

RELIGIOUS AND PILGRIMAGE TOURISM AS A SPECIAL SEGMENT OF MOUNTAIN TOURISM

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Abstract Mountain and hill sites have played a key role as pilgrimage and religious tourism destinations for thousands of years. Mountain areas with traditional sacred cultural and natural values can particularly benefit from the stimulation of religious tourism, in the forms of improved service supply, employment creation and revenue generation. First, the paper provides an overview of the relationship between religion and tourism, and the role of religious tourism and pilgrimages in the great world religions. In the second part, the authors assess the environmental factors as well as the various scenes and places of religious tourism developed in mountain areas, with special emphasis on meta-spaces and spatial metaphors.

Key words: mountain, sacred site, pilgrimage, religious tourism

Introduction

The characteristic feature of tourism – that we want to do something different, somehow different and somewhere different while getting out of our permanent life and work conditions – is especially true for religious and pilgrimage tourism in mountain destinations. This tourist product can meet various needs, its participants travel to different parts of the world, to the mountains and hills, because of very different motives. Religious tourism can create strong human relationships and significant human mobility around the world. Special scenes, geographical and cultural landscapes appear around religious tourists (Michalkó 2005). In order to successfully understand the complexity of mountain religious tourism and pilgrimage tourism, we have to become familiar with many elements of tourism as a science and its fields.

Tourists taking part in religious tourism can hardly be classified into a single type of tourism, as too many types of people with a variety of interests set off to participate in religious events, ceremonies, pilgrimages and processions. The geographical features of mountain religious tourism are analysed in our paper.

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The connections between religion and tourism on a global level

Religion plays an important and determining role in every society. The different religious beliefs and faiths came into being before written records and were parts of the earliest societies (Bowker 2004). The cave paintings, shamanism (some of it still living) and the ancient faiths and beliefs of the native population living on different continents refer to these ancient religions.

Religious tourism can be connected to almost all the lesser and greater religions. Journeys motivated by religious faith play a significant role in the great world religions, too. A significant majority of the world's religious pilgrim scenes are connected to mountain ranges or hills. Pilgrims often regard the journey they take as a physical manifestation of an inner spiritual journey, with the path travelled being a framework for the travel within (Hall 2006).

The Bible does not make it obligatory for Christians to take part in pilgrimages, since, according to this religion, God is present everywhere. In spite of this, throughout history, millions of Christian believers have wandered on pilgrim routes to visit places with religious significance, particularly those connected to the lives of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, while sites connected to saints and miracles are also widely visited. Among the most important pilgrimage destinations of the Christian world are Jerusalem and Bethlehem in the Holy Land, Lourdes and Mont-Saint-Michel in France, Fatima in Portugal, Santiago de Compostela in Spain, and Rome – with the Vatican City – in Italy. Millions of people go to Fatima, where the Virgin Mary appeared; to Assisi in Italy, where Saint Francis worked and to Turin in Italy, where one can see the shrine showing the winding-sheet of Jesus. Among the sacred European sites attracting both pilgrims and religious tourists should be mentioned the Mary-shrine with the famous Black Madonna icon in Częstochowa, Poland, together with Saint Paul's route and the Maltese Knights' – the Defenders of the Faith – heritage in Malta, as well as an other Marian apparition site, Medjugorje in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It shall also be noted though that many of the significant Christian pilgrimage sites are also major tourist destinations that are visited by large numbers of secular tourists, too. In addition, Jerusalem is a special religious centre, which attracts Christian, Muslim, as well as Jewish pilgrims (Cohen-Hattab 2004).

In Islam, it is one of the five pillars of the faith to visit Mecca, the holy city, once in a lifetime, if their financial and health conditions permit. Following this religious obligation, millions of pilgrims travel each year to the sacred site to perform the rituals of the Hajj and to earn the designation "hajji", a title of great respect and admiration among believers of Islam (Peters 1995). The climax of the Muslim Hajj is the "standing" on Mount Arafat, where, according

to the legend, Adam and Eve were reunited 200 years after their expulsion from paradise, and it was from this site that the Prophet Muhammad gave his farewell sermon.

