogue in Africa, and is an especially popular sacred site for pilgrimage around Passover.





**Fig. 15.2.** Bete Giyorgis (Church of St George), Lalibela, Ethiopia. (From Bernard Gagnon, available on Wikipedia at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bete\\_Giyorgis\\_03.jpg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bete_Giyorgis_03.jpg))

## Sites in Tanzania

### *Kilwa Mosque*

The mosque at its time was the largest in East Africa. The domed chambers and massive monolithic pillars still stand today and still look majestic. Kilwa Mosque is shown in Fig. 15.6. There is also a smaller domed mosque which is the best preserved of its kind in the world.



**Fig. 15.3.** Tomb of Askia. (From Taguelmoust, available on Wikipedia at <http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/a/ab/Askia.jpg>)

Other sites in Tanzania include the Mkutini Palace, the Great House and Gereza Fort (Prison). Gereza Fort was built by the Portuguese after they conquered the area in the early 16th century.

## Sites in Nigeria

### *Sukur Cultural Landscape*

The cultural landscape of Sukur has survived unchanged for many centuries, and graphically illustrates a landform use that marks a critical stage in human settlement and its relationship with its environment. It is situated on a plateau in north-eastern Nigeria, near the frontier with Cameroon. It has been occupied for centuries, and its inhabitants have left abundant traces on the present-day landscape.

### *Osun-Osogbo Sacred Grove*

This sacred site is located in the city of Osogbo, in the forest along the edge of a river. The landscape is home to sanctuaries and shrines dedicated to the goddess of fertility, Osun. It is believed to be the last sacred site of the ancient Yoruba people. This is illustrated in Fig. 15.7.





**Fig. 15.4.** Almoravid Koubba (Marrakech). (From Kashmir, available on Wikipedia at [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%C3%BApula\\_almor%C3%A1vide\\_\(Marrakech\)\\_exterior.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:C%C3%BApula_almor%C3%A1vide_(Marrakech)_exterior.jpg))

### Site in Uganda

#### *Tombs of Buganda Kings at Kasubi*

The Tombs of the Buganda Kings at Kasubi are the major spiritual centre for the Baganda where traditional and cultural practices have been preserved, and are still actively used today – bearing living witness to an ancient cultural



**Fig. 15.5.** Ghriba Jewish synagogue, Djerba Island, Tunisia. (From Wikipedia, [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El\\_Ghriba.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:El_Ghriba.jpg))

tradition. The main tomb is built using wooden poles, spear grass, reeds and wattle. Due to their fragile nature (for example, one of the tombs was badly damaged by fire in 2010) UNESCO has listed these tombs as a World Heritage Site in Danger.

## The Way Forward

Reflecting on the theoretical material presented earlier in the chapter, development of tourism and more particularly religious tourism in Africa could reap substantial benefits from capitalizing on the reputation and quality of its religious heritage. The findings of this case study into African religious sites provide a number of recommendations that could be followed to suggest appropriate policies for the management of religious tourism sites.

### Provision of strategies to increase visitors' length of stay

There is a need to look into supporting infrastructure that will enable consumers to increase their length of stay and spend more money at the various sites. The sustainability of these sites relies heavily on the existence and provision of tourism services and facilities, such as transportation, accommodation, catering and other facilities. These could become more financially viable with the inclusion of facilities such as swimming pools (which many westerners



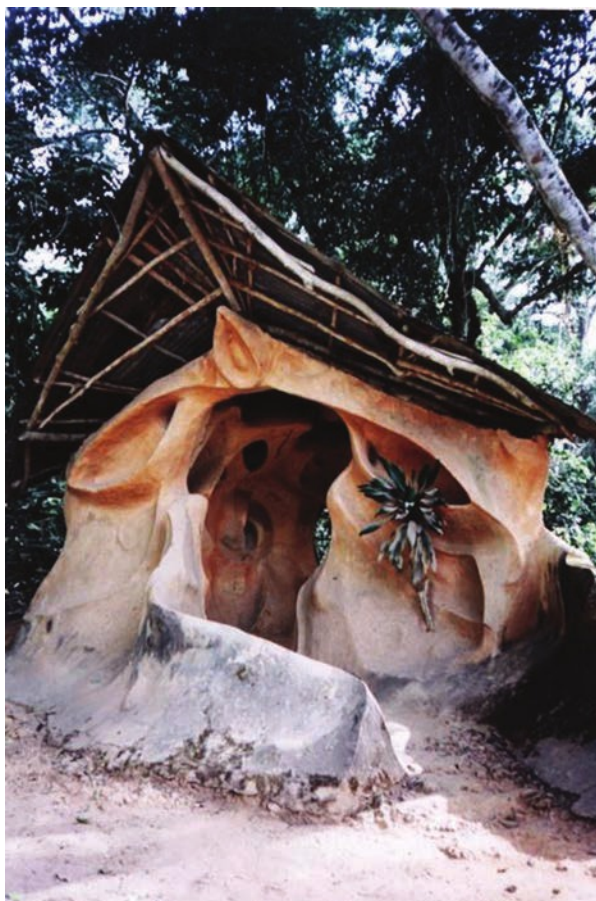
**Fig. 15.6.** Kilwa Mosque located at the waterfront. (From <http://www.zamaniproject.org>)

expect) and relaxation centres, which could be introduced more naturally into the religious sites. This would allow visitors to maximize their enjoyment of the sites. Ideally, such developments would need to be compatible with the religious experience being provided.

### **Catering for religious needs and attributes**

There is a need to attend to the religious needs of tourists to the range of Islamic, Christian and traditional sites. Tourism is generally encouraged by Islamic law once religious mannerisms, rules and regulations regarding conduct, dress, food and prayer have been followed. Muslim tourists may decide not to travel to a particular destination due to the absence of these attributes. It is recommended that 'halal hospitality' be introduced in the Islamic sites to increase the volume of consumption and length of stay. Similarly, Bibles are recommended to be provided for Christian tourists in their rooms.





**Fig. 15.7.** A section of Osun-Osogbo Grove. (From <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1118/gallery>)

### **Implementation of tourism policy**

Tourism policy documents form the basis on which tourism can be developed. The objectives of the relevant policy should be implemented by governments so that benefits from tourism can be achieved. Religious tourism offers tremendous opportunities of generating revenue through the establishment of tourism facilities on site. Foreign exchange earnings are obtained through international visitors to these religious tourism sites. It is therefore crucial for the government to fully implement the objectives of their tourism policies in various African countries.

### **Repackaging, marketing and maintenance of sites**

It is important to consider presentation and preservation in a natural state of the main types of religious sites found in Africa, thus maintaining their aesthetic beauty and religious purposes. This can be done effectively by the rehabilitation

and refurbishment of existing buildings and religious sites if necessary and care must be taken not to tamper with their intended original meaning. To offer professional management and marketing services for religious tourism facilities in Africa, there is a need for an appropriate combined marketing strategy for religious tourism. This could be achieved through printed literature such as brochures, traditional tour guides, tourist literature and prospectuses, but must also consider the various online digital channels. Professional management of all the religious sites and attractions should also be implemented at the destinations level.

### **Promotion of African religious products**

Development and promotion of innovative religious products in every part of Africa should include inventing new ideas and promoting religious products including souvenirs, decorative art, paintings, carvings and crafts through advertisements, national and international music extravaganzas and religious shows.

### **Summary**

Religious tourism in Africa has moved from being a niche to becoming a full-blown industry. This is evident in the large number of tourists who travel to various religious and pilgrimage sites in the continent. Issues associated with consumption of these religious sites have perhaps been underestimated by practitioners at many religious destinations in recent decades. Tourism in Africa has been produced without much planning. The few countries with religious tourism sites do not have a blueprint or master plan for the development of this or any form of tourism. The major problem Africa has is a lack of proper tourism planning which leads to serious cultural problems and a deterioration of the tourism product. Because religious sites are so important to individuals' identity, they are even more important than many secular sites; thus, there is an even greater need to readdress the way in which religious sites are produced, consumed and subsequently managed.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What are the inhibiting factors for religious tourism consumption in Africa?
2. What are the effects of governance on religious tourism consumption in Africa?
3. What are the socio-economic implications of the spatial distribution of religious sites in Africa?

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# 16

## Case Study 5: Ashura and its Commemoration in Ireland: A 'Proxy' Pilgrimage Experience

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### Introduction

Islam is a major world religion that originated in the Middle East after Judaism and Christianity; it was promulgated by the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) in Arabia in the 7th century (Doniger, 2006). Thus, it is the youngest of the three Abrahamic faiths and grew out of a revelation to and through a prophet (Renard, 1996). A demographic study of more than 200 countries by the Pew Research Center in 2009 found that there are 1.57 billion Muslims (followers of Islam) of all ages living in the world today, representing 23% of the estimated world population of 6.8 billion. Initially, the Muslim world was not divided into denominations as it is now, but soon after the death of Prophet Muhammad things changed and different parties appeared to claim leadership.

Of the total Muslim population, 10–13% are Shia Muslims while the overwhelming majority (87–90%) are Sunnis (Pew Research Center, 2009). The focus of this chapter is this minority group, the Shia, which counts for between 154 and 200 million Muslims, of which approximately three-quarters (between 116 and 147 million) live in Asia (note – in this calculation, Iran is included in the Asia-Pacific region), with most of the remaining Shias (36 to 44 million) living in the Middle East/North Africa region.

Ashura is a religious observance marked every year by Shia Muslims, and this chapter focuses particularly on its commemoration in the city of Karbala, Iraq. While travelling to Karbala to take part in the pilgrimage does not have the obligatory status of the hajj pilgrimage to Mecca (Makkah), millions of Shia worshippers travel each year to visit this holy city, where they visit the shrine of Hussain in the month of Muharram. Often, however, it is not practical to travel

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to Iraq for this activity, yet followers want to celebrate their belief. Thus, events are organized where these individuals live so they can publicly celebrate their faith. This chapter focuses on one such international event (in Ireland), where Shia Muslims carry out the various activities they would undertake in Karbala. This participation fulfils many of their religious requirements and thus satisfies the participants' desire for pilgrimage, but in a setting where such an event may appear as an exotic or even unusual activity.

Figure 16.1 is the starting point for our story into commemorating Ashura in Ireland. It was taken by one of the authors in Dundrum Town Centre, a shopping centre in the suburbs of Dublin, days before Muharram, and led the authors to reflect on such a visual message about Islamic pilgrimage in a country such as Ireland where only 1.1% of the population are Muslim (CSO, 2011).

## Denominations and Schisms

Before discussing the Shia, their beliefs and rituals, one must examine how the main Muslim denominations started. The division between Sunnis and Shias dates to the death of Prophet Muhammad, when his followers were forced to decide on his successor, their leader. This is the largest and oldest division in the history of Islam. While both resultant parties agree on the fundamentals of Islam and share the same Holy Book (the Qur'an), there are differences, mostly derived from their different historical experiences, political and social developments, as well as ethnic composition (RELIGIONFACTS, 2004; BBC, 2009).

Soon after the death of Muhammad in 10 AH (AD 632), a disagreement began as to who was his rightful successor or caliph (spiritual leader of Islam; claiming succession from Prophet Muhammad). The majority selected Abu Bakr, one of the Prophet's senior companions, but another group supported Ali, the son-in-law of the Prophet and his childhood confidante; Abu Bakr's supporters were called 'Sunnis' while Ali's group came to be known as 'Shia'. The Shia maintained that the leadership should remain within the Prophet's family (the progeny of the Holy Prophet), and they continued to support Ali and Ahl Al-Bayt – the Prophet's Family Members (Kasim, undated; Pew Research Center, 2009; Fibiger, 2010). The Companions of Muhammad disagreed, and their elders argued that Muhammad had appointed no successor and unanimously elected Muhammad's father-in-law, Abu Bakr, as his first descendant (Afary, 2003; Pierre *et al.*, 2007). The Muslim world was thus divided forever into two great sects, the Sunni majority and the Shia minority (Fernea, 2005, pp. 130–131).

Sunnis nowadays include followers of various traditions including the Hanafi, Shafi, Maliki and Hanbali schools of Islamic jurisprudence as well as the Wahhabi or Salafi movement. Shias include Ithna Asharis (Twelvers), Ismailis, Zaydis and Alawites. To add to the complexity of these subgroups, there are also a number of Muslim groups that are difficult to classify as either Sunni or Shia; these include Kharijites in Oman and the Nation of Islam movement in the United States, as well as the Druze (Pew Research Center, 2009).



Fig. 16.1. Poster advertising Karbala and Ashura Commemorations, Dublin, Ireland.

## Who Are the Shia?

Shia means members of a party and (or) followers; taken to mean followers in ethics, behaviour, political and religious belief. Consequently, Shiism means following the steps of the Ahl Al-Bayt (Prophet Muhammad's Family Members). Shia believe that only God has the right to choose a representative to safeguard

Islam, the Qur'an and Sharia (Islamic Law); thus, they believe that Imam Ali Ibn Abi Talib should have been the first successor of the Prophet, and they consider him to be divinely appointed as the rightful successor to Muhammad, and the first imam. The Shia extend this belief to Muhammad's family, the Ahl Al-Bayt (Prophet Muhammad's Family Members) and certain individuals among his descendants, known as imams, who have special spiritual and political authority over the community.

## Imam Hussain

Imam Hussain was the third Shia imam after his father Imam Ali and his brother Imam Hasan. Known as the Karbala Martyr, he was born on the 3rd or 4th of Shaaban 4 AH (i.e. c.8 January AD 626) (Al Kurashi, 2006), in Madinah (Medina), Saudi Arabia. Hussain was named by his grandfather Prophet Muhammad, and was Ali's younger son. Initially he resisted calls from Shia followers to govern the Shia, but his subsequent leadership against Muawiyah and attempt to reclaim the caliphate, resulting in his death, captures the Shia imagination and serves as an exemplar of courage, self-sacrifice and compassion (Norton, 2005). As we will see, he was killed by his political rivals along with 72 companions in the 7th-century Battle of Karbala, where some of the bodies of the dead were then mutilated (*Daily Mail Online*, 2012).

The Shia regard Hussain (son of Imam Ali, grandson of the Prophet Muhammad) as a martyr (shahid), and count him as an imam from the Ahl Al-Bayt. They view him as the defender of Islam, and he is also the last imam following Ali, whom all Shia sub-branches mutually recognize (Al Kurashi, 2006). For Shia, the martyrdom of Imam Hussain (680 CE) and his companions is considered the epitome of sacrifice and the foundation of Shia culture (El-Aswad, 2010), while the person of Imam Hussain is a symbol, a school and a distinctly unique political and religious revolutionary in the history of Islam (Al Huda, 1992).

The story of Imam Hussain's martyrdom begins with him refusing to pledge alliance to the ruling family at that time (Umayyad dynasty), because of a belief that they were corrupt, and that their general policy in leading the Islamic world was against the Islamic values. Thus, Hussain rose and revolted against them, claiming leadership of the Islamic world for himself.

After performing the hajj ritual, Hussain left Mecca with a small entourage of loyal followers. This group intended to cross the Euphrates to launch their revolution from Kufa, where they would refuse to give allegiance to Yazid (appointed heir to the caliphate by his father Mu'awiyah). Mu'awiyah sent a troop of 4000 men to force Imam Hussain to give his allegiance. Hussain heard about the army sent to intercept him, but did not return to his home. Shia believe that:

Hussain realized that mere force of arms would not have saved Islamic actions and consciousness. To him the faith needed a shaking and jolting of hearts and feelings. This, he decided, could only be achieved through sacrifice and suffering.

(Pierre *et al.*, 2007, p. 63)

As a result, Hussain, his 72 male followers and their women and children were surrounded and besieged for 3 days on the desert sands of Karbala, near the banks of the Euphrates River. Deprived of water during the siege, they were attacked and killed, and the women and children were taken prisoner (Shams El Din, 1979; Vincent, 2005; Yalçinkaya and Dündar, 2011). This Battle of Karbala (also called Al Taf Battle) is Shia's central drama, a tale of martyrdom and dispossession. Referred to as the most contested battle in the history of Islam, the results of this event have political, psychological and ideological effects which resonate today, having direct and indirect effects on the conflict between Sunni and Shia throughout history (Al Kilidar, 1998; Ahlulbayt, 2010b). The Karbala Battle is seen as much more than the death of a small band of pious loyalists, faithful to the family of the Prophet, by an overwhelming military force; it is seen by the Shia as an ideological battle between a group of principled individuals and a militarily powerful political administration, and thus this event makes Imam Hussain the ultimate tragic hero (Hussain, 2005).

## Ashura

Ashura is the 10th day of Muharram (the first month in the Islamic Hijri calendar), derived from the Arabic word for 10th, the day of the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his family members and followers. This crucial event in the history of Islam took place in the year 61 AH, which is known as AD 680 in the Gregorian calendar (Fibiger, 2010). For Shia, it is considered as a symbol of the conflict between what is right and what is wrong. Imam Hussain is seen to have been martyred while defending Islamic values and principles against the corruption of the ruling authority. It is an annual event in the Shia Muslim world, which commemorates both the early Shia leader and his death in Karbala over 1300 years ago. It is a time for reflection and worship, where an important historical battle and its outcome is analysed, interpreted and dramatically commemorated. Weddings and other joyous events are not held during Ashura because it is a time of mourning, not celebration (Norton, 2005).

For a period of 2 weeks at the beginning of each Islamic year, speeches by religious leaders, poetry recitals, flagellation rituals, weeping mourners and many discussions about all of these activities demonstrate the importance that is attributed to Ashura (Fibiger, 2010).

## The story behind Ashura

Exclaiming 'Ya! Hussain! Ya! Hussain!' rows of Shia men strike their exposed backs with chains. In the flurry of religious passion, the ancient streets of Karbala turn red with blood that flows from gashes cut deep into the skin.

(Pierre *et al.*, 2007, p. 61)

Once a year, Karbala teems with the Shia faithful who have come to remember the death of Imam Hussain in AD 680. This activity is part of Ashura, one of the

world's great religious processions, and as many as two million Shia gather in Karbala to wave flags, chant and beat their chests (Pierre *et al.*, 2007).

Karbala is one of the most important religious destinations for Shia Muslims; it is the burial place of Imam Hussain and is one of the most sacred cities of Iraq, where the most legendary story of all happened in AD 680 (Al Ansari, 2009; Al Jumaily, 2010). The city has significant prestige because of its historical and religious importance; moreover, Karbala was one of the important educational destinations in the Islamic world. Cultural, educational, religious and geographical position are some of the reasons that make this city an important tourism destination. Some people visit Karbala for grief and sorrow; others observe and watch (Al Kilidar, 1998). It is one of the most sacred Islamic cities and has a very special international importance all over the Islamic world, drawing millions of pilgrims and visitors each year.

## Location

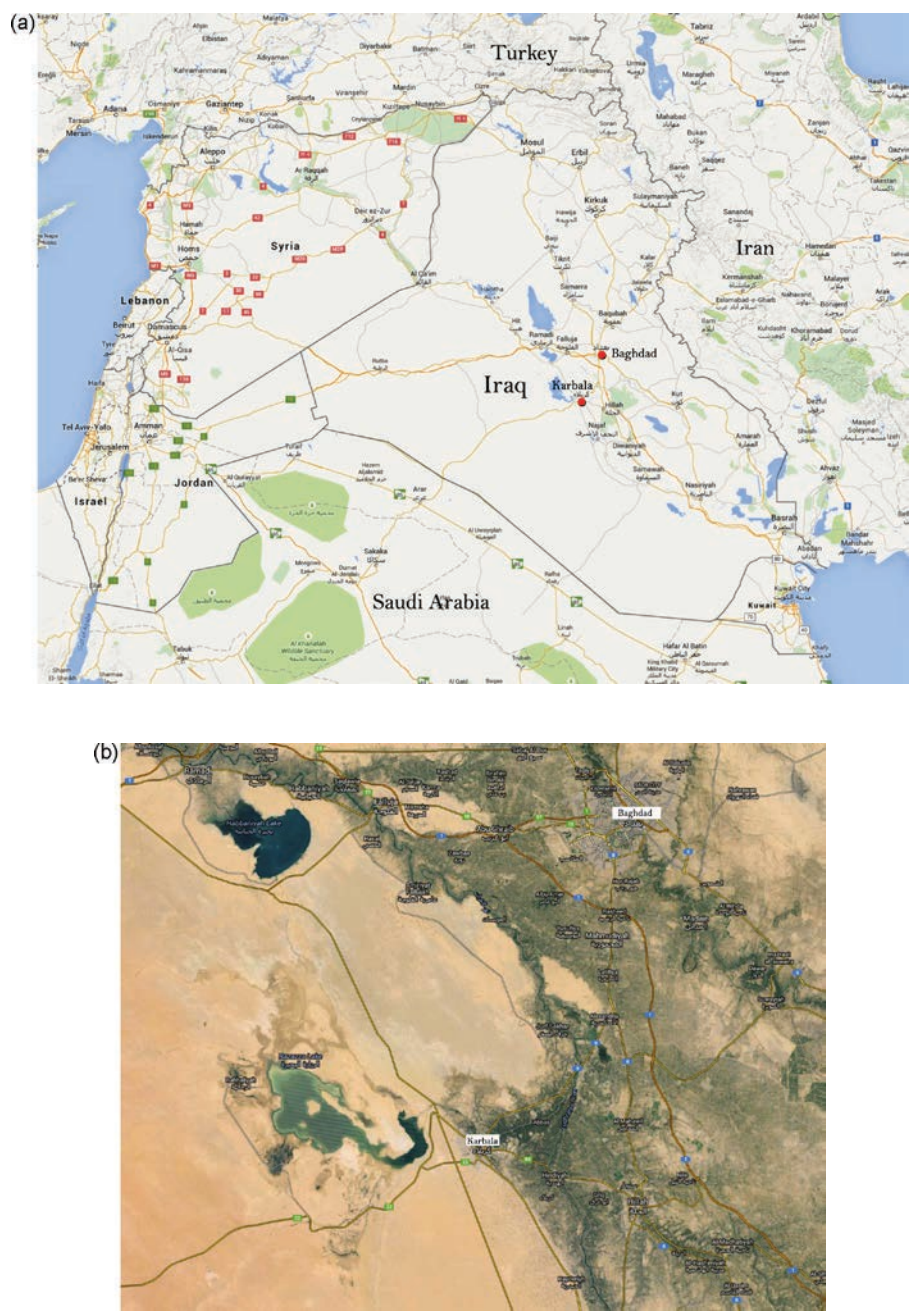
Karbala is located about 80 km (50 miles) south of Baghdad (*BBC News*, 2003; Sacred Destinations, 2009), as shown in [Fig. 16.2](#). It is the capital of Karbala Governorate and is a very ancient city, known since the Babylonian Age (Ahlulbayt, 2010a). Karbala has had different names throughout history, including: Al Ghadiryah; Nenava; Amouraa; Shatie Al Furat; Al Taf (Al Kilidar, 1998); Karbala (Arabic: كربلا); Al-Karbala'; and it is also referred to as Karbala' al-Muqaddasah – the Sacred City of Karbala (Sacred Destinations, 2009). Historically, the name of Karbala (Kor Babylon) is understood to mean a number of Babylonian villages; others state that the name comes from Al Karb and Al Bala' which means agony and scourge, because of the massacre of Imam Hussain (PUH) and his family members and followers (Ahlulbayt, 2010a).

