

## Book review

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Pilgrimage and Sacred Places in Southeast Europe. M. Katic, T. Klarin & Mike McDonalds (eds). 2014. Zurich, Lit Verlag GmbH. ISBN 978-364390504-8

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Though religious tourism has posed as one of the main attraction in tourism industry worldwide, nowadays a lack of a serious debate respecting to commonalities between tourism and pilgrimage still exists. To fulfill such a gap, this book, which is edited by Katic, Klarin and McDonald, presents the outcome of a previous event: *Pilgrimage and Sacred Places in Central and Eastern Europe, place, politics and religious tourism*. Understanding pilgrimage as an act of faith, which results in devotion, redemption and penitence, it is interesting to discuss to what extent the term “religious tourism” is acceptable. Of course, we start from the premise this type of tourism has religion as its primary criterion of attraction. Among the strengths of this book, we find a finely-ingrained debate respecting to the role of mobile factor, which is present in pilgrimage and tourism, to offer a homogenized product of consumption that at the bottom it is based on different goals. While the pilgrimage seeks for a redemption, which is caused by sickness, or pain, tourism signals to curiosity as its constituent element. Not only, is this assumption rejecting a whole portion of what is being written in “pilgrimage tourism”, but also places the term under the lens of critical scrutiny. It is difficult for this reviewer to synthesize this masterful book in almost 1.000 words, but its originality, I assume, is my time and efforts worth. One of the primary aspects that is posed by editors is the conceptual limitations of the current literature evinces. In a secularized world, it is very hard to think peoples are moving for religious purposes.

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Methodologically, serious differences between medieval pilgrims and modern tourists are found. This is the reason why, historians have paid attention to the technological breakthroughs in mobilities and transport as a factor that led to adopt new practices. It is important not to lose the sight that parishioners followed the existent means of transport to accelerate their arrivals. As a newfound activity, tourism not only demanded a larger infrastructure but also forged radical changes in the transport system. At some extent, modern tourism and mobilities paved the ways for popular parlance to fuse both concepts into the same term, pilgrimage tourism, but indeed, reasons that move parishioners today are not far from their ancestors in Middle Age. An additional problem of applied research, this book unearths, is that we have no clear if spirituality and religion have the same meaning. Though we witness the decline of institutional religion, no less true is that spirituality is mushrooming. The diverse 14 chapters though express divergent voices, are orchestrated to highlight an epistemological debate on sacredness and tourism. Among the weakness of the project, we stress the lack of a deep view respecting to the role played by authenticity in tourism. At time tourists visit a sacred-temple, moved by other reasons than the sacrifice; it is clear that curiosity or needs of gazing something different pose as their primary goal. In so doing, tourists would never look for sacredness. However, as Maccannell puts it, the problem of sacredness has not received the sufficient attention. If the totem is vital by articulating the relation of power and authority in Tribal society, tourism plays a similar role in the modern industrial world.

At time religion has declined by the advance of secularism, tourism and authenticity mediate between citizens and their institutions. It is not far-fetched to admit that pilgrimage exploits the needs of engaging with divinity whereas tourism, as a cherished form of consumption, stimulates our ego-enhancement (MacCannell, 1976). However, in recent decades, Korstanje has exerted a radical criticism on Maccannell's diagnosis respecting to the play of tourism and sacredness. Though Maccannell's account is illustrative and sounds original, the fact is that not only tourism is a rite of passage which re-validate our cultural beliefs and values in lockstep, but the performance of sacred spaces does not work as Maccannell (1976) observed. Korstanje and George (2012) explore the study case of Malvinas-Falklands' case which represents a sacred space for Argentinean tourists. Despite their devotion, they do not travel to the island. Further evidence suggests that sacredness and tourism are not united. This conceptual error was given because Maccannell misunderstood sacredness with authenticity. The etymology of the word

paradise which denotes sacredness, comes very well from Persian pairi which means outskirt and daeza (prohibited space). The power of paradise does not rest in its attractiveness to be visited by thousands of persons, but rather, in a far away exemplary centre where souls are limited to enter. This restrictive logic of sacred-space explains why Malvinas has not posed as a tourist attraction and ultimately, the conceptual divergence between pilgrimage and tourism. The arrival of tourists represents a serious offence to Gods (Korstanje & George, 2012).

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