Similarly to many other religious organisations and destinations that host religious pilgrimages, representatives in Islam in general and Saudi Arabian officials in particular deny the idea that the Hajj would be some kind of tourism, due to the association of tourist behaviour with hedonism (Timothy and Iverson 2006). However, from a global perspective, the Hajj represents many traditional components of tourism, including the consumption of tourist facilities as well as providing employment for local residents who serve the needs of Muslim pilgrims (Aziz 2001).

Religious Jews believe that God is present everywhere, so the religious regulations do not demand followers to undertake pilgrimages (although religious dictates in Judaism define when and where one should or should not travel). Thus, beyond Jerusalem, Judaism does not attach specific significance to religious sites in the same manner as Christians view Rome or Muslims view Mecca (Cohen-Ioannides and Ioannides 2006), but still there are important historical-religious places that attract large numbers of religious Jewish visitors, mainly found in the Holy Land (Israeli, Palestinian, Jordanian areas). Jerusalem and its surroundings, has been a pilgrimage site for thousands of years, with major religious attractions such as the ancient wall of the Temple, the Wailing Wall, King David's grave, the graves of the patriarchs in Hebron and Rachel's tombstone near Jerusalem.

Buddhism is generally seen as one of the world's great religions (although in a traditional Western sense, it is not a religion at all: there is no personal god, no unchanging and immortal soul, and no necessity for the salvation of the latter by the former, and it has no dogmas that must be believed by all followers – Hall 2006). However, religious journeys leading to sacred and respected places are present in Buddhism, too: the destinations of the journeys are scenes connected to the life of Buddha, many of which can be found in the mountainous areas of India and Nepal. These pilgrimage sites – several of which became established shortly after the Lord Buddha's death – can be categorised into a certain hierarchy: major sites are those places that were suggested by the Lord Buddha himself, followed by other places visited by him, then core locations associated with the different traditions of Buddhism, and finally secondary Buddhist temples, sites of devotion and education, as well as religious paths and festivals (Hall 2006). Well-known examples include Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha, and the Kathmandu Valley in the Himalayas

in Nepal, the ancient Japanese imperial capital of Nara, Bagan, the capital of the first Myanmar empire, or Borobudur in Indonesia, a “*manmade mountain metaphor in the shape of a mandala, where the circumnambulation and the visual richness of the striated friezes leads the pilgrim through a symbolic 10 cycle walk mirroring the 10 steps of enlightenment towards Buddhism*”².

Hinduism also has a strong and ancient tradition of pilgrimage. Most of the Indian religious scenes are situated on the four sacred rivers (Ganges, Jamuna, Godavari and Shipra) and on sacred lakes and water tanks, and pilgrimages generally involve holy baths in these revered water bodies as a symbolic – as well as physical – purification ritual (Singh 2006). The number of Hindu sanctuaries in India is so high and the practice of pilgrimage is so ubiquitous that the country may be seen as a vast sacred space organised into a network of pilgrimage sites and their hinterlands (Bhardwaj 1973). Although water is the central component of this system, people visit the the mountainous spring areas of the sacred rivers.

Chinese universism has a special place between the world religions. According to this belief system, the Sky, the Earth and Man are the three components of the unified world, which are in interrelation with each other and which are controlled by a universal rule. Chinese universists are followers of a unique complex of beliefs and practices that includes yin/yang cosmology with dualities such as earth/heaven, evil/good, darkness/light, ancestor cult, Confucian ethics, divination, folk religion, goddess worship, belief in household gods and local deities, neo-Confucianism, shamanism, and Taoist and Buddhist elements. As religious practices are completely fused with the everyday activities and the way of thinking in China, and religious manifestations have been forced to be hidden because of the ruling political trend, it is impossible to say how many followers this religion has. However, the destinations built on religious heritage as attraction belong to the most important destinations for the millions of Chinese domestic tourists (Guangrui 2002). In addition, the Five Great Mountains of Taoism – Tai Shan, Hua Shan, (Nan) Heng Shan, (Bei) Heng Shan and Song Shan -, and the Four Sacred Mountains of Buddhism – Wutai Shan, Emei Shan, Jiuhua Shan and Putuo Shan – and their temples and shrines have been important destinations for pilgrimage for centuries.