## Importance

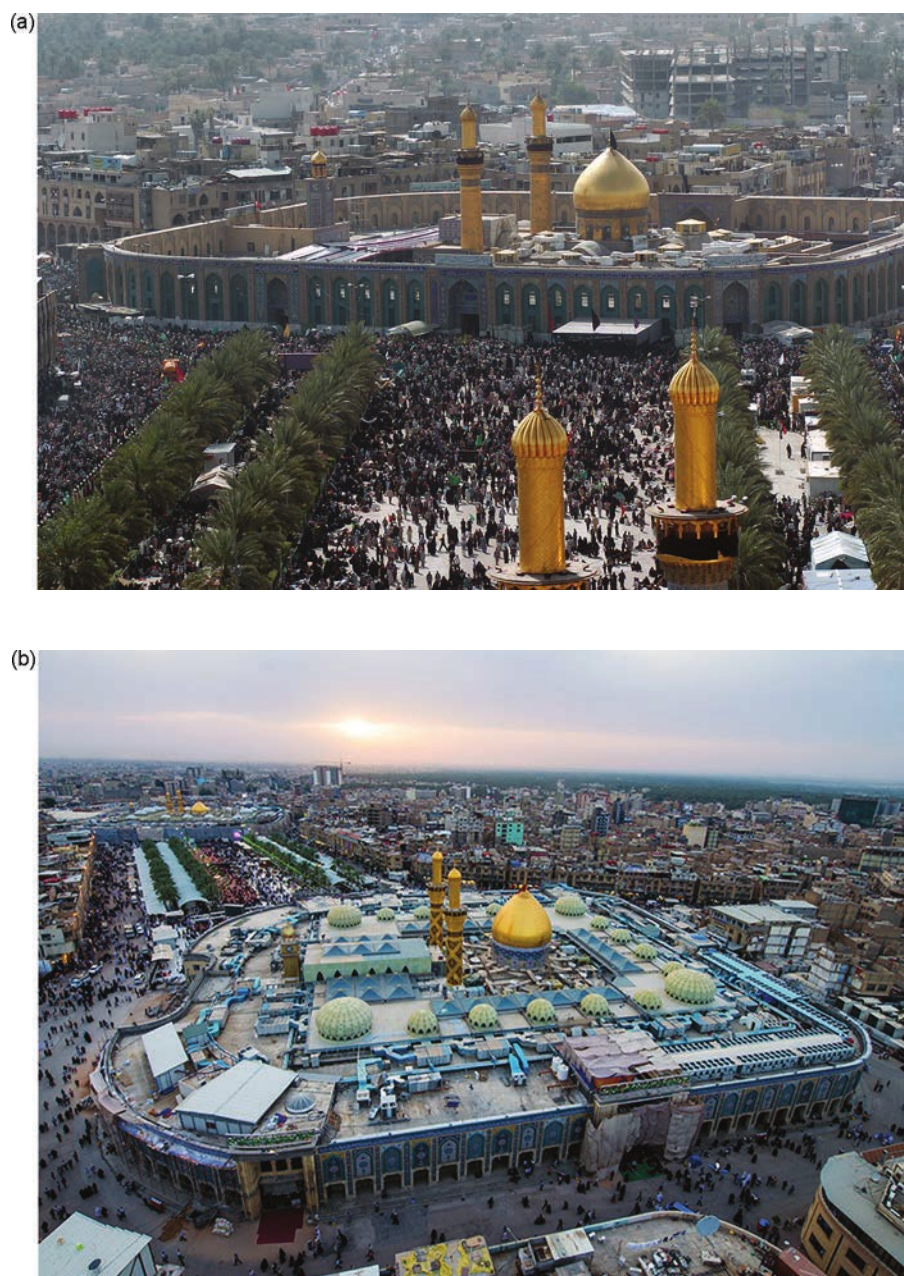
The city, best known as the location of the Battle of Karbala (AD 680), is among the holiest cities for Shia Muslims after Mecca and Madinah (Sacred Destinations, 2009), as it is home to the Imam Hussain Shrine (see [Fig. 16.3](#)). After the construction of the martyrs' tombs, Karbala became the centre of a very large population, and it is now one of the largest sacred cities in Iraq. Imam Hussain's tomb, with a gilded dome and three minarets, is the central building in the city and a place of pilgrimage for Shia Muslims (*BBC News*, 2003).

As Karbala gained this special importance it turned into one of the main Islamic pilgrimage sites for Shia Muslims. According to the Green Pilgrimage Network (2014) an estimated 15 million pilgrims per year visit the site. This is distributed between Ashura, Arba'en (Arba'en means the 40th day, when Shias also commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain) and the rest of the year. As a result, the city is one of Iraq's wealthiest, profiting from religious visitors. Karbala's cemetery is one of the largest in the world because many Shia Muslims desire to be laid to rest near the tomb of Imam Hussain





**Fig. 16.2.** Location of Iraq (a) and location of Karbala, between the Western Desert and the Valley of the Euphrates River to the east (b). (Based on Google Earth.)



**Fig. 16.3.** Photo of Karbala during celebrations (a – from Johns, L.E. (2005) posted and cited as public domain on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Karbala>) and Al Abbas Mosque Shrine, Karbala (b – posted and cited as public domain on [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al\\_Abbas\\_Mosque\\_Shrine\\_Karbala.jpg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Al_Abbas_Mosque_Shrine_Karbala.jpg)).

(Al Kilidar, 1998). Shias believe that burial in Karbala is a certain means of reaching Paradise. It is therefore a city of vast cemeteries. This broadly held belief that dying (or being buried) in Karbala means one will go to heaven has turned the place into a dead zone (Yalçinkaya and Dündar, 2011).

## Development

Evidence has shown that visitation by religious tourists and pilgrims and various other economic and demographic factors can create an environment that allows a shrine site, however small, to develop into a small village and then continue to expand until it becomes a shrine-city (Hussain, 2005). As one of Iraq's Islamic cities, Karbala evolved in this way. Historically, it was a small town surrounded by farmlands, close to the Euphrates River, located in a severe, extreme, hot desert. Karbala's importance as a sacred religious site started after the Battle of Karbala as the city started to grow. Facilities were built to cater for visitors from Iraq and other parts of the world. Developments included lodging places, transportation systems, restaurants, souvenir shops, etc. In addition, religious fabric for Shia Muslims developed, so that now, in addition to Hussain's tomb, the city has many other sacred places and has become an important pilgrim destination.

## Commemorating Ashura

The origins of the Ashura rituals are not confirmed, but Afary (2003) notes that most scholars claim that, in general, the rituals have pre-Islamic origins, citing the work of William Beeman who draws parallels between these and rituals related to the death of Dionysus in ancient Greece, or Osiris in ancient Egypt. Afary argues that the rituals are also similar to activities in Christianity and Judaism where self-flagellation is practised to purify the body.

Ashura has become a popular mass phenomenon that appears all over the media and the Internet at the beginning of the holy month of Muharram. With the start of this month, most of the houses of Shia are adorned with coloured flags: black for grief, red for injustice done for Imam Hussain, and finally green to tie the worshippers to the 12 venerated imams of Shia. Men, women and even small children wear black clothes, their eyes pouring with tears. It is an interesting, extraordinary phenomenon that happens once every year in the Shia Muslim community (El-Aswad, 2010).

The environment is markedly altered during Ashura, where flags and water are used in visual displays. Black banners hang from buildings and houses, and are strung across roads and attached to streetlights and electrical poles. Written on these banners are texts commemorating the martyrdom of Hussain, sayings of the Prophet, Qur'anic verses, or quotes from Khomeini and other important Shia figures, all of which highlight the importance of Ashura (Deeb, 2005). Water is life in the deserts of the Middle East. When the Umayyads deprived Hussain of water, they sentenced him to death. Today, Shia cover water pots in black cloth and inscribe them with mottos to memorialize Hussain's thirst.

During Ashura, many people observe modest candlelight vigils or say prayers inside the holy sanctuaries. Others offer tributes to Hussain that include



self-flagellation designed to allow the faithful to empathize with their martyr (Pierre *et al.*, 2007). The most common of these practices is rhythmically beating one's chest with a balled fist (*latm*), which is often undertaken during Shia ritual processions. However, in some instances this extends to flailing oneself with chains, metal whips, swords, or intentionally nicking the skin on the forehead to induce bleeding.

On the 9th and 10th days of Muharram, in Karbala, many hundreds of men, boys and even infants, as well as a handful of young women, embrace the suffering of Imam Hussain by shedding their blood in the memory of his martyrdom (Norton, 2005). The ritual is not obligatory, and in many locations is forbidden, but many believe it expresses their grief and helps them to re-enact the pain suffered by Hussain and his relatives (Cheetham, 2008). Opinions vary widely among Shia as to what is the 'right way' to remember Hussain's sacrifice, with some preferring quiet contemplation and prayer while others undertake dramatic public performance (Norton, 2005).

From the first day of Muharram, religious lessons, lectures about the life of Hussain and the story of his martyrdom, the brutal massacre of him and his family members and followers, makes people mourn and cry with tears. Millions of Shia visitors from different parts of the world go to Karbala to participate in Ashura rituals. The sacred city of Karbala and its residents all wear black, and it is said that people can find all meaning of sorrow and sadness in all aspects of life in the city during this month. Every place there has its own story to tell, places where different elements of the great battle took place, where the brave people who fought against injustice and cruelty gave their lives for the sake of Islam.

Why are the Shia people so devoted that they spend long hours travelling from their homes towards Karbala, sometimes in their bare feet, in extremely severe hot weather? To understand this, it is important to realize that while some Shia consider visiting Karbala as just a mere religious visit or a pilgrimage, others consider it as a pilgrimage that has the same importance as the pilgrimage to Mecca. In their belief, the pan-Islamic pilgrimage to Mecca (*hajj*) is paralleled by other pilgrimages with more regional or sectarian character (Pinto, 2007), and in this particular case, the Shia pilgrimage to Karbala. While all Muslims have the duty to perform the *hajj* or pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime (if at all financially possible), some Shia Muslims believe in a further duty: to make pilgrimages to the tombs of the imams – holy men who have been identified as important forces in the religious history of the Shia community (Fernea, 2005; *Sacred Destinations*, 2009).

Today, those Shia who are physically or financially unable to perform the actual pilgrimage view recitation of the sacred texts as a satisfactory alternative to their actual presence at Karbala (Hussain, 2005). The annual gatherings that they undertake during Ashura appear to have kept the memory of Hussain alive not only in terms of commemorating the anniversary of his battle and subsequent death but also by perpetuating the oral transmission of accounts of the battle, the events leading up to it and its aftermath (Hussain, 2005).

In Iran, Lebanon, southern Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan and India, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Hussain remains the most powerful ceremonial event of the year among Shia (Afary, 2003). In some Shia regions of Muslim countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Azerbaijan, Pakistan, Lebanon and Bahrain, the commemoration has become a national holiday (*Daily Mail Online*, 2012).

Barefoot weeping mourners march in the streets and provinces. These men, women and children wear black mourning clothes, and chant slogans lamenting the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and his family members and followers. The marchers are usually accompanied by drummers and reciters with microphones, being responded to by men shouting 'Ya Hussain'. Many devoted Shias remember and participate in the event of Karbala and the martyrdom of Hussain in different ways, as outlined in the following explanations of different rituals by different parties of Shia.

### Marches (mawakib)

Hussaini marches start from the first day of Ashura. Light chest beating is the primary way in which procession participants flagellate themselves in order to take part in the pain suffered by Imam Hussain and his companions. Some participants strike themselves very hard, whereas others perform the act more symbolically. A minority of participants use chains or swords. The chains are used to beat one's back, while the sword is used to make a small cut into one's forehead and then take part in the procession with raised sword and blood pouring over one's face and clothes. Others cover their faces with mud as another way to express grief. During these marches, people wipe their face and body with mud to show their sadness and grief at the death of Hussain. Bystanders construct roadside eateries to feed hungry and thirsty pilgrims at rest points along the way to Karbala (Pierre *et al.*, 2007; see Fig. 16.4).



**Fig. 16.4.** Photo of pilgrims gathering for the Ashura ritual in Karbala, January 2008. (From Dykstra, N. (2008) posted and cited as public domain on <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Category:Karbala>)



**Fig. 16.5.** Shrine of Imam Husayn Mosque, Karbala. (From Administration of the Imam Husayn Shrine, posted and cited as public domain on <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ImamHusaynMosqueKarbalaIraq.jpg>)

### Grave visit (ziyara)

An important element of the commemorations at Karbala is visiting the tombs of Imam Hussain and the other imams. These visits have a very important effect on the lives of Shia Muslims, where they express their loyalty to God and the Prophet and their family members. This practice seems to be the historical-literary root of what would later become a highly ritualized aspect of the Muharram commemoration ceremonies (Hussain, 2005).

### The theatrical performance (tashbih)

Another ritual sometimes included in the Ashura ceremonies is a theatrical performance involving a dramatic re-enactment of the Karbala Battle (Hussain, 2005; Fibiger, 2010). During the performance of this battle, a white horse marked with red spots (reminiscent of Hussain's blood), coffins (representing the martyrdom of Hussain), cradles (representing Abdulla, the slaughtered infant son of Hussain) and symbols representing the elevated hands of Al-Abbas (Husain's brother) are displayed (El-Aswad, 2010).

### Daily prayer sessions (krayas)

Throughout the holy season, daily prayer sessions (krayas) are held in Shia prayer houses or Hussainia (Hussain Houses) to prepare the community for the dramatic events, and remind them of the purpose of the rituals (Fernea, 2005). During these sessions, a reciter narrates a part of the events of the first



10 days of Muharram in a lamentation style reminiscent of a liturgy, graphically outlining the suffering and martyrdom of Hussain and those with him (Deeb, 2005). The recitation is interrupted at emotional moments, accompanied by chest beating, and all of this has a rhythmic hypnotizing effect (Hussain, 2005). This dramatic narration of the life and suffering of Hussain and his family members and followers is an opportunity for people to gather, where men and women sit in separate locations, and both audiences lament and grieve in memory of Hussain (Afary, 2003).

Hussaini poems are the most important part of Ashura rituals, where the reciter presents his ability to move an audience to deep tearful passion through his heartfelt recitations. A reciter incites the faithful Shia to strike their chests to a certain beat and rhythm. The reciter is the person who narrates Hussaini poems during the days of Muharram, and it is believed that both evoking these tears and shedding them are acts that bring divine reward (*ajr*) and thereby may increase one's chances of entering heaven. Blood spilled in memory of the events of Karbala is similarly seen as an embodied demonstration of grief and an empathetic expression of solidarity with the Imam's pain and sorrow (Deeb, 2005, p. 129).

## Issues Concerning Ashura Rituals

In recent years, a number of individuals and organizations have criticized the shedding of blood as part of the Ashura commemorations. This aspect of the rituals (which is graphically illustrated across the Internet) has been condemned by many Islamic leaders, who have issued religious edicts prohibiting participants from causing any self-injuries. Since the 1990s, several public health organizations, as well as Hezbollah (the militant Shia party based in Lebanon), have called upon people to make blood donations rather than inflict bleeding upon themselves (Norton, 2005). The Iranian leader, Hojjat al-Islam Ali Khamenei, issued a 1994 fatwa (an authoritative religious edict) condemning bloodshed during Muharram rituals, underlining the negative image that the rituals project to non-Muslims (Norton, 2005). Subsequently, the Iranian authorities have moved to limit the more bloodthirsty practices, banning the ritual cutting of the head or scalp with swords or daggers that leave the celebrants splattered in red (Abdo, 2000).

Many Shia see this ritual of self-mutilation as archaic and an embarrassment to the sect (Pierre *et al.*, 2007). The shedding of blood while performing *latm* is criticized by others as being un-Islamic because it involves purposely injuring oneself (Deeb, 2005, p. 128). For example, Muhsin al-Amin, a religious scholar from Jabal Amil (south Lebanon) who led a Shia community in Damascus, has criticized this form of self-injury as unlawful (Deeb, 2005, p. 124). However, Shia Muslims all over the world still pay their respects with the flowing of their blood, as they mourn the slaying and martyrdom of Hussain (*Daily Mail Online*, 2012).

In the Western world, according to one of the UK's most prominent Shia religious organizations, the influential Khoei Foundation (an international, religious, charitable institution created by Abul-Qassim Khoei, premier leader

of Shias across the world at that time), the bloodshed ceremony is not banned. However, it is 'neither obligatory nor recommended . . . it is merely permissible'. In other words, it is not mandated by religious authorities (Malik, 2005, pp. 22–23).

## **Shia in Ireland**

### **Muslims in Ireland**

The Irish Muslim community is of relatively recent origin. The first Muslims arrived in Ireland in the early 1950s, coming mostly for education – many came to study medicine, particularly at the Royal College of Surgeons. By 1969 numbers had risen to 100 (Colfer, 2009; Flynn, 2013). In April 2011 the Central Statistics Office stated that there were 49,204 Muslims in Ireland, a sharp rise on 5 years previously. Since 1991, the number of Muslims increased from just 0.1 to 1.1% of the total population (CSO, 2012).

Ireland's Muslim population is estimated to include more than 42 different nationalities from many different parts of the world – the Middle East, Africa, Asia and elsewhere, including countries such as Egypt, Malaysia, Pakistan, Indonesia, Somalia, China, South Africa, Nigeria, Algeria, Libya, Bosnia and Turkey. Religiously, the Muslim population is mainly Sunni, with as few as 2000 Shia. There are also many sects and sub-sects within these groups, including Sufis (who focus on the more mystical side of Islam), Barelvis (who are popular in South Asia), Deobandis (most common in Pakistan and India) and Salafis (similar to Wahhabism in Saudi Arabia) (O'Hanlon, 2007).

### **Irish places of worship**

The two biggest Sunni mosques in Dublin are at Clonskeagh and the Dublin City Mosque at South Circular Road. Dublin City Mosque is the oldest established mosque and Muslim community in Ireland. It is the headquarters of the Islamic Foundation of Ireland. In 1992 Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, deputy governor of Dubai and founder of the Al Maktoum Foundation, agreed to finance the construction of a Muslim primary school and Islamic Cultural Centre at Clonskeagh, Dublin, which was opened in November 1996. The more modest Shia community's mosque is in Milltown.

With the increase in the arrival of Muslims to Ireland in the 1990s there has been a growth in the establishment of Muslim communities throughout the country (Flynn, 2013). Outside Dublin the only purpose-built mosque is in Ballyhaunis, Co. Mayo, where a large halal meat factory using traditional Muslim methods of meat production is based. Outside Dublin and Ballyhaunis there are vibrant Muslim communities in Cork, Galway, Limerick, Cavan, Ennis, Tralee, Meath and Waterford. These communities gather to pray in converted warehouses, rented houses or private homes (O'Hanlon, 2007).

Like the Islamic Foundation of Ireland, the foundation of the Irish Shia community was established by a few medical students during the 1970s. This group rented a small house in the Portobello area of South Dublin and when this was unable to accommodate them, they moved into a bigger house in Rathgar. With the arrival of other members in the 1980s, there developed the need for a more permanent site and centre for the expanding community. Tapping into their own resources, the community decided to build a proper centre and in September 1996 the present Hussainia (Ahlul Bayt Shia Islamic Cultural Centre) was officially opened in Milltown, Dublin (Flynn, 2013).

The Hussainia is one of the main places where Shia commemorate Ashura and take part in the related observances of Hussain's martyrdom. It is here that Hussaini poems are recited before the festival, and it is the main gathering and culminating point during the Ashura processions (Norton, 2005). Most Hussainia have a large hall used for religious, social and political gatherings, as well as for special events, such as death rituals and marriage ceremonies. Thus, it is considered a public place in which speakers and listeners, or hosts and guests, observe common social and cultural codes (El-Aswad, 2010).

### Commemorating Ashura in Ireland

From the beginning of Muharram, a group of Shia men, women and children from different nationalities gather in Hussainia to participate in Ashura rituals. To commemorate the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, they exclaim 'Ya Hussain' and hold black banners with texts mourning the martyrdom of Imam Hussain and verses from the Qur'an to show their sorrow over this tragic event. In recent years the group has organized marches (*mawakib*) during Muharram (see [Figs 16.6, 16.7, 16.8 and 16.9](#)), and also members of the community organize information events, where they distribute literature about Islam, Hussain and their beliefs and practices to the general public, on the main streets of Dublin.

It is also common practice in Ireland that Shia families invite each other to their homes to commemorate Imam Hussain. During these gatherings a Hussaini poem is recited, participants read verses from the Qur'an and pray. Often they cook particular food made especially during the month of Muharram (*keema rice*). Sometimes the host family makes all the food, while other times the guests bring their own food to share.

In exploring the commemoration of Ashura by Iraqi people living in Ireland, a number of devoted Shia were interviewed, to explore their Irish-based 'pilgrimage experience'. All of the Muslims who were interviewed are highly devoted, with a strong belief in the stories of Karbala and Ashura, and with a strong belief in the memory of Imam Hussain as leader.

One interviewee is a 34-year-old male chef, who has been living in Dublin for 4 years. He participates every year in Hussaini marches in Dublin city centre. He is one of the organizers and sees participating in these marches as a religious duty. He is obliged to remind himself and others of the sacrifice by Imam Hussain and his family members and friends. He thinks that participating in Ashura in Ireland is a reasonable alternative for a visit to Karbala which is not



Fig. 16.6. Celebrating Ashura in Dublin. (From <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-u3Fqt4nBFo>)



Fig. 16.7. Celebrating Ashura in Dublin. (Used with the permission of the international Shia Multimedia Team (2014) – photo from Ashura Procession (Muharram 1436) – Dublin, Ireland Album, available on <https://www.facebook.com/Shia.Multimedia.Team>)





**Fig. 16.8.** Celebrating Ashura in Dublin. (Used with the permission of the international Shia Multimedia Team (2014) – photo from Ashura Procession (Muharram 1436) – Dublin, Ireland Album, available on <https://www.facebook.com/Shia.Multimedia.Team>)

currently possible for him. Another interviewee is a 64-year-old retired female, who has been living in Dublin for 7 years. She used to visit Karbala regularly before moving to Ireland, not only for Ashura and Arba'een but on a weekly basis. She enthusiastically participates in the Ashura rituals in Ireland. She visits Hussain House (Hussainia), she reads verses from the Holy Book (Qur'an) and she prays. She strongly believes that she must participate every year in the Ashura rituals – Karbala is very far and she cannot travel there. These two cases represent the experience of a number of Shias who were interviewed. For those people, being unable to travel to Karbala for various reasons did not restrain them from commemorating Ashura in Ireland.

## Summary

To this day, the Ashura Complex – the psychological fixation on the Battle of Karbala – continues to fuel Shia poetry, rituals, iconography, social customs, folklore and a versatile political theory. It brings the faithful Shia together every year to express their common identity (Pierre *et al.*, 2007). A very particular phenomenon happens every year for 10 days, where millions of Shia devotees gather in the holy city of Karbala to grieve for Imam Hussain and his family members and followers in dramatic ways. Many Shia faithful consider visiting Karbala as a pilgrimage and participating in some or all rituals as an obligation. Others consider it a religious visit where they participate in prayers, and visit the tomb of Imam Hussain and the tombs of some of his companions.



**Fig. 16.9.** Commemoration poster for Ashura in Dublin, Ireland. (From @DublinShia Twitter feed – <https://twitter.com/DublinShia/status/527889887023095808>)

Whether visiting Karbala is an obligation or not, it is a global phenomenon that draws millions of visitors each year to Karbala, from different parts of the world, to take part as devotees, pilgrims, visitors and volunteers. With the global spread of Shia followers, the phenomenon of Ashura is expanding, to the



extent that Shia Muslims who are unable to travel to Karbala are now performing their rituals where they live. Once an activity only celebrated in Muslim countries, Ashura marches now take place in different countries across the globe: throughout Europe, North America, Australia and many more places. These expressions of Shia faith and culture are living examples of this particular event and testimony to the strong belief of those wishing to commemorate the great martyr, Hussain Ibn Ali (PUH).

## Discussion Questions

1. What are the key elements of the Ashura celebrations as undertaken by Shia Muslims?
2. Discuss the most contentious elements of the Ashura celebrations, considering how such activities may be perceived in non-Muslim countries.
3. Is it possible to undertake a place-specific religious commemoration without visiting?
4. How could Karbala maximize the impact of Ashura for touristic purposes, and what are the main factors limiting such benefits?

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# 17

## Case Study 6: Revisiting Religious Tourism in Northern Portugal

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### Introduction

In 2003, a study was conducted in Northern Portugal designed to establish the religious tourism potential throughout the region. The study was part of a wider project entitled 'Religious tourism as a motor for regional development', carried out by a regional organization, funded by the national government and part funded by the European regional structural funds under the national development plan.

