Chapter 6
Catholic Pilgrimage in Europe: Contemporary Traditions and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

The chapter deals with the historic and contemporary Catholic pilgrimages in Europe. Modern religious practices of European pilgrims are presented. Author applies different typologies to classify European pilgrimage sites. Catholic sacred places divided into categories related with Virgin Mary, Jesus and saints. Analysis includes historic background, and contemporary challenges of pilgrimage traditions in relation to the themes of valuistic journeys, globalization, virtualization and development of modern tourism. Author identifies and analyzes the six most important religious practices performed at the pilgrimage places (participation at the Holy Mass and receiving indulgence, praying, processions and the Way of Cross, usage of water, leaving votive amulets, and buying souvenirs and devotionalias). Chapter also presents significance of values and identity in traveling. Valuistic journeys could help to express lifestyle and manifest values of the individuals. The chapter tries to answer the question – what are the challenges of pilgrimage traditions in Europe?

INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage and religious tourism is an important area of scientific discussions. The most developed pilgrimage routes in Europe are related with Catholic tradition. Rome, Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela, Fatima, Medjugorje are the most known pilgrimage places in Europe. These and hundreds others pilgrims’ sites attract international visitors.

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Examples of European pilgrimage traditions or descriptions of sacred places in Europe we can find in majority of volumes dedicated to contemporary pilgrimage and religious tourism. European Catholic pilgrimages in geographical aspect were investigated by Nolan and Nolan (1989), Jackowski (1996, 1998, 2000), Pazos (2012, ed.), etc.

Religious tourism is that type of tourism when participants are motivated either in part or exclusively for religious reasons. However, social scientists were mostly engaged in investigating the phenomenon of religious pilgrimage. Important insights in investigating the problems related to pilgrimage were provided by Turner (1967, 1969, and 1973), Turner and Turner (1978), Eade and Sallnow (2000). Issues related to the pilgrimage concept were investigated by Morinis (1992), Coleman, Elsner (1995), Coleman, Eade (2004), Timothy and Olsen (2006, eds.), Pazos (2014, ed.) while the modern secular pilgrimage was investigated by Reader and Walter (1993, ed.), Clift and Clift (1996), Margry (2008, ed.), etc.

Research publications by Rinshede (1992), Swatos and Tomasi (2002, eds), Badone and Roseman (2004), Raj and Griffin (2015, eds.) were of particular importance with regard to studies of religious tourism. Links between pilgrimage and tourism were investigated by MacCannell (1976), Graburn (1989), Cohen (1972, 1979, 1992, 2001), Smith (1992), Stausberg (2011), etc.

A lot of articles analyze phenomenon of pilgrimage and religious tourism in particular European countries. More and more articles and books are published on pilgrimage traditions in Eastern Europe: Liutikas (2012, 2013), Katic, Klarin, McDonald (2014, eds.), Eade, Katic (2014, eds), etc.

Pilgrimages are carried out by foot, bicycles, coaches, cars, the program of the journey increasingly covers elements related to the motives of the journey (for example, visiting other religious places on the road). Traditional pilgrimage on foot needs to contain a challenging physical element. A hardship is part of the defining concept of a Christian religious pilgrimage. Pilgrims regard restrictions as a personal choice because they agree to abide by them when they decide to participate.

Classifications of European Pilgrimage Places

It is difficult to answer to the question – how many pilgrimage places exist in Europe. Nolan and Nolan (1989) identified more than 6000 pilgrimage centers in Western European Countries. Lonely Planet travel guide “Europe” (2015) described more than 250 important religious objects under the categories Churches, Cathedrals, Monasteries and Convents.
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