Religions, religiousness and tourism

There is no generally accepted definition for religious tourism: we can find several approaches in different works. Religious tourism is generally seen as

² <http://stridialmkhlaafy.blogspot.com/2009/01/mountain-book-pilgrimage.html>

leisure tourism related to heritage and cultural tourism, where travellers visit a place, building or shrine that they perceive as sacred (Mester 2006). The concept also includes visits to churches, monasteries and other places with the motivation to take part in religious events, pilgrimages and processions (Berki *et al.* 2006). Religious tourism is thus a special type of travel in search of a religious, spiritual experience. As we could see above, the followers of the world's different religions travel to different shrines (Bodnár 2000), several of which can be found in mountains and hills.

In our globalised and unified world, the local cultural characteristics, such as religious traditions, events, treasures or architecture, become more and more valuable. Religious heritage may thus become the central element of the tourist product and the main motivation of the tourists in heritage tourism development (Dávid, Jancsik and Rátz 2007).

There are several similarities, but also many differences between tourism and religion. Both concepts are similar because their participants are somehow separated from their permanent, everyday lives, so neither belongs into the category of ordinary behaviour. Tourists leave their permanent living and workplace in order to get away from daily routine and cross a distance to an "other place": in mountain tourism, this distance may be substantial. The same can be said about religion: as we connect ourselves to the supernatural by participating in special rituals and leave behind the difficulties of everyday life, we arrive to thoughts and ideas different from our usual way of thinking. So both tourism and religion include leisure activities, an attempt to get away from everyday life, a shift from material focus, and unusual space and time connections. They also use similar, basic infrastructure and are temporary activities, where the participants use their discretionary income to take part.

On the other hand, there are also several differences between religion and tourism, especially in the motivations and activities. Tourists search for visitor attractions and tend to follow the same behavioural patterns, irrespective of the location. They prefer comfort and want their physical needs to be met perfectly. Those who take part in religious activities are not only willing to tolerate uncomfortable conditions and difficulties, but may even look for discomfort or even physical suffering. Pilgrims are also attracted by sacred places which have no general appeal in tourism. The traveller taking part in tourism is generally seen as a mundane figure who is interested in the physical, visible world. The pilgrim participating in a religious journey is perceived as a spiritual figure who is interested in pious phenomena and the physical reality connected to them: thus, a religious pilgrim can be defined as a spiritual, supernatural being. Of course, between the two extremes, the 'purely tourist'

and the 'purely pilgrim', there are several types: in the words of Pusztai (2004, 17), those taking part in religious tourism are often *"too profane to be pilgrims, but too pious to be tourists"*. This mixture is well expressed with the Spanish word-innovation where the word *"turigrino"*, a combination of tourist and *"peregrino"* (pilgrim in Spanish), is mainly used for the travellers going along the Camino, the road to Santiago de Compostela.

The geographical environment of mountain religious tourism

The mountain as a spiritual pilgrim destination is not specific to any one region: it is an ancient, archetypal metaphor that transcends location and time. Mount Olympus, Ararat, Zion, Sinai, the Tower of Babylon, the Ziggurats, the Pyramids or Machu Picchu are all upward-looking locations where we are inspired to stop, to think, or even to engage in intense communication, with ourselves or with a supreme being even above. On all continents, there are real mountains where legendary gods reside, and man-made mountains that are the achievements of human civilizations. Sacred mountains often play a key role in native people's religious tradition and ceremonial practice, shaping their culture and identity, as spiritual power is often linked to sacred geographies (Ball 2000).

The geographical environment of tourism is the complexity of conditions which by themselves can affect the tourist traffic as a result of exogenous and tectonic forces (Michalkó 2007). The surface of the Earth is also transformed significantly by human activities, so the natural conditions and the attractions made by mankind appear together in mountain religious tourism. The landscape of hills, mountains and forests reflecting a special mood is strongly connected to the experience provided by the churches, monasteries, statues and town views.