Although development of religious tourism had been limited to a few major sites, the 2003 study showed that it should be possible to spread the development of religious tourism to a wider geographical area. Particularly taking into account the potential for combining religious tourism with cultural and nature-based tourism, and the potential for developing 'New Age' or 'spiritual' tourism, it should be possible to use the major anchor sites identified to stimulate regional development. Finally, an important aspect focused on in the recommendations was the need to implement further studies on visitor motivations and consumption patterns. It was suggested that this would help to identify still further potential product combinations which could be developed around the anchor sites.

This chapter starts by drawing upon the findings of the 2003 study and presents highlights of the changes in national and regional policy as they relate to religious tourism in the period extending to 2013. Finally, partial results of a market study are presented, particularly related to tourist motivation and behaviour, to help understand whether religious sites have taken steps to improve their ability to meet the needs of today's ever-demanding tourists.

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## Why Religious Tourism in Northern Portugal?

The north of Portugal may be viewed as peripheral in European terms not least because of its perceived distance from the 'centre' of Europe in economic and political decision-making terms (Fernandes, 2009). It has many characteristics associated with remote locations: rural depopulation, marginal economies, a high-quality natural environment and cultures in transition from traditional to modern (Sofield, 2003). To reverse this trend, it becomes necessary to consider new strategies for generating income and employment, to adopt initiatives that will sustain regional progress and to rethink and reshape the design and direction of the region (Machado *et al.*, 2014). Increasingly, tourism is seen as an effective means of regional development to diversify the local economy as traditional industries continue to decline (Fernandes, 2009).

Tourism is one of the most important factors directly affecting competitiveness and regional growth. Tourism can be seen as the 'engine' of employment creation, poverty eradication, ensuring gender equality, and protection of the natural and cultural heritage. These facts principally result from the existence, in most developing and less favoured regions, of significant comparative advantages that are conducive to viable tourism specialization (Korres, 2008). Tourism as a component of development is important as tourism is regarded as one of the most promising sectors for employment creation and regional economic development (Ko and Stewart, 2002; Fleischer and Tchetchik, 2005; Sharpley and Vass, 2006). Tourists do not visit an area and then leave it unchanged; they need accommodation, restaurants, recreational facilities; and they make demands on local shops and firms (White, 1974).

Tourism is seen as a viable strategy for the development of the north of Portugal, a region that is unevenly developed and where there are marked differences between the coast and the interior. Furthermore, the eastern half of the region and the mountains of the north-west are predominantly rural areas with little socio-economic dynamism (Fernandes, 2009). It has been suggested that the development of tourism could help regions that suffer due to low population density, a lack of basic services, an inadequate labour market and low basic infrastructure (see, for example, Korres, 2008, p. 137), but which generally possess a rich cultural heritage.

Tourism is increasingly offering a range of cultural products, from visiting monuments and traditional arts and crafts centres (and religious sites) to participating in historical events and discovering unique lifestyles. Tourism creates an interest in these particular forms of culture (e.g. religious heritage), often encouraging the preservation of cultural and historical traditions, contributing to the protection of cultural heritage and to a renaissance of local cultures, cultural arts and crafts. The relationship between tourism and the cultural sector is potentially highly complementary. The cultural sector creates attractions for the tourist while tourism supplies extra audiences for cultural events and activities (Tighe, 1991).

Shackley (2001) suggests that tourism at religious or sacred sites is a special type of cultural heritage tourism. Tourists often view visits to historic religious sites as opportunities for cultural and educational experiences (Olsen, 2006), rather than just leisure in a resort that could be anywhere (Macleod, 2006).

A very significant part of the Portuguese cultural heritage is property of the Catholic Church (Falcão, 2002) and much attention has been paid to a few major shrines and pilgrimage locations across the country, the prime example being Fátima in Central Portugal, but also to the development in recent years of certain shrines in the north region of the country (Richards and Fernandes, 2003) which presupposes the planning and development of the specialization in religious tourism.

Religious tourism is assumed to travel in a manner characterized by multifunctionality, interacting with other forms of tourism, although the religious element assumes prominence. However, we can address their complementarity concurrently with the various tourist modalities. There is a certain ambiguity between secular and religious motivation (Lozato-Giotart, 1993 in Santos, 2006).

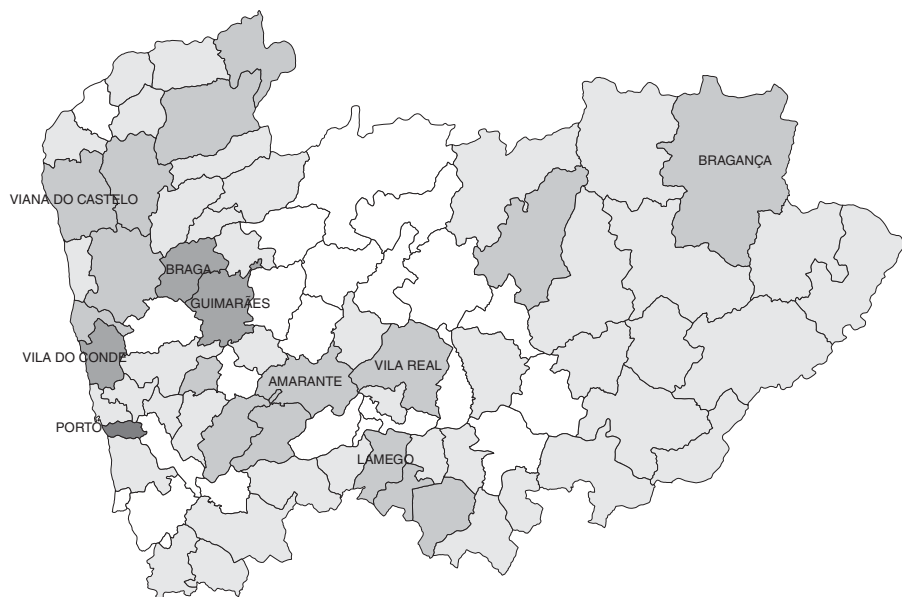
## Summary of the 2003 Study

The main objectives of the 2003 study were: (i) to analyse the tourist supply and demand in the north of Portugal; (ii) to analyse the specific supply and demand for religious tourism; (iii) to create a database of religious tourism supply in the north of Portugal; (iv) to present religious tourism development proposals for the north of Portugal; and (v) to identify the international potential of religious tourism, in line with the promotion strategy already developed under the brand 'Oporto and the North of Portugal', and in accordance with the strategies of the destinations that may be partners in commercial strategies.

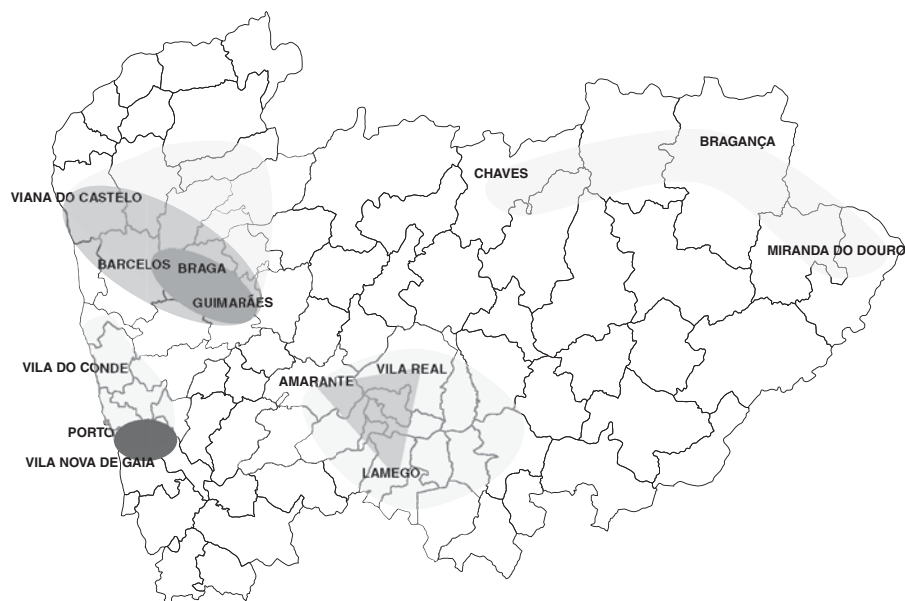
A mixture of primary and secondary research methods and techniques were employed, including surveys of visitors, travel industry intermediaries and policy makers, and collection of existing data on the supply of religious tourism attractions. By combining data on the demand for and the supply of religious tourism, the sites which have the greatest potential for religious tourism development were identified (Fig. 17.1).

Those sites, categorized as 'anchor sites', were recognized as having the key resources (and/or localities) around which the religious tourism product of the north of Portugal could be structured. The identification of these anchor sites resulted from the analysis of a range of parameters that included not only the importance of the religious sites or events, but also visitor flows, the available services, the visibility of the resources and districts, as well as other indicators linked to the tourist supply and demand in the north of Portugal. Furthermore, the total score of all data permitted a global score per municipality and the identification of the territorial dynamics for structuring the religious tourism product in Northern Portugal (Fig. 17.2).

Findings indicate the potential for religious tourism development in Northern Portugal. The study concluded that although development to date has been limited to a few major sites, the analysis shows that it should be possible to spread the development of religious tourism to a wider area of the region. Furthermore, it acknowledged considerable potential in some of the inland areas, which should help to alleviate the current imbalance in visitor flows in the region. Realizing the potential will clearly require a high level of inter-municipality, given the wide geographical area.



**Fig. 17.1.** Anchor sites identified in 2003. (From Richards and Fernandes, 2003.)



**Fig. 17.2.** Territorial dynamics for religious tourism in 2003. (From Richards and Fernandes, 2003.)

In addition, the importance of tourism supply factors show the need for extensive collaboration between the public sector, which is responsible for policy and promotion, the Church, which manages most of the sites, and the tourism sector, which provides the supporting facilities. An important



aspect which still needs further analysis is visitor motivations and behaviour, to help identify potential product combinations which can be developed around the anchor sites.

## Motivations and Behaviour

According to Pearce (2005), the topic of tourist behaviour depends upon, interacts with and occasionally determines other components of tourism. On the other hand, a substantial and frequent mode of describing tourists is to refer to their choice of a tourism product and to define their characteristics and behaviours in relation to that product. The range of tourism categories and hence tourist classifications that can be considered in this way is considerable. Ashworth (1992, in Pearce, 2005) noted that the conjunction of terms such as heritage and tourism, cities and tourism, farms and tourism and so forth produces a set of 'nouns) and adjectival tourisms that splatter the literature' (p. 42).

Tourist behaviour tends to matter to tourists as they themselves are very concerned with their own experiences and how to maximize each one (Pearce, 2005). What are the motivations to visit religious sites and what attractions are most appealing for visitors? It is suggested that findings will enable religious sites to improve the pull factor of their attractions. In other words, should visits to religious spaces be categorized solely as religious tourism? MacCannell (1973, in Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 11) notes that, unlike the religious pilgrim who pays homage to a single sacred centre, the tourist pays homage to a large array of centres and attractions.

Without tourist attractions there would be no tourism (Gunn, 1972, p. 24). Without tourism there would be no tourist attractions (Lew, 1987). Thus, it is argued, attractions are the basic elements on which tourism is developed. Yet it can sometimes be difficult to differentiate between attractions and non-attractions (Lew, 1987). MacCannell (1999, p. 192) notes that 'anything is potentially an attraction. It simply awaits one person to take the trouble to point out to another as something noteworthy, or worth seeing'. Much of the difficulty has to do with the various segments of the tourism industry (Lew, 1987).

In the case of religious tourism, attractions can include material heritage such as architecture of religious buildings and design of religious spaces, pilgrimage routes, sacred art and artefacts, as well as religious events such as rituals and festivals, but also people in the roles of pilgrims and tourists. As such, the question persists of whether religious tourism is behaviour motivated or whether it attracts, or should attract, simply segments interested in religion *per se*. Or, do motivations have nothing to do with religion, but with attractions associated with religion to satisfy what is happening in 'normal society' (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 3) – the fulfilment of needs for self-knowledge, experiences and entertainment at distinctive destinations?

Today, experiences are considered the foundation for defining tourism products and increasingly tourists want to feel they are in a place that is unique and that delivers memorable experiences. It is about consuming goods and services which are in some sense unnecessary. They are consumed because

they supposedly generate pleasurable experiences which are different from those typically encountered in everyday life (Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 1). The same authors suggest that such practices involve the notion of 'departure', of a limited breaking with established routines and practices of everyday life and allowing one's senses to engage with a set of stimuli that contrast with the everyday and mundane (p. 3). Turner and Turner (1978, in Urry and Larsen, 2011, p. 11) talk of 'liminoid' situations where everyday obligations are suspended or inverted.

Attractions must come alive for the visitors with human drama or history, not just names and dates. With tourist demand based not only on features and benefits but also on the sensations and memories that the experiences create, emerging cultural tourism destinations can help meet consumer needs for hassle-free time for living, experiencing quality of life, tradition and lifestyle authenticity in a perspective of culture as a 'way of life' (Richards and Wilson, 2007). Consequently, there is a need for destinations to develop a new range of skills which go beyond the traditional management of tourism services and which move into the arena of experience development, creativity and innovation (OECD, 2000, p. 20).

## What Has Changed in the Last 10 years?

### Policy analysis

Different parts of policy-relevant research can be 'used', including: (i) the description and/or analysis itself; (ii) the empirical findings; and (iii) the recommendations stemming from the research. Any one, a combination of two, or all three elements of policy-relevant research can be used in some way by policy actors (Ripley, 1985, p. 190).

Certainly, field research on programme implementation that focuses only on interviewing the bureaucratic staff responsible for implementation will run a high risk of getting a distorted view. A wide range of respondents with multiple points of view should be identified and interviewed. If persons from diverse backgrounds see roughly the same thing, the analyst is relatively safe in concluding what is going on. If there are disagreements, the analyst can look for the preponderance of evidence (not just from interviews, but supplemented by documentary evidence too) (Ripley, 1985, p. 148).

It is also important to note that policy actors move on the basis of their own perceptions. These perceptions include some of the environmental factors that analysts determine to be important. But the perceptions may also be of events, trends and factors that analysts cannot find systematically important but that, in the day-to-day decisions by influential actors that shape outcomes in detail, are quite important (Ripley, 1985, p. 36).

There are public decision makers who make either policy or management decisions about on-site behaviour. There are marketers whose interests include such factors as what will influence travellers to come to place A, B or C. There are also business decision makers concerned with the design and financial

success of tourism products. These kinds of interests focus on what tourists will prefer and how they make their travel choices and purchases (Pearce, 2005, p. 7).

Thus, it becomes necessary to research national tourism policy as it has affected the north of Portugal. In other words, what is the government attempting to do with the existing policy? What do the intentions of the policy appear to be (Ripley, 1985, p. 59)?

From 2003 until 2013, the country underwent a major reorganization of the tourism strategy. Indeed, during this period we witnessed the extinction of 19 tourism regions, each with its specific and autonomous strategy, and the establishment of a model based on five major regions and six priority Centres of Development. On the other hand, a national organization was created to coordinate the national tourism strategy, Tourism of Portugal, I.P., which developed the National Tourism Strategic Plan (PENT). This national tourism strategy suffered a revision in 2013 (Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 24/2013) which was based on macroeconomic pillars, fundamental to the needs of the country. In fact, the initial document was based on an ambitious vision for positioning Portugal as the fastest-growing destination in Europe based on the qualification and competitiveness of the tourism offer.

In the revision of PENT, 'Horizon 2013–2015', it appears that the desired results were not satisfactory. This second document takes into careful consideration the economic and financial instability in Europe, which represents more than 85% of international overnight stays in Portugal, as well as the growth of the national GDP, employment and disposable income, advising caution in the projection of tourist flows. The reformulation of the strategy aims to create new dynamics and economic growth based on modern trade policies, with new products and models of supply where promotional marketing gives rise to a vision of 'Destination Portugal'.

From another perspective, the creation of value assumes, at this point in time, a correlation with innovation. According to the Global Innovation Survey, cited by PwC (Coopers) in a 2014 document, businesses plan to offer added value innovative products centred on quality and consumer experience. With regard to tourism, the access to a distinctive supply then becomes necessary, which will determine the competitiveness of the sector.

When PENT was launched in 2007, among the products included, cultural touring embraced the component of religious tourism. But with the reformulation of the strategy, religious tourism was identified as one of the core tourism products, on its own and no longer incorporated in cultural touring.

According to Santos (2011), religious tourism in Portugal represents about 10% of the total tourism traffic, generating annual revenues of €700 million and seven million visitors. Still, according to the author, Fátima presents itself as the main destination with about five million visitors a year, followed by the shrines of *Bom Jesus*, *Nossa Senhora do Sameiro* and *São Bento da Porta Aberta* in the north of Portugal with nearly one million tourists a year. However, it is suggested that these figures are disputed as the 'tourism traffic' referred to comprises mostly same-day visitors, including pilgrims travelling mostly by their own car and staying for only a few hours.

It is true that the definition of tourism varies source by source, person by person. There is no consensus concerning the definition of tourism. However, it is generally accepted that the 'travelling to and staying' includes the consumption of support services and activities, particularly transportation, accommodation, food and beverage establishments, retail shops and entertainment. Same-day visitors, *by definition*, do not use most of these support services, particularly the accommodation for overnight stay.

Contrary to the policies of 2003, there now appears a new approach to the importance of resources related to religious heritage. In this sense, the Portuguese Church is preparing thematic tourist routes, 'Portugal Paths of Faith'. Saldanha (quoted in Ecclesia Agency, 2014) states that tourism moves very significant cycles and flows of people regardless of their motivations; hence these itineraries grounded in the abundant and very rich heritage resources are of undeniable value. To these should be associated all the intangible heritage and festivities on a permanent articulation.

The *Festa de Senhora d'Agonia* in Viana do Castelo is an example of the type of tourism associated with religion that is being developed and is flourishing in the region, particularly during the period of July to September. Seasonal events, such as religious festivals, that also feature local traditions, folklore, craftspeople, lifestyle and lots of entertainment are organized by every municipality in the region. Festivals and other events require much planning in order to create a sense of being transported in time and place and mood, of seeing and hearing things as if for the first time, of being stimulated in the most pleasurable way – sensations and memories that experiences create and which enhance the appeal of the area and provide more reasons to visit (Fernandes, 2013a).

## Destination marketing and promotion

The tourism marketing strategy brings together realistic, achievable goals and objectives that will take full advantage of the opportunities provided to tourism operators in a particular destination or region. This document provides linkages with the marketing strategies of the national tourism strategy. A regional marketing strategy is usually implemented by a Destination Marketing Organization (DMO). This organization is central to the marketing of regional tourism, fulfilling several roles, including visitor servicing and product development as well as operating as an interface between public sector tourism initiatives and private sector businesses delivering tourism (Sheehan, 2007).

A review of the Tourism Market Strategy 2007–2015 of the Regional Tourism Board of Porto and Northern Portugal was undertaken in order to identify the strategic importance of the religious tourism product, what it includes, but most importantly what it does not include. This examination found that religious tourism is not mentioned in the document. In terms of the characterization of supply, the listing of the more relevant primary tourism resources includes only one mention each of tangible heritage (the religious heritage in Braga) and intangible heritage (festivals and pilgrimages). As for the principal tourism resources of the sub-tourism brands, only festivals and pilgrimages are

mentioned with other resources being of a more general nature. In the market research conducted on behalf of the Tourism Board to visitors arriving at Porto airport, when asked which words best describe the north of Portugal, no connotation was evident for religious heritage, but there was for history/heritage; in identifying the more important tourism products, there was no mention whatsoever of religious tourism, but there was of cultural tourism. The message proposed for marketing the region is 'Porto and North: The Essence of Portugal' with sub-messages attributed per type of tourism (FEEL 'our nature'; FEEL 'our food and wine'; FEEL 'our cities and villages'; FEEL 'our culture'; FEEL 'our World Heritage'; and FEEL 'our people'). The sub-message most associated to the religious heritage is FEEL 'our culture'. Apparently, the rhetoric around religious tourism and its importance and potential to Northern Portugal does not translate into reality.

If destination marketers are concerned with the selling of tourism places, then it should be the domain of DMOs to make decisions on the most adequate target markets for the specific tourism products. But markets change constantly and destinations need to be well informed with data on market segments visiting the destination, the competition and market trends. As such, market research needs to be continually taking place to provide decision makers with a comprehensive view of tourists in order to develop the most appropriate products and services that meet their needs, preferably better than the competition. But in Northern Portugal, no market research was carried out at religious sites between the 2003 study and 2013. Ten years later, a similar survey to that conducted in 2003 was carried out at religious sites in Northern Portugal. A total of 301 surveys were validated. The aim was to identify changes in the visitor market and determine consumption patterns and whether adequate conditions are in place for providing tourists with experiences in religious spaces or heritage tourism within a sacred setting. The four survey sites chosen were precisely the four 'anchor sites' identified in the 2003 study (see [Figs 17.1](#) and [17.2](#)).

## Partial results

In the survey, nearly 62% claim to be on holiday and 38% on a day trip ([Table 17.1](#)). Fifty-five per cent of respondents claim to be 'looking around the area, including visiting this religious site', 38% come specifically to visit the religious site and 7% for a reason unrelated to the religious site. Over two-thirds of respondents used catered accommodation, mostly hotels, and the duration of stay was an average of 4.73 nights. More than 80% claim to be travelling independently and on their own. Over 86% of respondents were travelling with one to three persons, of whom 50% were travelling accompanied by two persons, and of these nearly 58% of adults are accompanied by one child. A majority of respondents assert non-religious motivations for visiting the site ([Table 17.2](#)).

Furthermore, the breakdown of the amount of time spent at the religious site is as follows: 8.8% of respondents remain there about 120 minutes, 10.5%

**Table 17.1.** Holiday versus day trip.

Reasons for the visit	%
On holiday and staying in this area (staying within 16 km)	34.0
On a day trip while on holiday elsewhere (more than 16 km from here)	27.7
On a leisure day trip from your home (more than 16 km from here)	38.2

**Table 17.2.** Motivations for the visit.

Motivations for the visit	%
Mainly for religious/spiritual reasons	40.4
Mainly because of the architecture	9.6
Mainly because of the historical/cultural associations	31.4
Mainly because of a non-religious event taking place within the religious place	3.9
Out of a general, but not specific, interest in such religious places	11.1
Because I was in the area and had nothing else to do	3.6

remain 90 minutes, 25.8% reported 60 minutes, 4.1% for 45 minutes and 16.6% account for 30 minutes. The remaining refer to periods ranging from 10 minutes to 25 minutes. Overall, the average amount of time spent at the site is 52 minutes.

When asked what the predominant memory of the visit is, nearly a majority of respondents (49.2%) mentioned art and architecture; 14.3% appreciating the surrounding beauty; 20.6% identifying with spirituality and religiosity aspects; and the remaining 15.9% pointing to various other memories. When asked what caused this lasting memory, two major reasons were provided: 44.9% said the surrounding beauty and 16.6% the art and architecture. Specifically spirituality, faith and religion accounted for 13% of all responses.

The partial results presented (mostly on motivation and behaviour) help to better understand the reasons for visiting religious sites in Northern Portugal and could facilitate the management of those spaces as well as support services.

Clearly the destination is increasingly dealing with independent travellers. The religious site is the attraction intended and the visitor is not expecting additional attractions nor to spend much time there. The visit tends to be less about the religious aspects and more about other motivations to visit which suggests that it is not a homogeneous market. Accordingly, the expectations and consequently the consumption patterns differ.

## Summary

Tourism is increasingly under tremendous competitive pressures as new destinations vie for the same tourists. Often the emerging destinations offer unexploited natural and cultural resources and/or attractions which favour today's ever-demanding tourist. On the other hand, culture, traditions, heritage and nature are the reasons for tourists to visit an area. Therefore, cultural tourism



depends on these natural and cultural resources. A region's culture can and often does form the basis of tourism development (Fernandes, 2013a).

In Northern Portugal, the existence of a large, varied and rich tangible and intangible religious heritage poses a challenge for regional and national authorities to develop religious tourism. Clearly that has not taken place in religious tourism *per se*, but following Ashworth's argument about the 'adjectival tourisms' (Ashworth, 1992, in Pearce, 2005), perhaps it is the designation or classification of the tourism product that needs to be questioned. Would the tangible and intangible religious heritage be best associated to a heritage tourism or cultural tourism product instead of the specialization of religious tourism?

The tourism industry is changing. A new tourism is emerging – one which takes into account the complexity and segmentation of tourism demand (Korres, 2008). Tourists are taking more frequent and shorter leisure trips, and there is a greater demand for experiential travel and an increasing popularity of city and short breaks, facilitated by the increased availability of low-cost airlines and the Internet revolution which represents a fundamental and extensive force in how people seek information and make their bookings. In some areas, the market for sun, sand and sea products appears to have reached a stage of saturation, which explains the current interest of tourism developers, public and private, in alternative resources transformable into tourist products (Fernandes, 2013b).

There is a rapidly growing niche market that is directed towards unique and diverse experiences that are authentic to the place being visited, including local customs, traditions, arts, history, sites and culture, in an engaging and memorable way. On the consumption side, tourists are engaging more actively with the culture and creativity of places and increasingly turning their backs on products which reduce them to mere observers of culture (Richards, 2008). This tendency requires that regions develop and promote their attractiveness. Policy decision makers need to encourage all partners (for instance, regions, municipalities and the business community) to cooperate more proactively. For governments, this means that an innovative tourism policy has to promote coherence and synergy (Korres, 2008, p. 149).

It is recommended that the north of Portugal region be more consistent with its policy on the tangible and intangible religious heritage as part of a tourism product, in accordance with the national tourism strategy and current trends in the tourism market. Today's tourist seeks experiences that broaden and deepen his or her understanding of other places and people. Attractions must come alive for the visitors with human drama or history, not just names and dates. With tourist demand based not only on features and benefits but also on the sensations and memories that the experiences create, emerging cultural tourism destinations can help meet consumer needs for hassle-free time for living, experiencing quality of life, tradition and lifestyle authenticity in a perspective of culture as a 'way of life'. Furthermore, culture-based tourism is less sensitive to seasonality (Fernandes, 2013b).

This could be achieved by encouraging investment in those tangible and intangible resources to promote their attractiveness and create new reasons to visit, and investment in the tourism and hospitality sectors to provide a

diversified range of accommodation units and other services that would be welcomed by special interest tourists. The interpretation at the attractions would need to be in such a way as to supply a range of tourist experiences – things to do, see, learn – and at the same time be entertaining. This special interest tourism requires that tourism agents adopt a proactive attitude towards creativity and innovation; creativity in the sense of producing ideas and innovation in making those ideas happen through the promotion of entrepreneurship and new business opportunities. Such new businesses could be tourism operators, DMOs, etc. meeting the needs of the religious tourism specialization in the north of Portugal.

## Discussion Questions

1. What new forms of consumption can be created to improve the tourist attractiveness of religious sites?
2. Should religious sites concentrate on motivating tourists to visit for religion per se, or focus on a wider target market for heritage and cultural tourism?
3. What are the motivations of today's experiential traveller for visiting religious sites?
4. What changes do religious sites need to undertake to improve visitor satisfaction with the experience in order to extend their stay?

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# 18

## Case Study 7: From Disaster to Religiosity: República de Cromañón, Buenos Aires, Argentina

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### Introduction

On 30 December 2004, the República de Cromañón, a classic nightclub in Buenos Aires, held an event hosting rock group ‘Callejeros’. One of the attendees, who was never identified, threw a flare to the ceiling which ignited in seconds due to the inflammable material it struck. As a result of this fire, 194 attendees were killed and more than a thousand were seriously affected by the toxic gases. This event was known as ‘the tragedy of República de Cromañón’. Further police investigations showed that some irregularities were overlooked by officials and inspectors. Basically, the roof was made from banned materials, but also some of the secondary exit doors were kept closed at the time of the tragedy. This man-made disaster cost the Mayor Anibal Ibarra his job and sent the nightclub’s owner Omar Chabán to prison. Ultimately, the trial, which started in 2008 ended in 2009, resulted in the following sentences:

- Omar Chabán (nightclub owner) – 20-year prison sentence;
- Raúl Villarreal (nightclub security chief) – 1-year suspended sentence;
- Callejeros (rock group members) – 11-year sentence;
- Diego Argañaraz (manager of Callejeros) – 18-year sentence;
- Fabiana Fiszbín (community safety official) – 2-year sentence;
- Ana María Fernández (community safety official) – 2-year sentence; and
- Carlos Díaz (police inspector) – 18-year sentence.

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Some days later, relatives and survivors built a shrine in the space where the first bodies were piled by the police. This sacred space was baptized as 'el Santuario de Cromañón' (Cromañón's sanctuary). From its onset, Cromañón represents a radical case which not only defies the classical literature of religiosity but also pilgrim tourism. Unlike other similar events, Cromañón receives many tourists on a daily basis though the site cannot be commercialized by tour operators. It remains as a sacred space to remember the suffering of thousands of families and friends of victims.

Through this chapter, we will examine the anthropological roots of pilgrim tourism as well as the connection of human beings with their deaths. Methodologically, the investigation was done using ethnography as a primary source of information. The dataset presented here synthesizes more than 2 years of ethnography and contradicts the thesis that death exerts considerable attractiveness to tourists. Under some conditions we will explore here, the tourism industry is resisted. As Phillip Aries (1975) put it, in medieval times pilgrimage resignified the connection of believers with saints. Death was elsewhere, burials and cemeteries were located beyond the boundaries of city. With the expanding of health care and life expectancy, persons embraced the love for life to the extent to deny death forever. Paradoxically, the secularized world reduced substantially the rate of mortality but unleashed death from its cage; thus, lay people became terrified by the experience of others' deaths (Aries, 1975).

## Anthropological Roots of Pilgrim Tourism

If Cromañón exhibits elements of what specialists call popular religiosity, the problem is how it can be defined. Sociology and anthropology have devoted considerable time in defining 'religiosity' but this goal was not successfully achieved (Frigerio, 2000). Pablo Semán clarifies, in this vein, that religiosity shares two significant factors: on the one hand, it connotes an all-encompassing answer to the problem of death, but on the other it signals to politics (Semán, 2001). One of the founding parents of modern anthropology, Bronislaw Malinowski, emphasized the importance of managing death and suffering to understand our being in this world. Death plays a vital role in determining or reducing social order. Any tragedy, whatever its cause and nature, should be remembered by survivors. In so doing, they construct monuments, sanctuaries and shrines to restore the lost sense of security. In these types of disaster, the solidarity of survivors serves as a catalyst to restore trust in 'other'. Otherwise society would disintegrate. In his view, religiosity would also be defined as the need for order in a state of uncertainty generated by death (Malinowski, 1948).

As in the previous argument, Aronoff argues convincingly that politics and religion are inextricably intertwined. Based on the supposition that beliefs and religiosity are key factors of cosmology, the authority conferred by religion is often employed by politicians to enhance their legitimacy (Aronoff, 1984).

According to Blackmore:

Religions build theories about the world and then prevent them being tested. Religions provide nice, appealing and comforting ideas and cloak them in a mask of 'truth, beauty, and goodness'. The theories can then thrive despite being untrue, ugly, or cruel ... I do defend the idea that science, at its best, is more truthful than religion.

(Blackmore, 2000, pp. 202–203)

Matthew Evans responds to this, confirming that religion is an attempt to understand the cosmology of the world as well as the external stimuli of environments (Evans, 2003). The sacred objects/persons give significance to events which otherwise would not be understood. According to Malinowski, Evans proposed a model based on four different subtypes of sacralization:

1. personal-sacred;
2. spiritual-sacred;
3. civil-sacred; and
4. religious-sacred.

While the personal-sacred type confers value to personal effects that belonged to ancestors, spiritual-sacred ascribes to the territorialisation (attachment) of deaths. To set an example, the space where the first bodies fell often is viewed as a space of spiritual-sacralization. The civil-sacred type can be explained by the national symbolism of flags or nationhood which gives identity to community. The sum of the first three subtypes conforms to the religious-sacred cosmology. Last but not least, for Comaroff and Comaroff (1999), religion is an archaic social institution not only aimed at controlling the negative effect of death, but also power. It is impossible to imagine religiosity beyond the boundaries of politics. It exhibits a technique which tries to discipline human beings by the articulation of beliefs, hopes and needs of transcendence. Certainly, religion creates a state of consciousness, which is politically manipulated by privileged groups.

## Religion, Tourism and Pilgrims

Although religion in early modernity has gained too much attention, the fact is that cathedrals are buzzing with more tourists who are interested in gazing at something anew than devoted parishioners. In accordance to this, some specialists have proclaimed that we are living fabricated forms of religion (Leiper 1999; Griffin, 2007; Raj and Morpeth, 2007); some anthropological studies even suggest that tourism is a way of pilgrimage (Jackowski, 1987; Cohen, 1992; Collins-Kreiner and Gatrell, 2006; Blackwell, 2007; Vandemoortele, 2009; Korstanje and Busby, 2010).

Dean MacCannell was a pioneer in revealing the connection between tourism and religion, though for this scholar, both concepts were incompatible. Following the legacy of structuralism, MacCannell starts from the premise that the secular world should be opposed to primitive non-Western cultures. Religiosity as it is practised by aborigines depends on the symbolic power



of totem. In modern capitalist societies, totemism is being replaced by a new form of social relation that mediates among human beings: tourism. Therefore, MacCannell says overtly that religious travels appeal to a staged authenticity which not only is unreal, but also results in declining social bonds (MacCannell, 2003, 2007).

In this context, Jafari and Scott (2014) stress the need to study Islam, to understand new alternative forms of tourism(s) beyond the Western paradigm. What makes attractive the study of Islam is the interconnection between religion and politics. Tourism as an industry may be considered inside the world of beliefs. Since it creates a contradictory situation because much of the behaviour which tourism brings is banned by Islamic law, authors are reminded of the importance to discuss the gap between 'pious and leisure travels'.

In this respect, Timothy and Olsen (2006) explain that religious travel is not a new phenomenon. Mobilities motivated by reasons of religiosity are present in the major religions of the planet. Perhaps the increase of religious travel depends on the growth of tourism worldwide. In recent years, globalization has contributed to the upsurge of religiosity and pilgrimage by many motives, which range from the rise of fundamentalism towards the return to a more traditional spiritual style of life. What would be more than interesting to debate is the role of religion to give a sense of the secularized world. Modern consumers appeal to religion to order their life and find a sense of their cultural values.

Shepherd *et al.* (2012) acknowledge that tourism may revitalize the economies of those spaces already considered as sacred, but of course it has some costs. Residents understand that the presence of tourists imperils the sacredness of their faith. If this happens, conflict surfaces as a form of relation between secularized tourists and believers. Last but not least, Korstanje and George (2012) found the thesis of MacCannell not only does not explain the roots of sacred space but also rests on shaky foundations. Basically, sacred spaces exert considerable pressure to keep tourists away, restricted to peripheral areas. Employing the metaphor of heaven as an exemplary centre, they argue that one of the aspects of religiosity is its resistance to commercial forces of economy. Since tourism is recognized as a business-led activity, believers look to a sacred spot as a shelter for their doubts. Unlike leisure tourism, pilgrimage exhibits that 'sacrifice' is the only valid way of reaching authentic religiosity.

What would also be interesting to discuss is to what extent tourism preserves the logic of work for the economic forces of a still functioning society. Although pilgrimage shares with tourism its nature as a rite, the goals go in contrasting directions. It alludes to visiting the 'sacred land' or the space of saints or founding parents whenever the subject needs assistance. In our experience, pilgrims offer to God a sacrifice. Travellers go in quest of something outstanding, or in acknowledgement of the tutelage of gods. We need to review the etymological nature of pilgrimage to understand what we say. The word stems from the Latin *per agere* which means going through the wild-camps. Unlike leisure-related travels which were framed into the available infrastructure to secure the consumer, pilgrimage opened the doors to much more risky conditions. To put it another way, the message of pilgrimage is the opposite of

tourism. The former signals to the superiority of God in contexts of disgrace, uncertainty or panic. In contrast, the latter refers to men who believe they are gods. The tourist, as cosmo-creator, intends to conquer the paradise, reinforcing their sentiment of superiority over the created nature. This begs more than one interesting question: what is the role played by conflict in religiosity? Why does death attract us? To what extent does this tension prevent the adoption of tourism?

Unlike other animals, humans feel special attraction their own and others' deaths. Raine (2013) advises that dark tourism sites, for example, are based on 'devotion' to dead ancestors as well as the characteristics of their death. The visitation of dark spots, according to Tarlow (2005) and Stone and Sharpley (2008), corresponds with a sacred experience where attendants contemplate their own death. The search for 'catharsis' with the other's misfortune, and of course the need to remember that, ascribes to the formation of dark sites and religiosity, first and foremost if one of the vulnerable victims has died in vain or in an unprotected condition.

Korstanje and Ivanov (2012) suggest that dark tourism is a fertile ground to understand how psychological resilience works in post-disaster contexts. As a catalyst, dark tourism gives a lesson in order for survivors to ameliorate the trauma or understand the causes of an event. Trauma or disasters, whatever their cause may be, represent a radical rupture for the self. The community is bereft in a sharp dilemma because there is no guarantee that the event will not happen again in the near future. This degree of uncertainty is controlled by diverse mechanisms enrooted in the resiliency of community. In order to avoid social fragmentation, because of mass destruction, the community elaborates forms of adaptation. Survivors, in spite of their deep sadness – many of them having even lost relatives and friends – develop a sentiment of superiority based on the fact that they are still on their feet. The process of recovery of a city or a group depends on this psychological principle. In some cases, survivors understand that fortune, after all, has been benign with them, but in others, they believe some internal virtues protected or saved their life. Values such as strength, bravery, civic virtue and moderation may engender a sense of exemplarity to mitigate the psychological effects of trauma. Survivors, therefore, enter in an ethnocentric allegory of self, which may lead the community to nationalism and chauvinism. The troublesome logic of death is not only commemorated by dark sites but also represents a mechanism to domesticate death.

## **República de Cromañón**

Although 'el Santuario de Cromañón' receives many tourists, families reject the efforts of tour operators and travel agencies to commercialize the site internationally. It is hard to locate leaders within this movement due to the huge number of victims. Each family is allied to various groups with six main leading organizations. Every family has been paid but these subgroups have struggled to monopolize the subsidiaries. Not only does this raise a great conflict, but it has also prevented the unification of the Cromañón movement. Their various

interests are based on diverse goals. While some families looked to imprison Omar Chabán, Callejeros rock band and Anibal Ibarra because of their compliance in bribes, others considered seriously that the event was a simple accident. Quite aside from this, the person who threw the flare was never found.

Figure 18.1 shows some of the faces of Cromañón's victims, who varied in age, social class and gender. Though many of them were children and teenagers, which generated many conflicts of interests among families, their claim was the quest of justice, which means the fair trial of all involved persons. This picture has become the flag of many human rights movements concerned in the cause of Cromañón.

As a cult of popular religiosity, Cromañón has identified two evil forces: the economy, embodied in the figure of businessman O. Chabán; and politics, in the figure of the former Mayor A. Ibarra. The victims died simply because Chabán bribed the municipal inspectors who investigated irregularities in the nightclub. If this had not happened, the 194 victims would have been saved. In the Cromañón's imagination, the victims did not die in vain. Their death has denounced the corruption of businessmen and politicians. In this vein, survivors and families have accepted a sacred mission, to seek justice before the judges and politic powers. The event could have been prevented if corruption had not poisoned the hearts of public management officials. The popular religiosity is based on four key factors, which are now examined:

1. sacralization of the dead;
2. conflict;
3. syncretism; and
4. sacrifice.



Fig. 18.1. In quest of justice. (From movement Cromañón Que No Se Repita, 2006.)

## **Sacralization of the dead**

Undoubtedly, sacralization of the dead is of paramount importance for the consolidation of religiosity. Historians such as Fustel de Coulanges have shown that the cult of ancestors played a vital role in the genesis of the first religions. Indo-European religions such as Christianity are derived from the cult of ancestors who were protectors/mediators between gods and humans. Offerings to them not only galvanized the courage of gods, but also guided the community in times of uncertainty (Coulanges, 1874).

One of our key informants told us the shrine of Cromañón was built in January of 2005, a couple of days after the tragedy. Originally, lay people gave flowers, rosaries and other objects which were decorating the place. The geographical point where this was built was the space where the first bodies were piled by the police. The 194 victims are remembered as 'angels' because of their purity and pristine souls. The archetype of angels reveals two important aspects of life. The massacre, for survivors, alludes to the need for justice. The sacralization process consists of attributing outstanding features and feats to victims to support a political cause. This is the reason why the process is enrooted in politics. At a closer look, society mobilizes resources to protect those groups who represent the fertile ground of the next generation. That way, the group preserves its ability to survive. Whenever teenagers, pregnant women or children are killed, the group goes into shock. Religion attempts to answer a question which has no real answer. In the end, we not only will die someday, but also we live to die. Angels are social constructs which mediate between gods, humans and evil. They are not as vulnerable as men but not as powerful as gods. Any episode of sudden death confers to the victim a special and outstanding nature, to not only give meaning to the death, but also to guide families. It demonstrates the logic of sacrifice.

## **Conflict**

Following this explanation, sacralization operates in combination with a second element – conflict. Mayor Anibal Ibarra was supported not only by the former president Néstor Kirchner, but also by a set of social-democrat parties. The attack on him was based on the reaction of Estela de Carlotto and other human rights militants. As Andrea Estrada (2010) put it, Cromañón evidenced two aspects of power. One signals to the struggle for fathers and mothers who had lost their sons and daughters in a man-made disaster, but the second and most important bespeaks of the monopoly of memory.

Estela de Carlotto, founder of the movement 'Abuelas de Plaza de Mayo', suffered the disappearance of a son at the hand of the Military Junta in Argentina. Though in the past she exerted considerable resistance to diverse governments, today she supports the 'Frente para la Victoria' party (Front for Victory party) which supported president Néstor Kirchner and his wife, Cristina F. de Kirchner, in coming to power. Carlotto abruptly named Cromañón's families as 'enemies of democracy'. She was repudiated by whole

families who expressed their concerns in many letters. One of the parents, Liliana Garófalo, accused Carlotto of creating an allegory of suffering where some actors are excluded. The discrepancy in this token is the monopolizing of memory and questions, and under what circumstances that suffering may be manipulated in an all-encompassing discourse. The families of Cromañón represented a serious danger for democracy because they agitated for the trial of Mayor Ibarra and this engendered political instability.

## Syncretism

The third element is syncretism. This refers to the mixture of ideas or beliefs into a unique form of religiosity. The shrine is furnished by symbols of Christianity and rock and roll. This combines saints such as San Jose, Expedito, Saint Pius or Esteban who are established sacred figures with more secularized pictures of slippers which signify the culture of sacrifice of rock and roll. One of the interviewees maintained that the souls of the victims are now together with their idol, rock guitar legend Norberto Napolitano (Pappo), and other rock celebrities who have died in tragic circumstances. The culture of rock plays a vital role by resisting the incorporation of official religion into the shrine. Certainly, the Catholic Church has never recognized this popular religiosity in any formal way, considering it as a type of art or simple belief of the popular sectors. Whatever the case may be, the presence of rock alludes to a much broader process of secularization where victims said they do not believe in God or in the Catholic Church. This has created serious conflict between believers and non-believers inside the Cromañón movement.

The journalist Laura Cambra (2008) acknowledges that the tragedy is mediatized by many voices. All these views are articulated by the discourse of what the specialist calls the 'rock chabon'. This genre surfaced post-economic crisis in 2001 when thousands of Argentines lost their trust in their politicians, parties and leaders. The lack of trust relates to the daily frustrations of almost 40% of the population who are unemployed and 60% who are living in poverty. Rock chabon exemplifies a new form of more radical protest, respecting politics. If teenagers of other times ascribed to parties to improve the conditions of their country, rock chabon proposes the opposite: there is nothing to do to reverse



**Fig. 18.2.** Parents in a protest. (Photo courtesy of Antonio Cruz, ABR, 2007.)



the degree of corruption and decline of this society; it is clearly impossible to predict the future. Under this nihilist circumstance, supporters of rock chabon do not accept leisure nor consumption as signs of status, and they aspire to reject any political party whatever their root may be. The market and commercialization are evils of this world, and as one of our interviewees said: 'they do not aspire to change the world, because the heaven was already sold' (Marcelo, 20 years old). Like banks, politicians and the Church, the great narrative and institutions were complicit in the corruption that led Argentina to bankruptcy in 2001.

## Sacrifice

Last but not least, sacrifice represents the tenets of pilgrims. As noted above, tourists are moved by curiosity or the experience of something new, while the pilgrims allude to a much broader sentiment of spirituality transforming pleasure in a sacrifice. Believers promise God certain deprivations, to devote their love, or to ask for some favours. They do not look to face a hedonist experience, but ask God for assistance. As an exchange of favours (gifts) between humans and gods, the sacrifice or the promise to return is determined by the suffering of believers. In counterbalance, believers are benefited or healed by God. Though Cromañón does not exhibit signs of promises or mass pilgrimages as in many other cases of religiosity, it is important not to lose sight that some believers



**Fig. 18.3.** The sanctuary of Cromañón. (Photo courtesy of El Mensajero Diario, 2011.)



think the spirits of victims make miracles because they are mediating by a fair and just cause. They not only support their families in their crusade against the political and economic powers of Argentina, but also ask for the assistance of God if necessary.

In considering why Cromañón is not a site of tour commercialization, three tentative arguments arise. Like greed and corruption, tourism is considered an evil activity because of its links to financial powers. Families, survivors and other relatives understand that the authenticity of the sanctuary (*santuario*) should be placed out of the net of commercialization of tourism. Though they accept the presence of some tourists, no admissions can be sold. Secondly, unlike museums of memory or other dark tourism sites, the variety of involved subgroups and the broad range of interests at stake prevent a unified discourse regarding what message should be given to attendants. Thirdly, many of the victims belonged to a wave of Argentinean rock called 'rock chabon' which was critical of classical institutions such as the government or the Catholic Church. This secularized way of feeling the religiosity (in terms of Evans' model) resulted in syncretized forms of resistance that articulate religion as a consequence of politics.

The cult of popular religiosity often contains the following elements:

- Light symbolizes the spirit of the dead.
- Igniting a candle to the memory of victims means a form of fighting against the darkness.
- Popular religiosity and sanctuaries are decorated with personal effects of victims.
- Economic and political forces are demonized by relatives and families.
- Pictures not only evoke memories of the dead, but also their presence.
- Conflict works as a mediator between gods and humans.

## Summary

The tragedy of República de Cromañón not only shocked Argentinean popular opinion but also ignited a hot debate on the responsibility of authorities, officials and politicians in the event. Relatives and families of victims constructed a sanctuary looking for this disaster and its conjuncture not to be forgotten. Through this chapter we have explored the anthropological roots of religion, tourism and death. One of the aspects which should be discussed is to what extent these families reject tourism as a primary industry for revitalizing their incomes and monetary resources. In this vein, Cromañón is unique in many ways. The degree of conflict and the pejorative view of tourism make it very difficult to organize mass tours to the site, although the space exhibits interesting expressions of popular religiosity.

Judicial investigations have tried to identify those responsible, who threw the flare that night, but without any practical result. Unlike other events of dark tourism or popular religiosity where the guilty are discovered and judged, here they remain a complete mystery. As a result of this, the conflict is directed against two identifiable demons: the economic power embedded with the nightclub owner,

and the political authorities. Since tourism is related to both, it is understood as a commercial activity enrooted in corruption and greed; therefore, families are unable to accept a planned contingent of visitors. Envisaging Cromañón as a tourist attraction would be seen to trivialize the struggle of the families involved.

## Discussion Questions

1. What features of commemoration at Cromañón are similar to those at traditional sites of religious pilgrimage and tourism?
2. This chapter presents four key factors of popular religiosity. Outline these factors and discuss their importance for this site.
3. Can you identify other examples around the world similar to Cromañón which have shunned opportunities to 'commercialize' their tragic past?
4. Do you think that Cromañón may transform into a site of pilgrimage in the future, and if so, what factors need to resolve before 'visitors' would become welcome here?