The examined Hungarian mountain religious scenes are situated in relatively low terrain, since the country's highest peak – the Kékestető – is only 1014 m high. Most of the foreign religious places and pilgrim routes are located not higher than 1,400 metres, either. However, there are mountain religious areas – visited mainly by the local residents – at the height of 3,000-4,000 metres in South America and Asia.

In our study areas, the characteristic features of the landscape are mountain-ranges of medium height, valleys, basins and plains, together with villages and towns built. Religious buildings can be both found in the mountains and in the settlements situated at lower altitudes. However, there are several reasons for the monasteries and churches to be built at or near the top of the mountains and hills:

- The buildings which were built on higher sites and were difficult to approach could defend the clergymen living there and the crowd of believers who escaped there from attacks and epidemics.
- Being more isolated from the world made it easier for monks and nuns to concentrate on spiritual development without external disturbance.
- The elevated position of the place expressed that they were closer to God.
- Those who lived in the valleys and on the plains looked up to the people living and working “up there”.
- The physical position also expresses well the elevated nature of teaching that radiates from above to the surroundings below.
- Approaching the higher religious places implies physical effort, sometimes suffering, which means that one has to endure to achieve a spiritual experience.

Water has a favoured role in tourist attractions. In different areas water is not only the primary condition of human life, but it also has a determining role in the tourist product. This is often the case in mountain religious tourism, too. Almost all the rivers, creeks, springs and lakes in the mountain ranges can be connected to religious tourism. The religious routes often lead to water-based resources. Many holy places are built on miraculous springs. Springs provide water supply for the remote monasteries, where the water also has religious and faith-related importance. Drinking from and bathing in these springs can bring physical and spiritual purification.

Climate is a fundamentally important factor of tourism. Climate is determined by the geographical location, the distance from the oceans, and the configurations of the terrain. Mountain religious places which we examined can be found in the temperate zone where the four seasons change regularly; though, unfortunately, we can meet extreme climatic situations more and more often, which make it more difficult for travellers with religious motivation to actually take part in tourism. The combined effects of the periods of sunshine, the temperature of the air, the wind and precipitation conditions create bearable, often favourable circumstances for those who participate in mountain religious tourism. The temperature inversion on the mountainous areas can be also advantageous for tourists. The climatic conditions of spring, summer and autumn are pleasant for the participants of mountain religious tourism. The severe climatic conditions on the places at 3,000-4,000 metres mean extra challenge and difficulty to those taking part in religious tourism. It is also difficult to build the infrastructure for tourists at this height, so the participants literally suffer for the spiritual experience.

The natural flora and fauna is a special segment of the tourist environment and gives a living background to the visitors' route. The green forests and meadows, the twittering of the birds can start positive emotional processes in the sensitive tourists, which makes the perception of space a positive experience (Michalkó 2007).

The socio-geographical environment of mountain religious tourism

The socio-geographical environment of mountain religious tourism includes the complexity of the supply characteristics as well as the religious and ethnic composition of the local population which is highly important. However, it shall be emphasised that the destinations preferred by religious tourists do not have special features or characteristics in terms of population and demographic distribution. The classical mountain areas are sparsely populated, while in the hilly areas there are more densely populated places with small villages. (These statements are not necessarily true for the religious places situated outside of Europe and in higher territories.)

Concerning the ethnic and religious features of the assessed sites, although the Roman Catholic religion is overwhelmingly characteristic in the European mountain religious places, religious and ethnic diversity has generally proved to be beneficial for religious tourism. Obviously, acceptance of religious tourists by the local religious and ethnic communities is a precondition of such tourism development. In several destinations however, locals move beyond acceptance towards support, respect or sympathy, for a variety of reasons. One major social factor is the perception of a spiritual-religious relationship with the visitors; however, economic rationalism also plays a key role in changing the local populations' attitudes, as tourists may represent a significant spending power which is often the only source of living in areas which have no other economic function.

Accessibility and transport are very important in approaching an area. The great religious centres can easily be approached by land, air and/or water. Walking is particularly a favourite way of transport as well as physical activity in mountain religious tourism. We can also meet its more extreme manifestations coming from religious fanaticism or deep faith: moving on knees or prostrating, alternately kneeling and standing up. People deeply motivated by religious beliefs are able to cover extreme distances in these ways.