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# 19

## Case Study 8: Pilgrimages toward South Lebanon: Holy Places Relocating Lebanon as a Part of the Holy Land

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### Introduction

The sacred geography of Lebanon testifies to the importance of the 'cult of saints'. The so-called 'pilgrimage phenomenon' is deeply rooted in Lebanese culture, and involves a multitude of different religious communities. This chapter introduces the pilgrimage sites to provide a reflection on the presentation and the construction of South Lebanon as a Holy Land. The Virgin, her son, her father and Saint Peter would have preached in, lived in and would have even been established in this region. This chapter seeks to understand the desire of integrating the religious sites in the biblical and evangelical tradition supported by the renewed interest towards these shrines and above all the establishment of facilities and programmes to organize visits to such sanctuaries. Local communities visit and surround these holy places with a popular religiosity by transmitting their reputation and the stories of the miracles attributed to them, while Lebanese from other regions are often ignorant of this history and only associate South Lebanon with war and martyrs.

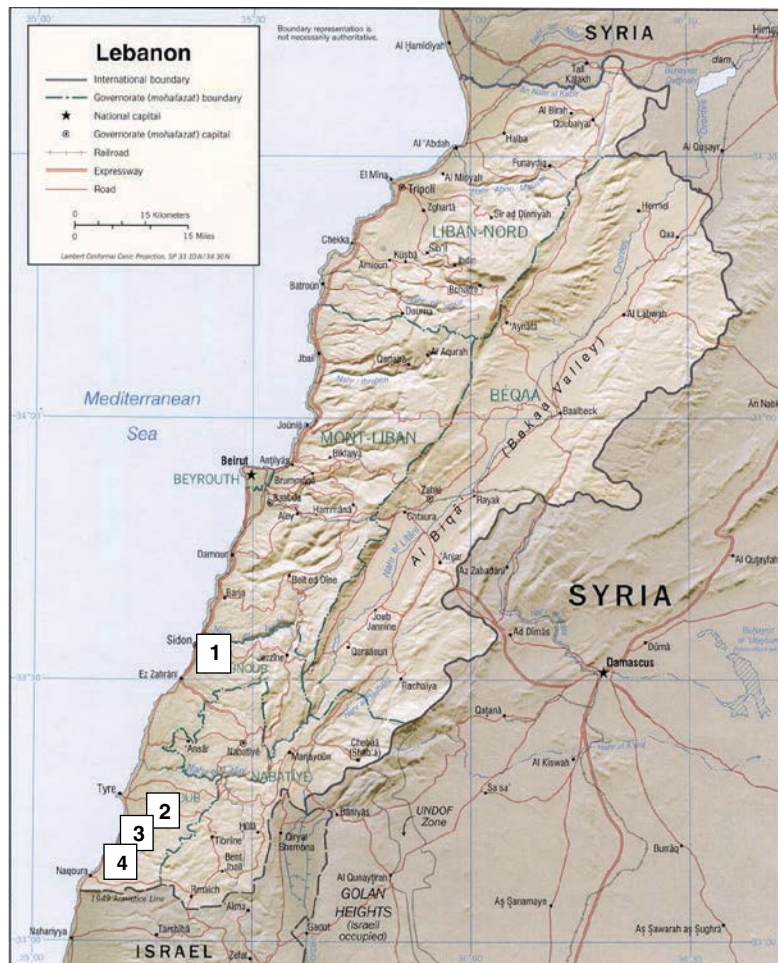
There are over 96 references to Lebanon in the Bible, and Jesus Christ himself is said to have walked on its soil. Christian communities were present from the apostolic period in Lebanon, and Saint Paul and Saint Peter made many visits to Lebanon. The holy texts reveal to us that Jesus conducted several sermons in Lebanon, and performed miracles in the area between Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 14: 21–28 and Mark 7: 24–31), praising the faith of the inhabitants and reminding the Pharisees of an episode in the life of the Prophet Elijah who, during a famine, was said to have been fed by a widow of Sarepta

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(Sarafand nowadays, south of Sidon). And it is at the top of Mount Hermon (Lebanon) that Jesus Christ was transfigured (Matthew, 17: 1–13).

Despite these biblical references, and the many stories of pilgrims and orientalist,<sup>1</sup> the designation of 'Holy Land' has been almost exclusively reserved for Palestine/Israel, although more recently has extended to include Jordan. Take the example of the special folder 'La route de Jésus' in *Geo* magazine (No. 58 – 1983), and various guides to the Holy Land (i.e. Honoré-Lainé *et al.*, 1971) and many other works (i.e. Stève, 1961), which exclude Lebanon from the topography of the 'Holy Land'. In May 1997, Pope Jean Paul II proclaimed Lebanon as a Holy Land for its privileged place in the Bible,



**Fig. 19.1.** Map of Lebanon. (From CIA maps, available at [http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle\\_east\\_and\\_asia/lebanon\\_rel\\_2002.jpg](http://www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/middle_east_and_asia/lebanon_rel_2002.jpg))

- 1 - Our Lady of Mantara (awaiting Lady) in Maghdouche
- 2 - The village of Cana
- 3 - The maqam of Nabi 'Omran in Qlayle
- 4 - The maqam of Cham'oun El Safa in Chamaa

its martyrs and its sacred places. Following this statement, many civil society initiatives attempted to place Lebanon on the international tourism map of the Holy Land. Examples of organizations that work towards this end include the 'Association for the Development of Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism in Lebanon',<sup>2</sup> 'Lebanon, Holy Land'<sup>3</sup> and 'In the Footsteps of Jesus Christ in Lebanon'.<sup>4</sup>

This increased effort to consider Lebanon as part of the Holy Land is also reflected in the work of authors including Roncaglia (2004), Harb (2008) and Abou Nakoul (2013) who have begun to consider and reflect the importance of Lebanon in their references to biblical and evangelical geography. To do this, these authors rely on numerous testimonies, bibliographic and historical sources in focusing on holy places in southern Lebanon. This analysis relies particularly on the writings of the historian Eusebius of Caesarea that located the evangelical Cana in the land of Asher near Tyre in Lebanon.

Such claims, however, are hampered by modern-day political and geographical realities including the effects of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict in South Lebanon. The opening of the borders between Jordan and Israel has allowed the establishment of new combined pilgrimage circuits which exclude Lebanon, and the closed southern Israeli–Lebanese border isolates Lebanon from Jerusalem, the centre of the Holy Land. This isolation seems to be especially carried through the sacred sites of South Lebanon, whose history is deeply marked by and connected to the biblical and Christological texts.

## The Study

This chapter is one of the outputs of an anthropological research project under the theme: 'Shared Places of Worship and Shared Rituals in Lebanon, between the Past and the Future: Foundation, Development, Conversion and Abandonment', supported by the *Institut Français du Proche-Orient* (IFPO) and funded by the National Council for Scientific Research (CNRS-Lebanon). The fieldwork of this research project was conducted in collaboration with Dr Hoda Kassatly. Over 200 hours of participant observation and around 60 interviews were conducted across the entire Lebanese territory during 2010 and 2011. More than 30 religious sites were visited and described in ethnographic notes.

For this study we focused on South Lebanon where hundreds of churches, monasteries, mosques, maqâms and mazars ('maqâm' and 'mazar' are Arabic terms for mausoleum or shrine in the Muslim world) are found in and around important cities and small villages. In villages, devotions towards different local and international saints can be observed in various shrines. In cities many historical churches and mosques can be visited. All these religious sites are very interesting and can have historical background but are not particularly related to biblical references. During our successive trips to South Lebanon we focused on four places of worship recognized as being related to the biblical texts by the local communities, and thus a potential source of tourism in the region.



The sites observed are: the sanctuary of Our Lady of Mantara (awaiting Lady) in Maghdouche (Fig. 19.1 (1) and 19.2); the village of Cana (Fig. 19.1 (2) and 19.3); the maqâm of Nabi 'Omran in Qlayle (Fig. 19.1 (3) and 19.5); and the maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa in Chamaa (Fig. 19.1 (4) and 19.6). The historical background of these sites and the devotional practices observed there testify to old local traditions, which attests that Jesus Christ, the Virgin and the Apostles have walked through South Lebanon.

In this research, we try to analyse the emergence, the renewal and the transmission of this tradition, which fits into two distinct fields: religious tourism and popular religiosity. We are also interested in the patrimonialization of these sites, and the actors involved in this process.

This chapter describes the chosen pilgrimage places in order to understand how the government, religious authorities and private initiatives try to include Lebanon in biblical trails. We believe the ethnographic detailed description is important taking into consideration that these sites are almost undocumented and scriptural sources mention them very rarely. Furthermore, the description of the physical and cultural elements of the sanctuaries demonstrates the will of local authorities to develop these sites and the faith of the devotees in the biblical traditions. Through the analysis, we explore the hypothesis that the patrimonialization claim has implications far beyond the desire to include Lebanon in the context of mapping the Holy Land. This claim comes in a specific socio-political context and its challenges are many, related to both identity and socio-political issues. Our analysis seeks to uncover these issues, and understand more the dynamics that have been established around this claim.

## **A Christological Route Under Development Including the Sanctuary of 'Our Lady of Mantara' and the Site of Cana**

In South Lebanon, the Greek-Catholic Marian shrine of 'Our Lady of Mantara', Saydet El Mantara, and the site of Cana are established places of pilgrimage already recognized as biblical sites by different local political and religious entities. They are already promoted as such by the Ministry of Tourism, and many travel agencies already integrate them into their biblical tours.

### **Saydet El Mantara: a shared, centuries-old pilgrimage site**

The sanctuary rises on a hill in Maghdouche village of South Lebanon, overlooking the coast, the city of Sidon and the Palestinian refugee camp of Ainel-Hilweh. The shrine, reachable by road from Sidon, is located right at the entrance of the village. It has long been mentioned by travellers, orientalist, tourists and archaeologists. Renan (1997, [1864] pp. 517–518), describing this place of pilgrimage, compares it, just like Goudard (1993), to 'Notre-Dame-de-la-Garde'<sup>5</sup> (translated literally as Our Lady of the Guard).

The Greek-Catholic Archbishop of the diocese of Saida and Deir El Qamar, Archbishop Kwaiter, has published several brochures on this place, including



**Fig. 19.2.** The sanctuary of Our Lady of Mantara (awaiting Lady) in Maghdouche.

one entitled 'The Path of the Sanctuaries' (2001). The introduction describes the site as a Highly Sacred place of inter-religious Marian pilgrimage; it also offers 12 stations of meditation on biblical events in Lebanon.

The extensive literature describes this sanctuary as a place of pilgrimage shared by all religious communities and as one of the major touristic sites of South Lebanon. The brochures of the Ministry of Tourism (2006a, 2006b) date the foundation of the village back to antiquity. A ritual procession used to lead the faithful from the caves of Tabloun to Ain-el-Hilweh, in the direction of the cave of the goddess (tradition asserts that the goddess Astarte lived there in a cave) with offerings and sacrifices. Many years prior to the birth of Christ, the position of the sanctuary was chosen as a watchtower for the priests of the goddess. The traditional tale behind the history of Saydet El Mantara purports that the Virgin Mary, as a Jewish woman, was prohibited access to cities at the time. Some popular traditions tell that she waited in the cave during her pregnancy (before Jesus was born) and at other times during the time Jesus was preaching in Saida. Traces of a Roman road near this shrine demonstrate that the cave was probably on the road linking Jerusalem to Saida, via Caesarea Philippi and Panias.

In the year 324, Saint Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine I the Great, built a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary, decorated with an icon painted by Saint Luc. Due to religious persecutions taking place in the 8th century, the entrance to the cave was camouflaged, only to be rediscovered accidentally in 1726 by a shepherd. Since then, it has become a place of pilgrimage, and in 1860, the Greek-Melkite community took ownership of the land and proceeded to develop it. In the early 1960s, Bishop Khoury built

the hexagonal chapel surmounted by a tower of 28 m height with a beautiful bronze statue of 'Madonna and child', by the Italian artist Pierrotti.

The sanctuary acts as a parish church, governed by specific opening hours and daily masses. Touristic facilities meet the demand of the expanding number of visitors, including a vast esplanade of approximately 4000 m<sup>2</sup>, which separates the cave-chapel and the tower. The cave has been restored into a rock chapel (15 m by 7 m), and at the entrance of the cave we can observe a statue of a Virgin waiting in front of a condemned well. The 'sanctuaries trail', located outdoors, below the tower, illustrates the biblical events which according to the texts and the oral tradition are said to have taken place in Lebanon. Stations, along a path lined by rosemary and olive trees, commemorate these events by steles carved in stone. The great Basilica (1500 seats) is in the process of completion. At the entrance of the site there are now parking lots, a boutique richly supplied with souvenirs and religious articles, a large cafeteria and toilets, all of which have been developed for the reception of pilgrims.

Saydet El Mantara attracts pilgrims from all over Lebanon and all over the world. The flow of visitors is regularly affected by political events, due especially to the proximity of the sanctuary to Ain-el-Hilweh camp. Although the number of visitors increases significantly at weekends, holidays and during the summer, the flow of pilgrims remains fairly constant throughout the year. Visitation reaches its peak at dates on the Marian calendar, especially on the 7 and 8 September celebration of the birth of the Virgin Mary.

Christians and Muslims alike regard this shrine as a miraculous and blessed site, with members of both religions sharing this place of worship and proceeding to enact the same rituals (Farra-Haddad, 2010). The Virgin of Maghdouche has many virtues but she is visited particularly for eye problems, women in need of children and the protection of children; many miracles are attributed to her such as protecting the village from invaders and enemies. Christians and Muslims in the region have a special devotion to the Virgin Mary; they see her as a mother figure and a confidante, and they believe that they receive special attention and graces from her. She is called 'Umm el Kol' ('the mother of all', an expression taken by many faithful to designate the Virgin), who reaches out to all pilgrims from different denominations. For the pilgrims the *baraka*<sup>6</sup> come mainly from the fact that, as stated in tradition, the Virgin Mary herself has visited the cave.

### **Caná of Galilee in South Lebanon: the controversial site of the first miracle of Jesus Christ<sup>7</sup>**

The village of Caná is located in South Lebanon, 12 km south-east of Tyre. The inhabitants of Caná, and of the surrounding area, are predominantly Shiite, but a small Greek-Catholic community is based around the Church of Saint Joseph. Archaeological remains from different periods have been discovered in the village, some dating back to prehistory. The site (known as the 'Site of the Statuary') remained largely unknown for years, partly due to difficult access (the site being encircled by rocks), and only a few inhabitants of the village were aware of its

existence. The rock carvings found on the walls date back to the early centuries and depict characters in devotion, with hands lifted to the sky or close to the chest. Until the 1990s, this site remained without any facilities or signs to find it.

A ministerial note dated 25 November 1993 stipulates the touristic and religious importance of 'Cana El Jalil' in South Lebanon (Fig. 19.4). Following the declaration of Pope Jean Paul II during his visit to Lebanon in 1997, the Minister of Tourism, Nicolas Fattouche, launched a major project for the development of this site. However, the project will take many years to be executed.

Cana is renowned for tragic war events including massacres that have been reported widely in the media.<sup>8</sup> Following the liberation of South Lebanon in 2000 from Israeli occupation, thousands of Lebanese who had been cut off from the region for many years were drawn towards the site, leading to its 'rediscovery' of sorts. More and more visitors targeted the site, attracted mainly by the reputation of a miraculous cave. This regular passage of visitors establishes the path that leads to the site, which was fully organized between the years 2000 and 2002 by the Ministry of Tourism and the municipality of Cana. The site has been transformed from an open space with free access, to a confined space subject to rules of visits. Nowadays, visitors enter through a guarded gate where they must pay an entrance fee. At the entrance, a restaurant, shops and toilets are available to visitors who are guided by signs, stairs and ramps leading to the sculptures and the cave. Elements are now in place to transform the site into a sustainable and official touristic place.



**Fig. 19.3.** The 'Site of the Statuary' in Cana.



During the 1990s, this place was visited as an archaeological site, and the cave was known only for having sheltered Christians escaping persecutions. With numbers of visitors increasing, coupled with the increasing religiosity of visitors, the cave has gradually turned into a place of worship. The soil and water that are secreted from the walls of the cave are now collected and coveted for their miraculous properties. Images, icons and statues of the Virgin and saints are offered to the cave by devotees. Visitors light candles, recite prayers and make wishes in the cave. In the Ministry of Tourism's brochure on Cana we can read: 'They [people] collect in empty bottles drops of water falling from an upper stone of the cave for the miraculous virtue of this water which symbolizes breast milk of the Virgin Mary'. All these facts help to re-invest this holy place, unknown until recently, with no historical evidence of an ancient cult.

The site named as 'The Site of the Jars' (also named 'The Site of the Miracle'), about 2 km away from the 'Site of the Statuary', was discovered in the 1970s. In front of the archaeological remains that highlight the wine presses is a Shiite mazar dedicated to Nabi El Jalil. Oral tradition reports that a prophet by the name of El Jalil was buried here, although there is no tomb inside the mazar. During our research, this story was narrated by the guardian who holds the key to the sanctuary – Hajj Ali – and Zahra (age 8) who presented herself as the local guide. The popular story tells that the wedding took place at the site of the current mazar. Another popular tradition indicates the existence of a miraculous well, wide and deep, but we did not find any trace of such a well.

Christian and Muslim pilgrims look for the *baraka* of the mazar El Jalil by touching its exterior walls and the sacred tree in front of the sanctuary, which are thought to be miraculous, but very few seek to enter inside the mazar. Oral traditions purport that drinking infusions of the leaves and pieces of bark of the sacred tree heals a variety of diseases. Some Shiites in the region report that this tree was blessed by Jesus Christ himself, who is said to have performed his first miracle in the vicinity. They believe that this tree could be 2000 years old, claiming that the age of the tree points to it being eternal.

For around 10 years, official development of the site, along with the magnitude of religious practices that take place, has supported the sacredness of Cana. The cleanliness of the place and the constant upkeep and maintenance attest to the sincerity of the Muslim community in the town to believe in the Christian tradition. In addition, the transformation of Cana into a sacred space is now supported by the many accounts of miraculous healings attributed to it.

The local Greek-Catholic Christian community as well as the 'Holy Land Lebanon Association' wish to integrate a visit to the nearby Church of Saint Joseph into the pilgrimage circuits/routes, and to this effect a large statue of the Virgin was installed in front the church on 11 September 2011.

The heritage claim of Cana El Jalil takes source and support primarily from the identification by many authors (Roncaglia, 2004; Harb, 2008; Abou Nakoul, 2013) of the village as the Cana where Jesus Christ performed his first miracle; local authorities also consider the biblical Cana and Cana El Jalil to be one and the same. The discovery of multiple archaeological elements,



**Fig. 19.4.** The Mazar of Cana El Jalil.

including jars, rock carvings and a holy cave, reinforce the thesis, mainly supported by the National Committee for the Development of the South of Lebanon.<sup>9</sup> According to the arguments put forward in this instance, jars discovered on the site of Cana by a Muslim, Musa Amer, neighbour and guardian of the site, could be those that Jesus used for its first miracle. This statement seems to be corroborated by the appearance of the jars, and by their similarity to the description given by John the Evangelist (2: 6).



All these facts are used to assert the claim for this being the 'true' Cana. It is suggested that this was not realized in the past because pilgrims would have travelled along the coastal road, avoiding the mountainous interior, and thus would consequently have never encountered Cana located in Lebanon.

For some authors the confusion regarding this Cana has no literary or biblical basis and they suggest it is based on an anti-Israel activism of Hezbollah since the 1996 massacre. Russbachla<sup>10</sup> in his analysis fails to mention Christian researchers who argued for the cause of Cana in Lebanon long before the events of 1996, and based their claims on trustworthy sources and references. Regardless of the official positions taken by the ecclesiastical authorities in Rome, who have not yet clarified the question of the actual location of Cana, on a local level, researchers, historians, religious and political leaders have not hesitated in calling for the identification and recognition of the 'Lebanese Cana'.

## **Shia Maqâms Seeking Recognition on the Margins of the Biblical Circuit**

Two maqâms of South Lebanon, the maqâm of Nabi 'Omran in Qlayle and the maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa (Saint Peter) in Chamaa, are the subject of a campaign by local Shiite communities who preach for their integration into the biblical trails, and hope for their official development. So far, the unstable security situation in the region has impeded the resurgence of tourism, and as a result these maqâms are barely promoted at all.

### **The maqâm of Nabi 'Omran in Qlayle: the father of Maryam (the Virgin Mary) buried in South Lebanon**

The village of Qlayle in South Lebanon is located 10 km south-east of Tyre. In this Shiite village there are three mosques, including one linked to the maqâm of Nabi 'Omran. The maqâm is located at the end of the main road of the village, and indications on the road leading to Qlayle and to the site are marked by 'Marabout of Nabi Omran'. At the entrance, in a corner, is situated a well, which locals believe holds miraculous water. The sanctuary is composed of two buildings: the most recent, dating back a decade, is a mosque with a concrete minaret, a room of prayer (reserved for men) and bathrooms. The old building that contains the tomb of Nabi 'Omran is built on a rectangular plan, and two large Corinthian marble capitals decorate its entry. Its ceiling is composed of four arches surmounted by a cupola. Inside the room, the tomb of the prophet is made from wood and covered with a velvet banner bearing verses from the Qur'an; a representation of Imam 'Ali is located just in front of a small *mihrab*. The metal bars that surrounded the tomb no longer exist. The interior of the maqâm and the grave are decorated by an important number of cult objects (rosaries, Qur'ans, etc.). The second room, which is smaller, has a *mihrab* and bears the name of the mother of the prophet.



**Fig. 19.5.** The Maqâm of Nabi ‘Omran in Qlayle.

Behind the maqâm, a field reveals an archaeological site. Local tradition mentions the existence of a *‘deir*’ (Christian convent) prior to the construction of the maqâm. On 27 April 1996, as a result of Israeli bombings, the remains of a crypt were revealed, and led to archaeological excavations by the General Directorate of Antiquities that identified mosaic floors, as well as Byzantine structures indicating the existence of a church with an apse. The ancient remains of this place are mentioned by several travellers and orientalist, including Renan (1997 [1864], p. 692).

‘Amram or ‘Imran in Hebrew is a name given by the Muslim authors (Ṭabarī, 2001) to two figures: the first is biblical, but is not mentioned in the Qur’an, whereas the second figure is mentioned. The first holy figure is the father of Musa (Moses), Harun (Aaron) and Maryam. The second was, according to the Qur’an, the father of Maryam, mother of Issa (Jesus) and, according to Ashba’ historians, also the father of Elizabeth who went on to become the mother of John the Baptist. ‘Imran is (for Muslims) the name of the father of Maryam and the husband of Anne, who does not appear in the biblical text, but who is called Joachim by the Catholic and Orthodox traditions.

The maqâm in Qlayle is the only place of worship in Lebanon dedicated to Nabi ‘Omran. In the city of Salalah (Dhofar region), in the Sultanate of Oman on the Arabian Sea, a sanctuary is dedicated to him and the same confusion exists as to the identification of the figure that is buried there. Some recognize him as a local saint; others as the father of Maryam; and finally others still consider him to be the father of Moses mentioned in the Bible. For the inhabitants of Qlayle and the region, there is no doubt that Nabi ‘Omran is the father of the Virgin Mary, but the sheikh of the village could not certify the identity of the holy

figure, and he concluded that since there was no clear evidence, the tomb here could be simply dedicated to a 'holy man'. For the inhabitants of the region, the Nabi protects, heals and responds especially to women in need of children.

With a small number of visitors, there are no strict rules for visiting the maqâm, which is open with free access, day and night. The number of visitors was heavily affected by the bloody episodes of successive wars in the area. While believers from different denominations continue to visit the place, it remains mainly visited by the Shia inhabitants of the village who strongly believe that the Nabi is their ultimate resort.

Wajih Abu Khalil (1998) – director of the school next to the maqâm – published a book 'El Qalayle, on the Prophet's Road and a Home for the Friends of God', placing his village on a sacred trail. According to biblical sources, Jesus Christ passed by Cana, Tyre, Sidon and some other villages in the area; therefore, he could have lived in or passed through Qalayle with his mother, visiting the house of his grandfather and where his grandfather is buried.