The scenes and places of religious tourism

The scenes of religious tourism that are rich in symbols, code systems and sacred objects may have several functions. Obviously, the first is the function

for the given religion and its characteristic ceremonies. These ceremonies meet the spiritual needs of the believer communities and are controlled by traditions, customs and liturgical regulations (Nyíri 2004). During these functions, the tourist needs are secondary, negligible besides the religious needs, and the spiritual experience of the devoted pilgrims should not be disturbed by ordinary visitor activities, such as taking photos, moving around or talking loudly. Because of their religious attraction, the revered shrines are often visited by large numbers of pilgrims and religious tourists whose consumer needs are met by religious organizations: they are provided with instructions and guidance, as well as a wide range of services and souvenirs (Puczkó and Rátz 2000). Religious sites are often the locations of musical and cultural events, due to their unique architectural and natural features that may provide a special background and scenery for the participants.

The scenes of religious tourism, however, often appeal to a wide variety of tourist segments, in addition to religious demand. The attraction of different religious scenes is varied and complex: the picturesque landscape – particularly in the mountains or in waterside destinations –, the heritage buildings and the tourist infra- and superstructure can satisfy the demands of several target groups (Michalkó 2004). The important and difficult task of the destination management on religious places is to harmonise the crowds of tourists and visitors with everyday religious functions without disturbing those who practise their religion (Berki *et al.* 2006).

The physical scenes of religious tourism

Memorials, ancient monuments and historic buildings are often the scenes of the religious tourist events, such as festivals, processions, pilgrimages or other spiritual gatherings. Legends, beliefs and stories such as apparitions or miraculous healings are generally connected to these sites, and may even form the core of a destination's attraction: like in the case of Lourdes, in the heart of the Pyrenees in France, that has become a Marian city after an apparition of the Virgin Mary in 1858. Today Lourdes has the second greatest number of hotels in France with 230 establishments, and its geographical position makes it an ideal starting-point of excursions to the mountains.

The other group of scenes consists of peculiar natural formations (lakes, rivers, springs, caves, and cliffs), mountain-ranges and mountain routes. The mountains help us to get near God, to move beyond the ordinary and reach something superiour. The springs, rivers and lakes help physical and spiritual clarity by bathing or dipping into them.

The meta-scenes of religious tourism

The “*meta*” part of this compound word means the cognition of the referred reality but beyond its material existence; it refers to metaphoric phenomena beyond the physical reality. Different myths, religious beliefs, rituals, old traditional customs appear in these meta-scenes, so they have special intellectual contents. Their significance is very important to the believers of certain religions because it strengthens the community awareness by suggesting a kind of secrecy and supernatural feeling (Michalkó 2007). Many of these meta-scenes can be found in mountain areas.

The sacred scene

Naturally, sacred scenes or scenes connected to sanctity have a special place in religious tourism. Sanctity always expresses some kind of untouchability and unquestionability, as well as a divine inspiration sent by the supernatural world. The believers of different religions have been looking for these places for thousands of years. They take part in pilgrimages, thanksgiving, penitence, spiritual exercises and testify their faith at these scenes. These ceremonies often represent ancient traditional customs. For example, the twin waterfalls of Kiyotaki and Shintaki on Mount Ontake in Japan (Ontake-san, as respectfully called by the locals) are respected as places of power and have been used by pilgrims for meditation by centuries.

The ethnocultural scene

The ethnocultural scene can also be connected to religious tourism: it is the lifestyle features of the social groups whose ethnic identity differs from their surroundings that appear in this meta-scene. Minority ethnic groups often represent religious characteristics and beliefs different from the majority population’s religion, so their ethnocultural scenes may attract both culturally motivated visitors and those with religious interest. Due to the geographical and social barriers created by mountains and hills, the same mountain range may host a variety of ethnic groups that each has their own cultural heritage and religious beliefs. For example, the hill tribes living in Northern Thailand and the mountains of Laos, Myanmar and China, all have complex ancestor worship and animist belief systems, distinguished wooden architecture presided over by guardian spirits, distinctive costumes, jewellery and handicrafts, and in the recent decades their villages have become popular destinations among Western travellers.