### **The maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa (Saint Peter)<sup>11</sup> in Chamaa: in the middle of medieval remains, a shrine is still active**

Not far from the southern border of Lebanon, about 6 km from the village of Qalayle, the village of Chamaa houses an interesting maqâm. This site overlooks Tyre and the region, and constitutes a useful observation post out over the coast. The population of Chamaa, who were exclusively Shiite, abandoned the village to live in cities or abroad. The original village was composed of a few houses built near a medieval fortified site dating from the period of the Crusades (12th century), which was then reinforced by the Mamluks (13th century) and the Ottomans (18th century).

Van de Velde saw in this site the Franc Montfort (a famous Crusader period fort), a thesis refuted by many travellers and researchers. Ernest Renan dates the site to the 16th-century. He speaks of 'Kalaat Schamma', a huge abandoned castle still inhabited by a few families (Renan, 1997 [1864], p. 688). The current remains attest to this dating, but Jean Claude Voisin suggests a more ancient origin in describing the general morphology of the fortifications that surround the hill (Voisin, 2009, p. 223). In the 18th century the Citadel became the property of the Al Sagheer family and was used as a residence and a military base, and in 2000 the General Directorate of Antiquities listed it on the national heritage list. The medieval castle was damaged in 2006 by Israeli bombings destroying its northern walls – which completely collapsed – as well as parts of its eastern walls.

Apart from the Citadel of Chamaa, a shrine exists which is dedicated to Cham'oun El Safa, identified as the Apostle Peter (Simon) who preached in the area in the 1st century. Simon, son of Jonas or Simon-Peter was a disciple of Jesus and also an Apostle. Born at the beginning of the Christian era in Galilee, according to tradition he died around AD 65 in Rome. He is considered as a saint not only by the Catholic and Orthodox churches under the name of Saint Peter, but also under the name of Cham'oun El Safa by the Muslims.

In the Muslim world, several mosques and zaouia are dedicated to him such as the oldest Chaldean Church in Mosul which dates from the 13th century. Many visitors that we have encountered on the site recognize this Nabi as a holy Christian saint full of graces that is also venerated by Muslims.

No source can accurately date the construction of the shrine, but according to oral tradition it was at least 1000 years ago. The maqâm is located in a large field housing a cemetery exclusively for the Safiyeddine family, considered as the *Siyyad*, descendants of the Prophet. Sayyed Ahmad Safiyeddine manages the maqâm nowadays. He asked the archaeologist Dr Hassan Badaoui to restore the site in 2000 and it was partially destroyed during the war of 2006 and subsequently restored in 2007 by the General Directorate of Antiquities, with help and important funds from the Emir of Qatar Mohammed Ben Khalifat. This donation was previously indicated by a commemorative plate which was removed in 2012.

At the entrance of the site, a model of the shrine is presented under glass. To one side a well called the 'well of the prophet' previously provided water to the inhabitants of the village and the Citadel. According to oral tradition, this well is bottomless and never empties of its miraculous water.

The 'Darih'<sup>12</sup> of the prophet is inside a stone building composed of several rooms surmounted by cupolas. It is covered by a wooden box, with a large cloth bearing the portrait of Abbas, half-brother of Husayn, which was probably offered to the shrine on the occasion of the commemoration of Aachoura<sup>13</sup> as with other banners. The fabric covering the grave is often raised by devotees, and reveals candles on the floor under the wooden box and a small 'mysterious' cavity giving access to the sacred soil of the tomb. The pilgrims take the *baraka* by lifting the veil of the *Darih* and putting their head in the hole, and they also take soil from the tomb for its blessings. The cavity entertains the imagination of believers who report various mysterious stories about incidences in the cavity. Some visitors have tried to introduce cameras that were damaged or disappeared mysteriously in the cavity; others tell that a camera filmed fragments of frescoes showing the presence of a prior church.

In the past, this shrine attracted a large and exclusively Shiite population. It was the subject of an important pilgrimage or '*Mawsim*'.<sup>14</sup> Once a year, in summer, pilgrims from the surrounding areas used to come in large numbers to the maqâm; they remained on the site for several days. However, with repeated instances of war, and the abandonment of the village by its inhabitants, this pilgrimage has almost entirely ceased to take place. Currently the maqâm is still the subject of regular pious visits (*ziyârât*).

Recently, officials of the place, affiliated to Hezbollah and the Amal party, installed a banner which reads: 'short life of the master of the maqâm', which, on several levels, is very significant for our research. Initially, the terms of the text would appear to resolve any doubts about the identification of the holy figure of the shrine as the Apostle Peter. But, even more, if the text establishes and presupposes a spiritual kinship, it tries to demonstrate the existence of an effective affiliation of blood between Christian and Muslim communities. A link is clearly established between the Nabi Cham'oun El Safa and the Virgin (it would be the son of her maternal uncle and the son of her paternal aunt



**Fig. 19.6.** The 'Darih' inside the Maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa in Chamaa.

so he would be related by his mother's and his father's side) and between Cham'oun El Safa and Jesus Christ (it would have been particularly close to Jesus Christ). But what is even more interesting and important is the establishment of a relationship with the lineage of the Twelve Shia Imams. On the other hand, the saint would be born in an area known as the 'Jalil El Umam' (Galilee of the Nations), or Cana of Galilee, located in Lebanon. Cana El Jalil is claimed as one of the other names of the Jabal Amel, the name given by the Shiites in South Lebanon. It is interesting to note the desire to put on the same level two appellations: the biblical name and the name given to the area by its Shiite inhabitants.

### **The Sacralization of Lebanon as the 'Holy Land' as a Dynamic for Patrimonialization**

It was during his pastoral visit to Lebanon in 1997 that Pope Jean Paul II delivered a quote which has been used repeatedly by Lebanese politicians and clerks: 'Lebanon is more than a country, Lebanon is a message'. This papal visit triggered a consensus for the development of religious tourism in Lebanon and instigated various initiatives for its progression. Since that time, such initiatives have sought to present Lebanon as a 'Land of Holiness', and have conceived of the 'Holy Land' as being a reality that should serve promotion strategies of religious tourism toward Lebanon.

The patrimonialization and the sacralization of the space are two processes involved in the valorization of South Lebanon. Concepts and practices



of patrimonialization in the Middle East were primarily imported from Europe during the last phase of the Ottoman empire and the mandate period. During the post-colonial era these concepts are going to be given new meanings, with different dimensions (religious, social and political). They will be reinterpreted again after the (so-called) war period in Lebanon (1975–1990). The patrimonialization of Cana and Qlayle, for example, will take a special turn because they are associated with war martyrs and bloody massacres.

Di Méo (2008) counts different milestones in the process of patrimonialization: heritage awareness; the presence of key active actors; and the implementation of conservation, exposure and valorization initiatives of heritage. Our fieldwork showed a development and a promotion of these sites at two different speeds: on the one hand some sites already have a reputation and the support of religious and governmental organizations such as the sanctuary of Saydet El Mantara and the site of Cana; and on the other hand, the sanctuaries such as the maqâms of Nabi 'Omran and Cham'oun El Safa are still waiting for recognition.

The local reconceptualization of sacred heritage is put forward by inhabitants and those involved in the public projects for sustainable religious tourism development. The dynamic between religious heritage and tourism should be investigated further to understand the policies and initiatives developed around these worship sites. A third pillar is to be also considered in this dynamic: the shared devotional practices and rituals related to these sites.

Through these pilgrimages sites we observed Christians and Muslims visiting saints side by side, praying side by side and undertaking the same rituals. In contrast with the codified religiosity of the mosque and the church, believers have developed a far less constrained religiosity, which some characterize as 'popular' through the 'ziyârât' (visits to shrines).

In Lebanon, shared pilgrimages spread throughout the country have contributed to maintaining a dialogue among the faithful even during some of the most difficult moments of war (Farra-Haddad, 2010). Pilgrims meet and share in a cordial atmosphere, without artifice, often far from the tension and anxiety of the Lebanese reality. Borders and boundaries between religions can disappear for the time of a visit, a *ziyârâ*. At these shared sanctuaries, an inter-religious conviviality is experienced that is favourable to the construction of national identities, in which many Lebanese have trouble investing themselves. A long debate exists around the difficulties to build a single national Lebanese identity (Kiwani, 1993; Azar, 1999; Rizk, 2001; Weber, 2007). Observations around the shared religious sites contribute to supporting faith in constructing a national identity, recognized by all religious communities. Visiting shrines, the faithful make common references to the Bible and the Qur'an and are proud to have common beliefs. We frequently hear statements like '*Nehna terikhna ouahad*' (Our history is the same) or '*Nehna min salli la nafes el anbiya*' (We pray for the same prophets). The 'faithful' seem to believe in one identity and a common heritage and the patrimonialization of different religious sites can be carried out by all the communities.

It would be interesting to look at issues of identity and also at the exploitation of this heritage valorization that passes through a dynamic carried by initiators



(authors, non-governmental organizations, policy-makers, etc.), but also applicants and domestic actors (local populations, tourists). A more in-depth reflection on the dynamics of territorial heritage claims could allow us to better understand and analyse the involvement of each of these actors and the role that they play in this valorization strategy.

The patrimonialization process is well established, but some sites are still waiting for their recognition and their promotion. For Halbwachs (2008) the creation and evolution of the pious traditions and the foundation of holy places depend upon the changing needs of the faithful, without necessarily taking into consideration the historicity of the testimonies. To what extent is the patrimonialization of the places of worship that we observed the result of the needs of stakeholders? Or is it really based on historical realities?

## Summary

This chapter provides reflection on the presentation and construction of South Lebanon as a Holy Land through four Christian and Muslim holy sites: the village of Cana, the sanctuary of the Virgin Mary of Maghdouche, the maqâm of Nabi 'Omran in Qlayle and the maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa in Chamaa. This reflection seeks to understand the wish to place these worship sites of South Lebanon in the frame of the biblical tradition. The Virgin, her son, her father and Saint Peter would have preached in, lived in and would have even been established in this region. Furthermore, a movement has emerged wishing to place Lebanon in the centre of the Holy Land. This movement attempts to recall that Lebanon is mentioned in the Bible more than 96 times and that Jesus Christ himself was Lebanon's first evangelizer. This claim is supported today by initiatives emanating from different organizations and supported by many scholars and authors.

This discussion seeks to understand the desire to integrate the religious sites in the biblical and evangelical traditions, supported by renewed interest towards these shrines and above all the establishment of facilities and programmes to organize visits to such sanctuaries.

## Discussion Questions

1. Consider the potential for the four religious sites in this chapter as potential sources of tourism in the region.
2. Discuss how different local initiatives are trying to relocate Lebanon as a part of the Holy Land.
3. Observe and review significant historical religious sites where we can observe pilgrimages and rituals shared by different religions or sects and how this demonstration of similar belief could be used to reshape the 'Holy Land'.
4. Discuss the development of religious tourism in a context of local and regional insecurity and explore how religious tourism can contribute to local development in South Lebanon.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Even if Lebanon was not the focal point of this sacred land, it was included in the route of the travellers toward the Holy Land.

<sup>2</sup> At the request of the Maronite Patriarchate in Bkerke, the 'Association for the Development of Pilgrimages and Religious Tourism' in Lebanon was created in 2007, bringing together rectors of shrines and travel agencies specializing in pilgrimages.

<sup>3</sup> The 'Lebanon, Holy Land' association chaired by Mrs Joyce Gemayel focuses its efforts on the Lebanese Cana, seeking to have it officially recognized by the Vatican as the biblical Cana.

<sup>4</sup> The project 'In the Footsteps of Jesus Christ in Lebanon' was initiated by the Maronite League in 2009. A team of specialists seeks to trace the pedestrian routes followed by Jesus Christ in South Lebanon.

<sup>5</sup> Confusion persists concerning the translation of 'Saydet el Mantara', recognized by some as 'Our lady of the Guard' and by others as the 'awaiting Lady'. Even the brochures of the Ministry use these names interchangeably. Proper terminology is without doubt the 'Waiting Lady' (the Arabic word 'natra' meaning waiting).

<sup>6</sup> By 'baraka' we mean spiritual impulses, visible marks of holiness, the blessings sent by God. This influx may originate from a place, a saint or an object.

<sup>7</sup> In most Biblical dictionaries, Cana of Galilee is identified as the shrine of Kefer Kenna in Palestine, an hour-and-a-half drive by road from Nazareth of Galilee; or it is identified as the town of Khirbet Kana near the Plain el Battouf, where lie the ruins of an ancient village. However, some researchers are attempting to identify the village of Cana in southern Lebanon as the place where the first miracle of Christ took place.

<sup>8</sup> Cana is referred to as a 'martyr city' of the Lebanon War: it was the scene of two massacres where a large number of its inhabitants were killed during Israeli bombardments (18 April 1996 to 30 July 2006).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.councilforsouth.gov.lb>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.olivier-russbach.com/site/64\\_qana\\_kana\\_cana.html](http://www.olivier-russbach.com/site/64_qana_kana_cana.html)

<sup>11</sup> Cham'oun is the equivalent of Sim'an. In French he became 'Simon'. It is therefore Simon Peter, who became Saint Peter, first bishop of Rome.

<sup>12</sup> The Darih is a saint's tomb, but in many shrines it can be a cenotaph (an empty tomb) symbolizing the presence of the saint. In the case of the maqâm of Cham'oun El Safa, opinions are divided; some are convinced that the saint was buried here but others dispute the existence of a real grave.

<sup>13</sup> The yearly commemoration by the Shia of the Karbala Battle.

<sup>14</sup> Mawsim (pl. Mawasim), literally 'season', is by extension a cyclic pilgrimage to the tomb of a saint or a prophet.

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## Case Study 9: The Creation of the Cults of SS Paul and Publius in Early Modern Malta

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### Introduction

The religious and military Order of the Knights of St John was given the Maltese islands as a fief in 1530. They established their headquarters on the then barren islands, in order to continue their fight against Islam. The Order realized the need to keep their European brethren and powers supporting their endeavours in the protection of the Catholic faith, and the fact that Malta is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles in relation to the shipwreck of St Paul on his way to Rome was providential for their political needs. After the initial years, the Order sought to increase the importance of this particular event, by helping to create a cult centred around the various places and traditions in connection with the presence of St Paul in Malta. Publius, who is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the *protos* of Roman Malta, was also elevated to a national patron saint, and this led to the establishment of another related cult in his honour.

In recent years, the local Church authorities have increased their participation in the tourism industry by offering their religious heritage to visitors and locals alike, in a better and modern way. This has led to a review of how these religious places are maintained and presented to the public.

In this chapter I will look at the issue from a historical point of view, and discuss how, since the 16th century, there was a concentrated effort to increase devotion towards the cult of St Paul and the subsequent creation of the cult of St Publius. This was meant to enhance the Order's prestige within the Catholic world, and their standing within the political world of Christendom. These same sacred places are still an integral part of the religious itineraries that are offered in Malta.

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Once we had come safely through, we discovered that the island was called Malta. The inhabitants treated us with unusual kindness. They made us all welcome by lighting a huge fire because it had started to rain and the weather was cold. Paul had collected a bundle of sticks and was putting them on the fire when a viper brought out by the heat attached itself to his hand. When the inhabitants saw the creature hanging from his hand they said to one another, 'That man must be a murderer; he may have escaped the sea, but divine justice would not let him live.' However, he shook the creature off into the fire and came to no harm, although they were expecting him at any moment to swell up or drop dead on the spot. After they had waited a long time without seeing anything out of the ordinary happen to him, they changed their minds and began to say he was a god.

In that neighbourhood there were estates belonging to the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius. He received us and entertained us hospitably for three days. It happened that Publius' father was in bed, suffering from fever and dysentery. Paul went in to see him, and after a prayer he laid his hands on the man and healed him. When this happened, the other sick people on the island also came and were cured; they honoured us with many marks of respect, and when we sailed they put on board the provisions we needed. At the end of three months we set sail in a ship that had wintered in the island; she came from Alexandria and her figurehead was the Twins.

(Acts 28: 1–11)

Every year, on 10 February, the above quote is read in all Roman Catholic churches of the Maltese islands. The day has been chosen to commemorate the providential shipwreck of Paul and his companions in AD 60, and it is also a public holiday. This event is taken as the baptism of the islands to Christianity. The Maltese Roman Catholic Church boasts that it owes its origins to apostolic times, and this is shown in so many different ways: the large number of churches that can be seen all over the islands, various church institutions forming part of the social fabric of the local population, and the still vibrant participation of locals in celebrating the religious festivals that are held throughout the islands. The various feasts that are held are still very authentic, and any visitor to Malta can realize this, as there is more than just putting on a performance for the tourists.

Among the various cults present in Malta, there is the Pauline cult, which in recent years has seen an increase in its promotion as part of Maltese Christian heritage. It has also been taken on board by the Malta Tourism Authority, and there has been an increase of organized tours coming to Malta on the theme of the 'Footsteps of St Paul'. These tours are usually part of an international itinerary, but it has led to a better understanding and appreciation of what can be provided to the discerning visitor. In 2001, St Pope John Paul II made his 93rd apostolic trip outside Italy. He visited Syria, Greece and Malta, with the theme being 'In the footsteps of St Paul'. Yet, this does not mean that the Pauline religious trail is a modern introduction.

The Pauline cult in Malta has a long and varied history. Since medieval times a number of foreigners visited Malta and places associated with the stay of St Paul. Traditions were formulated during this time, while a number of churches dedicated to St Paul were established. Locations started to be associated with

this providential event, and they are still part of the local folklore. The location of some of the churches is tied to one tradition or another, linked to the stay of St Paul in Malta. This providential shipwreck has also been imprinted on the Christian heritage of Malta.

When John Paul II alighted at Malta International Airport for the first time in 1990, he was welcomed by the then Minister of Tourism, Michael Refalo. The Pope said: 'You are no doubt grateful to Paul, because he gave Malta its first great advertisement for tourism and inscribed in Holy Scripture praise for the hospitality of the Maltese.'

(Serracino-Inglott, 2010)

Throughout the centuries there has been a constant addition of Pauline traditions connected with the real and presumed activities of the Apostle. Yet, due to the historical development of the island's history, this cult seems to have died a natural death after the loss of the islands by the Byzantines to the Aghlabite Arabs. This was to be revived first during the early medieval times, and more aggressively from the late 16th century onwards.

Today, the cult of St Paul is considered as part of the national Christian heritage and characteristic of the Maltese islands. It forms part of an identity that has matured throughout the previous centuries, and given rise to another important tourism sector that is still being tapped into by the authorities.<sup>1</sup> The most recent Tourism Policy published by the Ministry of Tourism for 2012–2016 states that religious tourism could be an important niche market, which needs to be addressed. One of the suggestions is the creation and better marketing of a St Paul's itinerary (Anon., 2012), among other routes and themes.

The local Church authorities have also realized the need to participate in the tourism sector, by opening up their various properties. The availability of European Union funds has seen a number of Church properties applying for grants, and the successful bids have restored old priories and works of arts, as well as opening up new museums. It is hoped that this momentum will be taken by other church institutions and new and creative ideas will also be in the offing.

The Malta Tourism Authority is very conscious of this important segment within the tourism industry. It has developed good contacts with various tour operators that specialize in this market; they participate in specialized tourism fairs and publish material promoting the rich religious heritage of Malta.

## **Religious Tourism Experience in Malta**

Religion and pilgrimage are an integral part of the tourism industry. Various authors have indicated the importance of this sector for world tourism (Vukonic, 1996; Timothy and Olsen, 2006). It has even been claimed that religious travelling must have been the earliest type of tourism recorded (Kaelber, 2011). According to Sagaón, 'When Man starts to worship his Gods and shows gratitude to them, he has to travel to holy places to pray' (Estrada-Gonzalez, 2006). Early humans were nomads and in order to survive they hunted and collected



fruit. It is believed that they visited caves where they left their primitive depictions of animals and human figures, probably as an act of praying to the deities for divine help, or in thanksgiving for the success of the hunt. The early agriculturalists sought divine intervention for their survival. Some of these communities built shrines and temples. The oldest free-standing buildings in the world are located in Malta, and these prehistoric temples (dating to around 3500 BC) are also part of this religious fervour that does not seem to have died out. The movement of these people seems to have continued for the following millennia. Travelling to sacred sites is still part of the modern world, and various are the sacred sites around the world that attract millions of travellers.

Tourism itself is also seen as a 'sacred journey' (Inkson and Minnaert, 2012), wherein the traveller is seeking comfort in their surroundings, understanding of themselves, and fulfilment of personal dreams and wishes. The combination of visits to sacred sites enhances the experience. At the same time it has also been noted that not all visitors to sacred sites will actually be religiously minded, as they will be more interested in observing the rituals and admiring the artistic and architectural heritage present on the sites.

Part of the experience is the authenticity of the place and rituals that are organized. According to Pine and Gilmore, 'now more than ever, the authentic is what consumers really want' (Pine and Gilmore, 2007). Everything that the traveller and visitor experiences, whether it is the smell, the touch, the sound, the sight or the taste, needs to be authentic (Knudsen and Waade, 2010), and this can be seen in Malta, where the 'product' is based on the locals performing their annual rituals. Wherever the original rituals have been lost, or discontinued, the local authorities have seen to it that these are revived. There has been an increase in the organization of historical and folklore re-enactments, and today these have become part of the annual cultural activities. It has also led to a number of regeneration programmes in various parts of the islands (Zammit, 2013). Yet, the more authentic activities that have been organized by the various villages in Malta, for the last couple of centuries, are religious in character. These have retained their authenticity, they have continued to be organized year in and year out for the benefit of the locals, and it is only these last few years that some of these rituals have become better organized. As it has already been discussed in Zammit (2009), these pageants and rituals are for real, as they are held by the local villagers even when no tourists are present.

## **The Cults of SS Paul and Publius in Malta**

The advent of St Paul in Malta around AD 60, as recorded in the Acts of the Apostles, has placed Malta within the early years of the history and spread of Christianity. The centuries that followed this important event would help to fashion the later perception of Maltese mentality towards their religious heritage. The only period when the islands were not under the rule of a Christian power was between the late 9th century and the early 12th century when they were under Arab control. The conquest of the islands by the Normans in 1091, who crossed over from neighbouring Sicily, initiated the slow re-Christianization of the Maltese islands, and the subsequent creation of the myth that the islands

had never lost their faith. An important event occurred in 1530, when the islands were given as a fief by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) to the Religious and Military Order of the Knights of St John. This was to be the turning point in the consolidation of the cult of St Paul, and the establishment of a national cult towards St Publius.

Archaeological and documented evidence points to the presence of churches dedicated to St Paul at least as early as the 12th century. The earlier Cathedral at Mdina is believed to have already been erected by the Normans, at least as early as the 12th century. St Paul's Grotto was already a pilgrimage site during medieval times. It served as the main parish for Rabat, and attached to it was a cemetery with a number of small and private chapels. The fact that foreigners came to Malta to be buried in this holy site indicates that there already was some kind of international knowledge about St Paul's Grotto. By the 16th century there were at least five other churches in Malta and another four in Gozo that were dedicated to St Paul (Borg, 2008). At that time, the cult of St Paul, although still not as widespread as it was to later become, was still more popular in Malta than in Sicily and Rome collectively. Yet there does not seem to have been any cult regarding St Publius until the beginning of the 17th century (Borg, 2008), as no church dedicated to him is recorded.

During the 16th century there was a marked increase in devotion towards St Paul. More churches were erected and altarpieces added to existing churches. The figure of St Paul started to be included in paintings together with other saints, with him always depicted as the divine protector of the Maltese (Borg, 2009). St Publius was still unrecorded throughout the 16th century.

The main attraction for pilgrims visiting shrines in Malta connected with St Paul was the grotto, located just outside the medieval fortified city of Mdina (See [Fig. 20.1.](#)). Already documented in 1366 (Wettinger, 1990) as the place where St Paul stayed while wintering in Malta, the place attracted even papal attention, when in the 15th century the Pope granted indulgences to those who visited the grotto on the feast day.

Since medieval times, St Paul was considered as the spiritual father of the Maltese. The Cathedral of Malta was dedicated to the Conversion of St Paul, and a number of small churches were also dedicated to this saint. A number of places were also indicated as being associated with the 3-month stay of St Paul in Malta, and a number of legends and traditions were created. The present 17th-century Cathedral in Mdina has an inscription above its main entrance stating that Paul is the spiritual father of the Maltese, thus confirming this long-held tradition. Foreigners visiting Malta during medieval times were taken to places associated with Paul's stay. Besides the grotto, pilgrims visited sites indicated by the local people as being where Paul stayed, carried out the first miracles, where the shipwreck occurred and other similar places.

Pilgrims made sure that they obtained a religious souvenir of their visit, and this is considered as 'the most widely accepted origin of souvenirs' (Timothy, 2005). Visits to the grotto ended with the procurement of a memento from the actual sacred place – pieces of rock. It was believed that rock chippings taken from the grotto were able to neutralize any poison. These rock chippings were distributed freely, and they were usually accompanied by a certificate to confirm their origin (Buhagiar, 2007). Besides a piece of rock from the grotto,



**Fig. 20.1.** The three patron saints of Malta: St Paul in the middle; to his right is St Publius; to the left is St Agatha. These effigies are to be seen above the main entrance (on the inner side) of the medieval capital of Malta, Mdina. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)

people used to take fossil sharks' teeth as souvenirs. The origin of this was the story that when St Paul landed in Malta he was bitten by a snake, the locals waited for him to die, and when nothing happened he was believed to be a god. This led to the establishment of a tradition that no snakes in Malta have any poison, as it was neutralized by the action of St Paul. Amulets with these fossil sharks' teeth embedded in them were common in medieval Europe, and it is believed that the majority of these originated from Malta (Zammit-Maempel, 1975). Interestingly, although what was being collected were fossilized sharks' teeth, it was believed that these were snakes' tongues! It was not only the illiterate people that believed in these traditions, but also very erudite visitors to the islands. In 1588 the German scholar Hieronymus Megiser visited Malta. When he published his travel accounts in 1606, in one of his chapters about Malta he writes about the devotion and the cult of St Paul at that time. He mentions various locations which are still associated with the visit by St Paul to Malta and he also mentions that a high-ranking Knight of the Order of St John donated him a considerable number of these souvenirs (Friggieri and Freller, 1998).

## Legends and Traditions

It is no wonder that a number of legends and traditions were created and associated with places reputedly connected with the arrival and stay of St Paul in Malta.

There are places associated with where Paul carried out his first miracle, where he met the main Roman officer in Malta, the first village where he stopped, the location of the bonfire that was set up by the local people to help the survivors from the shipwreck, the place from where he preached and was heard over wide distances, and the location from where he embarked on his way to Rome. In 1536 the earliest description of Malta was published in Lyons (France). This was written in Latin by Jean Quintin d'Autun, the secretary to the first Grand Master of the Order in Malta. In one of the sections he mentions the old tradition of where the shipwreck is believed to have occurred, the presence of shrines and churches, and the belief by the locals that St Paul was actually shipwrecked in Malta (Vella, 1980). The small islet at the entrance to a bay in the north-east of Malta is still held by many to be the location where the shipwreck occurred, although there is no proof of the theory (See [Fig. 20.2](#)).

Paul is considered as the spiritual father of the Maltese; thus throughout the centuries he was invoked during times of calamities. He is considered to have helped the Maltese to fend off attacks by pirates in 1429, when he was seen descending from heaven and attacking the invaders. It is also said that St Paul was invoked whenever there was a plague epidemic in Malta.

These events have become part of the folklore of the nation. Churches have been erected, and richly decorated. Statues are located near the places connected with the traditions, and a large stone statue was even erected on the islet which for centuries has been indicated as the location where the shipwreck occurred.



**Fig. 20.2.** St. Paul's Bay. At the entrance of St Paul's Bay there can be noticed a small islet (which looks more like two islets) where it is reputed that St Paul was shipwrecked. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)



## St Paul's Grotto and the Order of St John

The arrival of the religious and international Order of the Knights of St John was to be a turning point for Malta. The islands were ceded to this Order by the Holy Roman Emperor Charles V (Charles I of Spain) in 1530 against the annual payment of a falcon. It is believed that the Order was not happy with their new headquarters in Malta, and they would have preferred to return back to their island home of Rhodes. The eventual siege of 1565, which resulted in the defeat of the Ottoman troops, sent by Sultan Suleiman, led to the building of a new fortified city – Valletta. The international reputation of the Order was assured, but now they started thinking of attracting Christian pilgrims to the islands. A number of foreign visitors were lured to visit Malta because of the military exploits of the Order. At the same time the political needs of the Order meant that they would also try to increase the religious and pilgrimage aspect of their headquarters.

The internationalization of the cult of St Paul in Malta was to be taken up seriously by the Order at the turn of the 17th century. The French Grand Master, Alof de Wignacourt, was to be the prime mover behind the Order's involvement in the advancement of this cult. It was during his reign that a Spanish hermit, Juan de Venegas, started to live in the grotto where it was held that St Paul had resided during his unexpected stay in Malta. It has been said that this hermit had a fervent and fanatic zeal to promote the cult of St Paul more widely (Azzopardi and Freller, 2010). Although there have been no documents discovered to prove that there was some kind of an agreement between the Spanish hermit and the Order of St John, it is known that soon after the arrival of the hermit in Malta, the Order ordered that he would be given a weekly allowance by the public hospital located in the area.

The Order's support to Juan de Venegas was incredible. He was dispatched to visit Italy and Spain to look at how pilgrimage sites were administered. He was welcomed by the Order's ambassadors, and met Pope Paul V, from whom he obtained a number of holy relics. It is also interesting to note that the same pope gave permission for Juan de Venegas to look after the grotto, this holy shrine.

All of this was happening during the magistracy of Grand Master Alof de Wignacourt. The same grand master donated money for the embellishment of the grotto and the immediate area where more altars were set up. His generosity did not end with this site. He also paid for the rebuilding of two churches associated with St Paul in Malta. The church at St Paul's Bay was completely rebuilt at a different location, due to the building of a coastal tower where it originally stood. This church was supposed to be marking where the Maltese had put up the bonfire to welcome the survivors from the shipwreck. Another church, which was reputedly built over the country house of the Roman chief of Malta at the time, Publius, was rebuilt by the French Grand Master. It is believed that this was the beginning of a cult towards this personality, Publius.

Local tradition states that Publius was converted to Christianity after seeing his father healed by Paul, and was to become the first bishop of Malta. Later on, Publius is said to have become the Bishop of Athens where he was martyred (Catholic Online, undated). Until this very day there is still controversy about

this saint – whether he was Maltese, and whether the martyred saint was the same Publius that welcomed Paul in Malta.

At the beginning of the 17th century, the grotto became the centre of an increased devotion and religious fervour. With the increase in pilgrims, it was felt that there was the need to enlarge the praying and sacred area. More altars were added to the grotto, and eventually a proper church was built above the underground area. The church was dedicated to St Publius, the person whom the authorities decided to elevate to the altars, even though there was no documentary evidence that the main man of the island during the shipwreck of St Paul was the same Publius who was martyred in Athens.

Eventually, a small cult of St Publius was created, even though this never actually took off. A number of altar paintings were produced, and even placed within the Cathedral at Mdina; other altars were erected in other countryside churches; small churches were also built and placed under his protection, and one of these was to become the parish church of Floriana, the suburb of Valletta.

## Holy Relics

Christian relics and reliquaries from Antiquity and the Middle Ages provide material evidence for religion. The religion of relics was in fact quite various, involving a system of interrelated practices with respect to holy people and places, together with the popular theories and theological reflection that explained and justified those practices. At the centre of the practices lay a basic confidence that matter – fragments of bodies, oil, water, even bits of stone and dust – could contain and convey spiritual power. The word ‘relics’ indicated ‘left behind’. These could be the saint’s physical remains, but they could also be personal effects or things that had come into contact with the saint’s body. Matter gained holiness through contact with other holy matter, like a sacred contagion. Such matter might, in fact, gain its holiness throughout mere proximity to holy places where holy events had occurred. And all of this matter might provide access to healing or divine protection, guarding against uncertainty both in this life and the next.

(Krueger, 2011)

Touching, praying to and visiting relics has always been an integral part of the religious experience. This has led to the establishment of a number of important cult centres associated with the presence of these relics. The earliest Christian relics were the bodies of martyred saints. Initially, the Church authorities were against the removal of bodies from their burial place, although it was later accepted that these relics could be placed on altars for public veneration. These graves became the centre of devotions, which led to people travelling long distances to visit, pray and seek miracles. The authorities gave indulgences to anyone visiting these sacred sites, which led to an increase in visitors. It is also important to note that saints’ graves, or locations associated with the life of saints, were not only the place where miracles could happen, but were also a source of spiritual authority (Angenendt, 2011).

The devotion towards relics and holy places was therefore quite established throughout Christian Europe. No wonder that the Order of St John had a large



collection of holy relics themselves. It is known that since their establishment in the Holy Land in the 11th century, the Order were avid collectors of holy relics. These relics also attracted a number of pilgrims to visit the locations wherever the Order was established. It is known that the relics held by the Order while at Rhodes were visited by a large number of pilgrims (Luttrell, 1989). Eventually, after the loss of Rhodes and their subsequent settlement in Malta, some of these relics found themselves in Malta. After the building of the Conventual Church of St John in Valletta, the Order moved their holy relics to this church.

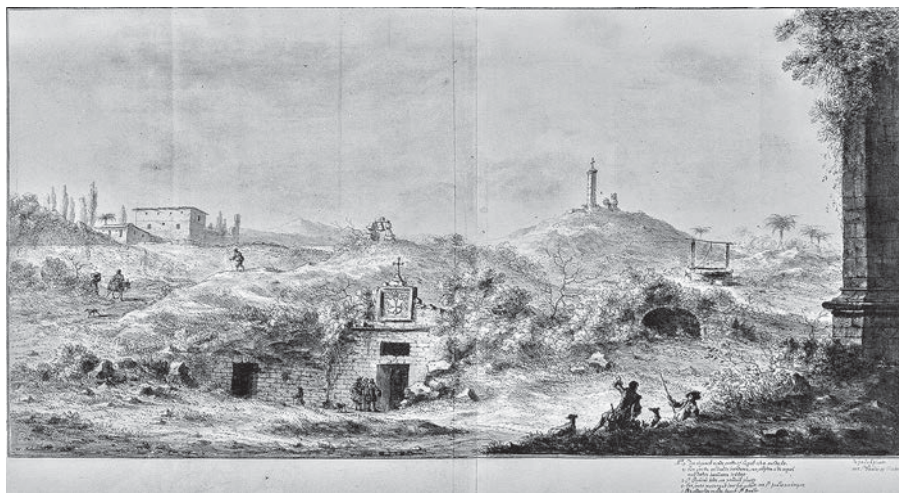
The need to have relics to attract pilgrims is well known. Thus, the work of the Spanish hermit Juan de Venegas at the beginning of the 17th century must have been a well-thought-out strategy. His work was helped by the Jesuit Order who were instrumental in increasing devotion, knowledge and enthusiasm towards the cult of St Paul in Malta (Buhagiar, 2007). When Juan de Venegas was visiting Rome he also met Pope Paul V, and when he returned to Malta, the Spanish hermit brought with him a number of holy relics. Although these relics had nothing to do with St Paul, their deposition within St Paul's Grotto meant that the place was becoming a pilgrimage centre. A holy relic with a Pauline connection was obtained in 1620 from Duke Ferdinand of Mantua (Freller, 1996).

Through the generosity of Grand Master Wignacourt, a college of priests was established, with their main job being to cater for the care of three Pauline shrines in Malta, namely St Paul's Grotto, St Paul's Shipwreck Church at St Paul's Bay, and St Paul's Church at Burmarrad. Next to St Paul's Grotto a spacious building was constructed where priests had their meeting rooms and accommodation. The same building passed through a lot of changes throughout the following years, and today it has been turned into a museum and centre for Pauline traditions.

## St Paul's Grotto and Wignacourt Museum

The establishment of St Paul's Grotto as a centre of devotion and pilgrimage was both a religious act and part of the political reasoning that the Knights of the Order of St John consciously decided upon. (See [Figs. 20.3](#) and [20.4](#)) Medieval Europe had a number of international pilgrimage itineraries and it is well known that these were famous, well visited, and attracted a large number of believers. Some of these itineraries are still part of modern religious itineraries. Considering that Malta was on the fringe of the European mainland, and, one can also say, set in a hostile Mediterranean Sea, it was very difficult to have a pilgrimage site that would be a major attraction for Europeans.

During the second half of the 16th century, after the end of the Council of Trent, the Jesuit Order sought to increase this devotion towards St Paul, and his connection to the island of Malta. Interest in Malta had already increased after the successful events of the Great Siege of 1565. European powers donated money towards the building of the new city, Valletta. Others provided help in various other ways. The Order proclaimed Malta as the bulwark of Christendom, with an aim of highlighting the defence of Christian Europe from the attacks of the Ottoman Empire. Thus, together with the presence of



**Fig. 20.3.** St Paul's Grotto and environs from a painting by Willem Schellinks (1627–1678). (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)



**Fig. 20.4.** Interior of St Paul's Grotto. St Paul's Grotto is reputed to have been the abode of the saint during his stay in Malta. This site is considered as being the location from where the early Christianization of Malta started. Today it is considered as a national shrine, and important personalities (like Pope St John Paul II and Pope Benedict XVI) have been taken to visit. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)

rich Pauline locations and the military aspect of Christian Europe against the Ottomans, the Order was trying to make use of a religious itinerary to increase their own prestige. They felt it necessary to be associated with an important 1st-century shrine, and be held as protectors of the cult centre.

The establishment of this religious centre in Rabat, near the grotto (the traditional place where St Paul stayed during his visit to Malta), led also to the establishment of the cult of St Publius. The latter is mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the Roman *protos* of Malta. It is also indicated that he was among the first to be converted to the new religion. Eventually, Publius was traditionally held to have been the first bishop of Malta. However, his cult appears to have been invented at the beginning of the 17th century by the Order of St John.

In recent years funds were acquired by the authorities managing this Pauline site, who set about to restore the building and reorganize the museum on modern lines. The museum items were restored, and exhibited professionally; new light installations were installed; the building was restored; new areas were opened; and an audio guide was made to offer a better experience to individual visitors. The success of this modernization can be seen in the increase of visitors.

## Present Day

Today, the cult of St Paul is part of the Maltese national identity. The 10th of February is considered as a public holiday, and the Church proclaims that day as the baptism of the islands and its inhabitants. Various are the places that are still connected with the stay of St Paul in Malta, whether dating back centuries or else of recent addition. There are no local doubts about whether St Paul was shipwrecked in Malta or not. The only debate is the identification of the actual shipwreck site. This centuries-old tradition has been taken up by the local authorities to promote Malta as a pilgrimage site, wherein itineraries called 'In the Footsteps of St Paul' are offered. These itineraries can either be based on local routes and places, or else combined with other countries. International tours have been created taking in places such as Cyprus, Malta, Sicily and Southern Italy.

The modern itineraries that can be offered in Malta are still in their infancy, and there is a lot to offer:

- The modern traveller wants more than just a visit to the traditional places associated with holy people. They tend to seek experience, authenticity and spiritual satisfaction. According to Østergaard and Christensen (2010) religious sites require 'individual strategies promoting intensity, authenticity, intimacy, relationality and spirituality'.
- The modern interest in authentic sites, religious tourism and the association of sites with the presence of saints need to be taken into account by the local authorities to increase their commitment towards religious tourism and pilgrimage.
- It is also well known that modern pilgrimage has changed. It is different from the medieval mentality of a purely religious pilgrimage but rather there are more factors to be taken into consideration.

The local Church authorities have already restored, renovated and opened museums, thus offering a modern way to appreciate the local heritage. There

is the added advantage of the small size of Malta, and therefore there is never the need to waste too much time travelling from one site to another. A concentrated effort by all concerned will result in more people knowing of the product available, with the eventual increase of visitors to Malta with religious tourism as their main aim. It has also been suggested that Malta could form part of the Council of Europe Cultural Route 'In the Footsteps of St Paul' as this would help to market the local traditions and the local places associated with St Paul, as well as placing Malta on a particular cultural route which is very much religious in concept.

The pilgrimage experience is also being developed by the Church authorities. Nowadays it is believed that tourists are looking for something else rather than the entertainment aspect only. As has already been indicated, 'there are many complex reasons why people elect to travel' (Olsen and Timothy, 2011), and this has been taken on board by the local authorities to try and entice pilgrims and religious tourists to visit the various places associated with the stay of St Paul in Malta. The key attraction is not St Publius, who is more of a local cult figure, but rather the internationally known St Paul, whose teachings and travels are part of the early history and spread of Christianity. The overhaul of the Wignacourt Museum is a step in the right direction. The combination of a visit to a baroque building filled with a good number of ecclesiastical heritage items and a visit to a grotto where St Paul is said to have stayed while in Malta, and which was visited by so many different personalities throughout history, is seen as the ideal place for such a religious experience. At the same time the ever-present dilemma emerges once more – how much success are the authorities ready to accept? The number of visitors has increased dramatically since the reopening. The combination of various items on offer has brought the necessary numbers – the religious tourist is being satisfied; now there needs to be attention paid to taking care of the pilgrim.

This is a great opportunity for the local authorities to actually push forward the idea of religious tourism in Malta, and eventually an increase in numbers of pilgrims visiting the various religious and sacred sites on the island. There needs to be a combined effort to bring together the various stakeholders. The organization of religious themed walks should be offered in order to provide the necessary set-up for more visitors to these religious places. This also needs the cooperation of the local Church authorities, the local councils and the central government, a combination of authorities which will help in making a success of such a project (Figs 20.5 and 20.6).

## Summary

The arrival of the Order of St John to Malta in 1530 was to be the catalyst in the evolution and formation of the cult of St Paul within an international context. The grotto was brought to the attention of the popes and this resulted in obtaining privileges and indulgences for all those who visited the site. The Order of St John managed to take over the grotto, and this led to an involvement that was to see enhancement of the sacred place, the decoration of the interior,





**Fig. 20.5.** The processional statue of St Paul, being carried shoulder high during the feast day of 10 February. The statue is enthusiastically welcomed by the parishioners and other devotees of the saint. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)



**Fig. 20.6.** Parishioners awaiting the statue of St Publius, the Roman Governor of Malta during the time of St Paul, and reputed to have been baptized and chosen as the first bishop of Malta. (Photo courtesy of Daniel Cilia.)

as well as the establishment of a College of Conventual Chaplains, to take care of all the religious functions associated with the three Pauline sites.

A steady increase of visitors to Malta during the winter months shows that the marketing plan by the Maltese authorities to increase cultural tourism is bearing fruit. The island still needs to attract and advertise more the possibilities of having pilgrims visiting the island. Local people do not tend to organize

pilgrimages to the sites as they can be reached at any time of the day. Locals tend to organize pilgrimages that take them to the other side of the island. There is a more visible devotion towards 'Our Lady', under her various titles, rather than to any particular saint. Therefore, while devotion towards St Paul exists, it is not linked with the organization of pilgrimages, especially by the locals. The establishment of a marketing plan to disseminate information about the cultural heritage associated with the cults of these two saints, and particularly that of St Paul, is needed. These places can be used by the local Church authorities to increase awareness of the antiquity of Christianity in Malta. This can also be used as a 'tool for the strengthening and dissemination of Christian beliefs' (Vukonic, 2011) to visitors to these places.

## Discussion Questions

1. How did the Knights of Saint John propose to increase the number of visitors to Malta?
2. Discuss the importance and association of souvenirs at holy sites.
3. What are the main motivations for worship at holy sites?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of June 2013 the Malta Tourism Authority published a 20-page supplement entitled *The Sacred Islands in the Heart of the Mediterranean*. This was distributed with *Universe*, a Catholic newspaper in the UK, which is the biggest tourist market for Malta. It encourages visitors to follow the footsteps of St Paul, among other religious activities (Anon., 2013).

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# 21

## Case Study 10: Takaful: To Explore the Market Need for Hajj Travel Insurance

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### Introduction

The importance of travel insurance is well understood by the Western traveller; however, many Muslim pilgrims travelling to the Islamic holy places do not take out travel insurance as they believe it is against their religion or are simply unaware of its importance. This chapter discusses these issues.

The chapter begins with an explanation of the most important journey in a Muslim's life, the hajj. Possible reasons are explored as to why Muslims do not take out insurance and an analysis of Islamic business principles and the Islamic insurance principle of takaful is made. A comparison is made between Western classic insurance and Islamic insurance, followed by a case study of the Takaful International insurance company based in Bahrain.

### Hajj/Umrah

Muslims have been performing pilgrimages to several holy places and shrines around the world for the last 1400 years as part of their religion. They have been travelling to religious destinations in Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and in other parts of the world. However, the main pilgrimage that Muslims must perform is the one to the holy city of Mecca (Makkah), Saudi Arabia, and is known as the *hajj* or *umrah* (minor hajj). For Muslims, the hajj is the fifth and final pillar of Islam. It is the journey that every sane adult Muslim must undertake at least once in their lives if they can afford it and are physically able. Every year around three million Muslims converge on Mecca. They visit a shrine in the city

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known as the *Kabbah*, built by Ibrahim (Abraham) and Isma'il (Ishmael) at the command of Allah (God). It is a place for all who want to reaffirm their faith.

The umrah is an extra, optional pilgrimage and can be performed at most times during the year, whereas the hajj has to be performed at a specific time. Although the umrah includes some of the rituals of hajj, they are shortened and there are fewer of them.

To perform hajj the pilgrims have to go through a number of stages during the 6 days of hajj. The climax of the hajj occurs on the 9th day of the Dhul-Hijjah, in the 12th month of the Islamic year, the Arafah. The pilgrims perform the following duties during the 6 days of the Dhul-Hijjah. On the first day of the hajj, pilgrims travel out of Mecca towards Mina, a small uninhabited village east of the city. During the second day, the 9th of Dhul-Hijjah, pilgrims leave Mina for the Plain of Arafat for the wuquf, the standing, the central rite of the hajj.

The festival of hajj is not placed in one area or city but is spread over a number of towns and cities in Saudi Arabia. The pilgrims start their journey from Mecca on to Mina, Muzdalifah and Arafat and vice versa over the 6-day period.

Muslims travel to Mecca in various ways from all parts of the world – by air, sea, car and on foot – to perform this spiritual pilgrimage. The pilgrims feel unanimous in the view that nothing can quite prepare them for the sheer beauty of the experience and the overwhelming feeling of humbleness that overcomes them during the pilgrimage of hajj. One pilgrim called Aysha reflected:

I hope if it's not closeness to God I hope I've learned how I can become closer, how I can become more sincere with myself. I think that's most important because you have to be very honest with yourself about who you are and where you want to be and how you want to be. And I think it's only then you can get close to anyone else. In terms of spirituality you need to really know your soul to be able to know how you can get closer to Allah.

(BBC, 2006)

The British Museum between 26 January and 15 April 2012 presented a key exhibition called 'Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam'. It charted the history of the personal journey of Muslims to the pilgrimage of hajj. In the exhibition beautiful articles including historical and contemporary art, textiles and manuscripts all told the story of the unchanged sacred rituals since the time of Prophet Muhammad in the 7th century AD. For those who were not able to attend the exhibition, or want to learn more about hajj, the hajj virtual project captures the legacy of 'Hajj: Journey to the Heart of Islam' and other interesting items from the exhibition. As part of the exhibition Muslim pilgrims were able to contribute to the virtual project by telling their own personal spiritual experiences of the hajj journey. One such moving account is made by Amirah Choudhury from Hull, UK:

It is an amazing indescribable feeling being present in the house of Allah. I was overwhelmed with emotion when I saw the Ka'ba for the first time, I could not

believe that I was really there and felt it was a dream! I felt truly blessed for being given such an opportunity! Everything felt so peaceful. I was united with my brothers and sisters from all over the world. I had never felt such a feeling of unity previous to this. Leaving Makkah was heartbreaking. Only Allah knows when I will be able to go again, I just pray Allah blesses me and my family with that chance soon.

(British Museum, 2012)

These stories are truly amazing and there are thousands more like them. But the hajj and umrah are not an easy journey and carry enormous risks for the pilgrim. The hajj in particular is fraught with hardship, risk and danger from beginning to end. The sheer number of people gathering in a small place for a short period of time presents enormous challenges for the organizers and the pilgrims. As Muslims arrive from all over the world through various means there is the risk of missing the transportation, loss of baggage and valuables, or becoming ill, injured and even dying on this journey. In fact, every year several hundred Muslims die from incidents ranging from stampede, sickness and transportation accidents to fire. In the 2004 hajj 244 pilgrims died as a result of a stampede while several hundred were injured in the incident (CNN, 2004).

With so much risk and danger involved it would be common sense to take out travel insurance for the purpose of this journey. However, few may take out insurance and these are mainly Muslims from the Western countries, while the majority do not.

## Why Do Muslims Not Take Out Travel Insurance?

Insurance generally does not play a big part in a Muslim's life, customs and beliefs. Everything, according to common beliefs, is in the hands of God and He alone is the sustainer and protector of all creatures. In fact this somewhat resigned view does not contradict basic Islamic beliefs, but these also emphasize the exertion of human effort which helps to create a good standard of living without going against God's will.

Moreover, in the past there was only the Western type of insurance available and this effectively did not meet the needs of Muslims without violating their beliefs. Therefore, most Muslims were unwilling to enter into such transactions except for car insurance, which was considered unavoidable as it was strictly imposed by the power of law.

Non-Islamic types of insurance also targeted segments of people in the Muslim world who are interested in insurance regardless of its incompatibility with the Sharia principles. This segment represents a minority in most Muslim countries and advertising campaigns are oriented to these people only. This can be observed in the language of the advertisement, which is usually English, though the language of the Muslim world is mainly Arabic. Therefore there is a need for Islamic insurance and the market potential for it can be realized from the Muslim population around the world. In order to understand Islamic insurance we also need to examine Islamic business principles.

## Muslim Populations Around the World

Islam is a global phenomenon and its influence on society and the economy is ubiquitous. In Africa, Islam is the most dominant religion followed by Christianity, and over 53% of the population is Muslim. In Asia, where Islam is the second most popular religion after Hinduism, over 32% of the population abide by Islamic principles. Muslims also comprise approximately 7% of the European population. The percentage of the Muslim population in North America is 1.71% and in South America it is 0.42%. It is noteworthy that in 2014, 2.08 billion Muslims were living in 184 different countries, comprising nearly one third of the world's population. The global Muslim population is growing by approximately 1.84% per year (Muslim Population, 2014).

## Islamic Business Principles

Many Muslim countries have increasingly persuaded companies to operate businesses under the stringent guidelines of Islamic principles that emphasize equality in wealth distribution and shared responsibility among the participants in business transactions. According to Muslim laws, businesses are discouraged from engaging in business activities which have uncertain outcomes and they can expect predetermined gains from financial transactions like interest on deposits or loans. Under the Islamic laws interest cannot be charged from individuals or companies taking out the loan in that country. These principles of operation are quite different from those prevailing in Western society. Those who are unfamiliar with these principles may falsely conclude that Islam does not promote profit-oriented business transactions. In fact, Islamic principles do encourage people to engage in business transactions as long as they can expect a predetermined return, even when the outcomes of such transactions are somewhat uncertain.

This encouragement became even stronger with the rapid developments in industrial infrastructure in Islamic countries beginning in the early 1970s. As a result, numerous financial services companies were incorporated locally in those countries and currently conduct business at home and abroad. A number of Western financial services companies have already entered, or plan to enter, the Islamic market (e.g. Citibank, Credit Suisse, HSBC Bank, etc.).

## Islamic Insurance

Takaful, an Arabic word meaning 'guaranteeing each other', denotes insurance, but approved specifically under Islamic jurisprudence or Sharia guidelines. It represents the concept of insurance based on mutual cooperation and the solidarity of people participating in a *takaful* scheme.

There was a need to develop a marketing strategy for takaful (insurance) because traditional insurance had certain features that contradicted some of the essential values of an Islamic financial contract. Muslims are directed by their

faith to follow a path of righteousness in pursuing the activities of their daily lives; for example, gambling and exploitation are strictly forbidden. In Islam what is called *riba* or usury is considered an extreme form of exploitation. Also, charging interest may not in itself be exploitative but it can certainly lead to forms of exploitation and hence is strictly prohibited. Moreover, a genuine sense of fair play is fundamental in an Islamic financial arrangement. A lender who lends purely for profit by charging interest is exploiting his position as owner of the principal amount without sharing in the risks associated with the use of that principal in the activities of the borrower. The traditional contracts of insurance were built on such features. Firstly, the investments and operations were based on debt and equity, debt being interest based. Also, where a loan was granted on a traditional insurance contract, interest was charged. This is not permitted in an Islamic contract. Secondly, the situation is liable to exploitation where even though the contracts are priced at marketable level, the profit from insurance operations built from policyholders' money is owned by the shareholders. This point is also seen as policyholders gambling away their hard-earned savings for no return where there is no claim. In contrast, in a takaful contract a 'no claim' scenario always leads to a refund of some of the money to the policyholder.

The differences between 'takaful insurance' and 'classic insurance' are outlined in [Table 21.1](#). The classic insurance business, which deals with the uncertainties of loss and does not conform well to Islamic principles, has long been discouraged, if not prohibited, in Islamic society. In recent decades, however, many Islamic countries have found that insurance plays a crucial role in furthering their economic development and, even in some of those countries, Western (non-Islamic) insurers are allowed to underwrite risks. A few local insurance companies were also incorporated in selected countries. Yet, it seemed somewhat remote that Muslim communities would accept broadly the Western concept of insurance for the reasons given above.

They have developed instead a new concept of insurance that complies with Islamic principles, called takaful insurance, discussed above. This is a type of joint guarantee insurance mechanism based on 'the law of large numbers', in which a group of societal members pool their financial resources against certain loss exposures. Takaful insurance is now popular in many, although not all, Islamic countries, including Indonesia, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates. It is also practised in other countries with a significant Muslim population, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, and, recently, in the USA, UK and Australia (Directory of Islamic Insurance, 2000).

## Islamic Socio-economic Principles and Insurance

In Islam, all that happens in this world is by the will of Allah and all activities of Muslims must conform to the Qur'an, the Muslim Holy Book. The Qur'an exhorts Muslims to accept all misfortunes as predestined, but not to passively endure them – they must take necessary steps to minimise losses from unfortunate events. Muslims are also taught to abide by the Sharia – the code



**Table 21.1.** Difference between takaful insurance and classic insurance. (From Ajmal, 2000.)

Items	Takaful insurance	Classic insurance
Shariah Supervisory Council	Shariah Supervisory Council, whose function is to monitor marketed products and fund investment	Not available
Contract	Mutual help/helping each other (takaful); participants own the insurance funds. Managed by the company. Participant gives up individual right to gain collective rights over contribution and benefit	Trading insurance is a buy–sell contract. Policies are sold and buyers are policyholders
Fund investment	Fund investment based on Sharia with sharing system, <i>mudaraba</i> , which means investment returns must not be driven by interest and by unethical commercial activities	Fund investment based on interest
Fund ownership	Collecting fund from participants (Premie) is owned by the participants. The company is only a mandatory holder, and manages it for a fee	Collecting fund from participants (Premie) is owned by the company, which is free to decide its investment
Company	Company acts as a trustee and entrepreneur	Relationship between the company and the policyholders is on a one-to-one basis
Claims payment	From the participants' tabarru account (Goodness Fund). From the beginning, it has been planned by participants to help each other in the event of an accident	From company's fund account
Guarantees	No contractual guarantees are given by the company. Joint indemnity between participants is a prerequisite of participation in a takaful scheme	The company guarantees benefits especially in the event of death benefits
Sales distribution	A sale through salaried staff is normally preferred	Sales on both commission and salaried basis
Regulation	A. Statutory. B. Islamic principles through Sharia committee	Statutory only
Profit	Shared between participants and company (according to sharing principle <i>mudaraba</i> ) and paid from defined funds under joint indemnity by participant	All profits to insurance company

of social conduct that Islamic scholars have built based on the Qur'an. For example, the Sharia applies the concept of *zakat* under which all members of society should share equally in the benefits afforded by that society and all are joined to help others who suffer misfortune. It exhorts that all resources must be put to optimum use and no individual has the right to wantonly squander

his or her resources. Of course, neither an individual nor a state should gain from the misfortune of others.

The Sharia classifies all matters into either *halal* (those permitted) or *haram* (those prohibited). For example, it permits *takaful* (shared responsibility) and strongly encourages this practice among Muslims. It also permits *zakat*, which obliges the rich to help the destitute and weaker members of society. Also, the Sharia prohibits exploitation and risky investments because Muslim jurists generally consider that these activities are *ghara* (contracts in which results are unknown, hidden or speculative in nature) (Ismail, 1997), and the market must be a place for the exchange of products and services where all parties to each contract explicitly know the prices. *Riba* (charging predetermined interest) is also forbidden in Islam regardless of the purpose for which such a loan is made and the rates at which interest is charged. As a result, Islamic financial transactions are, at least in principle, interest-free.

Ariff (1988) explained that the prohibition of *riba* does not mean that capital costs less; however, Islam permits making a predetermined claim on the surplus derived from using capital for production. Therefore, a profit-sharing arrangement, where the profit-sharing ratio but not the rate of return is predetermined, is allowed in Islam. This arrangement can technically replace its Western counterpart, the interest rate, and allow capital to flow into the arrangement that offers the highest profit-sharing ratio to investors. The Sharia also permits shareholding as Islam encourages movements of capital for the benefit of individuals and society as a whole.

## The Idea of Cooperation in Islamic Insurance

According to the Prophet Muhammad in *Hadith* transmitted by Islamic scholars which is relevant to the concept of Islamic insurance:

A Muslim is the brother of a fellow-Muslim. He should neither oppress him nor ruin him; and who ever meets the needs of a brother, Allah will meet his needs and he who relieves his brother of hardship, Allah will relieve him of the hardships to which he could be subject on the Day of Resurrection.

Therefore it is permitted (or even encouraged) to gain benefits, because this does not involve interest (*riba*).

A consultant in Islamic religion, Qaradawi (1986), states that Islamic insurance may exist in a condition where each participant contributes to a fund used for mutual support. Islam aims at establishing a social order under universal brotherhood and the underlying concept is that of mutual cooperation and help. The Prophet Muhammad stressed:

In mutual compassion, love and kindness you will find the faithful like a body, so that if one part feels pain, the whole body responds with wakefulness and fever. A Muslim is the brother of another Muslim; he neither wrongs him, nor leaves him without help, nor humiliates him.

Hadith

There are other references to *takaful* in the Qur'an; for example, '(Allah) who prepares nourishment to prevent the fear of hunger and saves/puts at peace those who fear' (Qur'an 106: 4).

## Concepts of Protection in Islam

A *takaful* contract must be based on principles of cooperation, protection and mutual responsibility and must avoid acts of interest (*riba*), gambling (*maisir*) and uncertainty (*gharar*). A *takaful* company conducts all its affairs in a manner compatible with Islamic Sharia tradition whether in investing its funds, in carrying out its business in all classes of insurance or in any other related financial field. The company's (Islamic insurance) Memorandum and Articles of Association underlines this approach (Qaradawi, 1988).

The company normally has a committee of prominent Sharia scholars. Their direct guidance and advice is essential at all stages of *takaful* operations, from the point-of-sale activities to payment of benefits, from accounting to investing the funds, and from public dealing to serving the community through insurance and non-insurance activities such as supporting charitable work, etc. All operations and contracts are set up to ensure that any element of speculation, uncertainty and gambling is eliminated or minimized. This is essential for maintaining the 'caring and cooperative' principles of *takaful*.

## Recent Changes

On examining the recent trends in the Muslim world it is quite evident that people have not taken up insurance products including travel insurance in the same way as in most other countries. However, most Muslim countries have the potential to at least double their insurance volumes (Qaradawi, 1986).

One of the main reasons for the low penetration of insurance in these countries is that it remains underdeveloped and a decade of misunderstanding created a mindset among Muslims. And yet travel insurance is essential in providing vital protection for oneself and the family. The premium of the insurance industry globally amounted to a total of US\$2.3 trillion in 1999 (up by 7.3% on 1998). Al-Zarqa (1995, p. 80) is optimistic about the opportunities for growth of the Islamic insurance industry: 'The *takaful* industry has the opportunity to unlock this potential with life insurance and non-life insurance'. In fact Islamic finance and banking has now firmly established itself with a total US\$7 trillion of capital, more than US\$4.1 trillion of assets and more than US\$120 billion of deposits. *Takaful* insurance is expected to grow over the next decade in line with the rapid development of the Islamic investment and banking systems.

In the first World *Takaful* conference held in Dubai in 2006, Dr Habib Al Mullah, chairman of the Dubai Financial Services Authority (DFSA), in a speech to inaugurate the conference stated that Islamic insurance companies must adopt an

innovative approach to their products and regional governments need to open the insurance market. The chairman continued that 'insurance remains an important tool to reduce risk, and it is as important to emerging markets as it is to developed economies. Regulators must recognise that the modern takaful industry is still in its formative stages and many issues need to be resolved'.

(Trade Arabia, 2006)

## **Takaful International: Case Study**

Takaful International, formerly known as Bahrain Islamic Insurance Company (BIIC), was incorporated in 1989. As one of the early players in the Islamic financial field, BIIC offered insurance products and services that were designed to meet the increasing demand for such products. With only a handful of employees, BIIC evolved into what is today Takaful International, a thriving corporation with staff strength of 68 dedicated and experienced professionals.

In 1998, the current name was adopted to underline the unique system the company offers, based on fairness and in complete harmony with Muslim social and cultural values. The new name also reflects the planned expansion of operations outside of Bahrain into other selected markets where Takaful's products have the potential to appeal to a wide audience of potential customers.

The company was restructured in 2000 to meet the millennium challenges. Takaful International then focused its efforts on making the company the preferred choice in the region in terms of new Sharia-compliant products. The company has achieved the following ratings and awards since 2008:

- In 2008 the company was rated (BBB) with a stable outlook from Standard and Poor's rating agency.
- In 2011 awarded Her Royal Highness Princess Sabeeka Bint Ibrahim Al Khalifa award for Women Empowerment.
- In 2013 the company was rated (B++) Secure with Stable Outlook by A.M. Best Rating Company.

## **Mission statement and business mission**

The mission of Takaful International is to be the insurance company of choice, based on caring and cooperative principles, and to be committed to people, performance and growth. The business mission is to be the leading provider of takaful products and services by creating awareness and maximizing the potential for takaful, to lead the development and marketing of innovative products that conform to the Sharia principles and to provide services that build and uphold the corporate values.

According to the CEO, Younis J. Al Sayed, the strategic direction of Takaful International remains focused on the following key objectives that are

aimed at delivering an enhanced sustainable financial position for the participants and the shareholders:

- generate economic profit growth;
- reduce earnings volatility;
- enlarge market scope;
- advance organizational excellence; and
- be best in class for customer service

The objectives have been rooted in all of Takaful International's activities, helping them to further improve their economic efficiency. Continuing on this point the CEO stated: 'Our business goals are simple: to ensure growth in earnings per share, to pursue high quality business rather than volume for volume's sake as is evident in our financial highlights in terms of improved claims ratio and decent profits for the participants and shareholders. This is further supported by continuously expanding the scope and the range of services we provide to our esteemed clients in all lines of business and regions.'

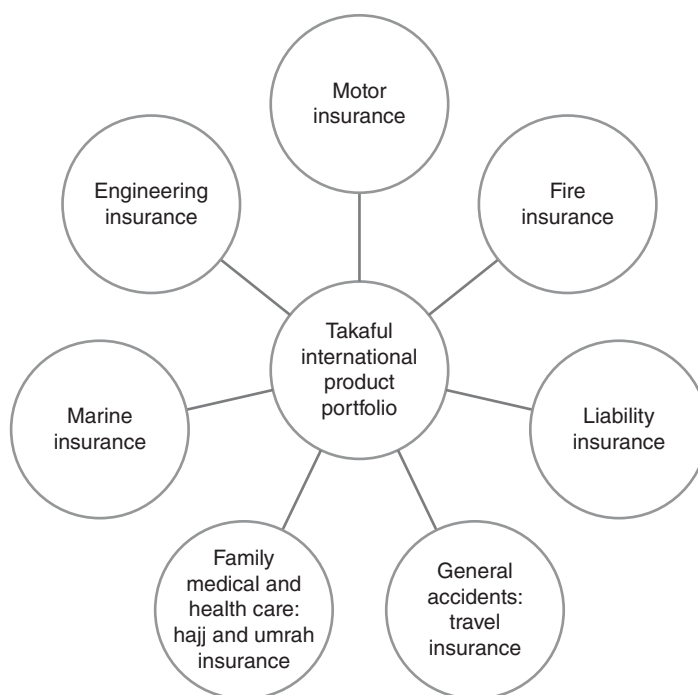
### **Takaful product portfolio**

Takaful International offers a range of insurance products in personal and corporate insurance including: motor, fire, marine, engineering, liability, general accidents and family medical and health care. Under its general accident cover it offers travel insurance and under the umbrella of family medical and health care the company offers hajj and umrah insurance (see [Fig. 21.1](#)).

The travel insurance provides the client with the financial protection needed in case of suffering from a sudden illness or an accident while on a business trip or a vacation abroad, by settling all related medical expenses. Other services under the plan include travel assistance, legal assistance, lost luggage assistance, emergency medical evacuation, repatriation of mortal remains, medical translation services, delivery of essential medicine, arrangements of compassionate visits, convalescence expenses and others.

The hajj and umrah insurance provides the pilgrim with suitable protection during the holy trip by covering injuries and accidents (death or disability) sustained during such holy trips, providing health care and medical treatment when needed, free of charge. The company was also able to play a major role in serving the national economy and laying down the principles for application of Sharia in insurance transactions.

The company continues to pursue its ambitious investment and underwriting policies and to cooperate with other Islamic financial institutions that comply with the principles of Sharia in all its business and investments. Its successful strategy has mainly focused on three key areas: underwriting policy, investment policy and customer services. As a result, the company was able to achieve outstanding results that reflected the success of such a strategy and having a wider customer base.



**Fig. 21.1.** Takaful International product portfolio.

## Financial status

In the latest financial figures available for 2013, the overall results of the company had shown positive financial growth. The top line of the company reported growth of 12% in its Gross Written Contributions during the year 2013: BHD 20,256,022 (Bahraini Dinars) as compared to BHD 18,138,798 during the previous year. The net surplus from takaful operations of BHD 69,089 was lower than the previous year. On the other hand, the shareholders' net profit for the year had shown some improvement: BHD 231,335 for the year 2013 compared to BHD 204,801, or 13% growth over the previous year. The company recorded a good growth in the return on investments: BHD 309,569 for the year 2013 compared to BHD 250,110 in the previous year, a growth of around 24% which was an achievement.

## Marketing

The Bahrain operations continued to grow and the company could reach a wider spread of customers through the opening of new points-of-sale offices, designed to facilitate distribution of a wide range of personal and commercial line products. The company also continued to improve on the other customer service channels, including its call centre, online access and mobile application.



The company changed its logo revealing a new identity of Islamic insurance in addition to the participation of all associates in the investors group in standardizing the group's overall identity. This has helped to promote its strategy for global expansion and to promote its various activities with new values and principles deriving their roots from Arab and Islamic culture.

The palm frond in the new logo is a symbol of the elements of life and growth and is a reflection of the care and security provided by Takaful International for its customers. Moreover, the palm frond enjoys a special status in Arab culture and traditions, showing the company's continuous philosophy and ambition for expanding its operations worldwide, supported with local knowledge.

In addition, investment in staff training and development was a vital requirement for ensuring the launch of the company's products within the framework of the proper strategy. The company believes that investment in human resources and having the right amount of capital are basic ingredients for the success of any business firm.

## Future plans

The chairman of the board Dr Al-Abbasi stated that, looking forward, Takaful was confidently prepared for facing the business challenges during the year 2014 and the goals were quite ambitious, as they remained focused on creating a long-term value to the shareholders and policyholders equally. With the support of the company's team comprising professionals and technical experts who have helped the company to reach to its current position, the company will rise to greater heights in the near future.

The CEO claimed that the growth of the company's operations in Qatar had been achieved. 'Our strategy was to approach the Qatari market in a conservative and selective method, enabling us to gain an understanding of the local market trend while gradually growing the volume of transactions. Alhamdulillah, our strategy has been successful as we accelerate the growth rate in Qatar after introducing the brand of our company through varied channels, including international brokers and the major local insurance providers.'

## Summary

This chapter has discussed the fundamentals of Islamic insurance and the market needs of the Muslim population. Muslims have been travelling and performing pilgrimages to several holy places and shrines around the world for the last 1400 years as part of their religious belief. They have been travelling to religious destinations such as Syria, Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Pakistan and to other parts of the world.

Muslims travel to Mecca in various ways from all parts of the world – by air, sea, car and on foot – to perform this spiritual pilgrimage. But this is not an easy journey. The hajj and umrah carry enormous risks for the pilgrim. In fact, every year several hundred Muslims die from incidents ranging from stampede

to sickness, transportation accidents and fire. With so much risk and danger involved it would be common sense to take out travel insurance for the purpose of this journey. However, only a few people take out insurance and they are mainly Muslims from the Western countries.

It is important to develop a marketing strategy for takaful (insurance) because traditional insurance had certain features that contradicted some of the essential values of an Islamic financial contract. Muslims are directed by their faith to follow a path of righteousness in pursuing the activities of their daily lives; for example, gambling and exploitation are strictly forbidden. The prohibition of riba does not mean that capital costs less; however, Islam permits making a predetermined claim on the surplus derived from using capital for production. The profit-sharing arrangement, where the profit-sharing ratio but not the rate of return is predetermined, is allowed in Islam. This arrangement can technically replace its Western counterpart, the interest rate, and allow capital to flow into the arrangement that offers the highest profit-sharing ratio to investors.

It is evident that the Muslim population around the world is growing. And with this increasing population, improved education standards and the increasing trends in global travel there will be greater opportunity and demand for travel insurance from the Muslim world. Insurance companies will need to identify and better understand the needs of Muslims by offering innovative takaful insurance products and marketing them in an appropriate and effective way. This is particularly needed in Muslim countries where there is a huge potential to develop insurance products and to dispel the myths surrounding insurance through education. Furthermore, the Saudi authorities, in order to reduce the risk, could make travel insurance a necessary requirement for pilgrims travelling for hajj or umrah.

## Discussion Questions

1. Discuss the difference between hajj and umrah.
2. Discuss the reasons why some Muslims believe against taking out travel insurance.
3. What are the differences between takaful travel insurance and the traditional forms of travel insurance?
4. Imagine you are Marketing Director for Takaful International. Advise the CEO on the marketing strategy for the next 3 years for the company.

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## Appendix: Glossary

- Gharar:** Sale of what is not present. This is not allowed in Islam, and there are grades of what is acceptable. Gharar basically means 'uncertainty'. The definition of uncertainty is lack of information about a certain product or agreement (object); the existence of uncertainty in the presence of that object and the lack in quantity and conciseness of information about the object. Ibn Taimiyah, who is of the Islamic school of thought, states that gharar means: 'When a party obtains his rights and the other party does not get what is rightfully his'.
- Hadith:** Sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad. These were collected and organized during the Prophet's life and shortly after his death.
- Halal:** Permissible in Islam.
- Haram:** Not permissible in Islam.
- Maisir:** Gambling. This is not allowed in Islam. Insurance is mistakenly thought of as gambling by some people.
- Mudaraba:** A type of business transaction involving profit sharing. This is used extensively with takaful insurance. This is sometimes modified to include sharing of surplus as well, called modified mudaraba.
- Riba:** The simplest explanation is interest.
- Sharia Law:** Islamic laws written in the Qur'an or narrated in Hadith, concerning what is permitted or not permitted for a Muslim.
- Takaful:** Insurance designed for Muslims.
- Zakat:** Alms, obligations and charities that provide for a certain group of people stated in Sharia and for the development of Islamic Community.

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