The symbolic scene

Different symbols and code systems help us find our way in everyday life. Religions also use such symbols in order to convey supernatural ideas to the

religious community as well to the visitors and pilgrims. The great variety of symbols also has a role in designing a space, and giving a special religious atmosphere, spectacular outlook to the scene. Kalwaria Zebrzydowska in Poland is one of the greatest examples of religious symbolic scenes and an exceptional cultural monument: in 1600 governor Mikolaj Zebrzydowski built the chapel of the crucifixion on Zar Mountain at the heart of Kalwaria. During subsequent years, Zar Mountain came to symbolise Golgotha, and a total of forty four chapels were constructed on the surrounding hillsides and in the intervening valleys, and the entire landscape was sculpted to recreate the holy sites of Jerusalem and its environs.

The informal scene

Informal scenes are those that differ from the official, “regular” scenes of tourism, i.e. those that are not formalised or regulated. These informal scenes can also be found in religious tourism. For example, there are the circumstances of selling various local souvenirs and devotional articles: these objects are often made by local residents who sell them by the roads, in front of their houses or on other spots to the tourists and pilgrims passing by. Another example of informal scenes in tourism is when local residents provide food and accommodation for those taking part in religious tourism. The tradition of helping, looking after and attending pilgrims dates back to the Middle Ages, and can still be found at several places; sometimes even in an altruistic way of offering hospitality free of charge.

The virtual scene

A virtual scene means visualizing reality by various modern technical means, such as computers and the Internet. The great pilgrimage scenes of the world also appear on the virtual scene, and those who want to participate in non-virtual religious tourism may obtain information on these places, their traditions, values, rituals, as well as their accessibility and supply facilities.

The spatial metaphors of religious tourism

The metaphors of “bridge” and “gate” often occur in printed and digital publications introducing various mountain pilgrim routes and religious scenes (Michalkó 2007).

Bridges

Pilgrim routes often go across lesser or greater rivers. Naturally, the function of these bridges is to serve the operation of these routes, so religious tourists can overcome the obstacles of rivers and ravines. Consequently, bridges can ensure the freedom of movement, provide security and connect different points

on the pilgrims' itinerary. Religious tourism as a concept may be perceived as a metaphorical bridge that connects everyday life with spirituality and provides a link to higher ideals. Religion and pilgrimage – like bridges – can also build links between people who are on the way to sanctity, to abstract and transcendent values.

Gates

A gate means entering, traversing or arriving at a safe place. Pilgrim routes often lead through town gates, castle gates or church gates. When entering a church or a temple through a gate, people arrive to a place where they meet God or gods. Beyond the gates, pilgrims can rest, recharge and receive physical and spiritual safety. Participation in religious tourism may also be perceived as going through a gate and arriving into an area which gives us new knowledge and relief: we can enter a scene which meets our inner spiritual needs by the help of tourism. Gates play a particularly important role in Shintoism where one has to pass beneath one or more large gates (*torii*) on the way to a shrine complex. *Torii* mark the boundary between the secular world and the sanctified grounds of the shrine. *Shinto* shrines may include multiple gates, and paths within the shrine may be lined with dozens of closely set *torii* which together create the effect of a long, enclosed corridor. Believers may use their walk through such passages as an aid in helping to clear their mind of worldly distractions and in preparation for making an appearance before the enshrined deity. Shinto gates are often produced using local timber, therefore shrines which are located in high mountain forests may feature *torii* constructed simply from a few rough cut conifers – they blend in nicely with the surrounding forest and are emblematic of the Japanese love of nature.

Two examples of pilgrimages: Csíksomlyó in Romania and Santiago de Compostela in Spain

Csíksomlyó (Șumuleu Ciuc) is situated in the Csíki-basin in Transylvania, Romania. Although it is not located inside the borders of Hungary, it has become the greatest Hungarian pilgrim scene. The pilgrimage was originally established in the 16th century following miracles performed by the statue of the Virgin Mary. The Hungarian pilgrims of Transylvania have visited the church, the chapels and the open-air mass place on the ridge between Little-Somlyó and Big-Somlyó for centuries; recently, they have been joined by pilgrims from Hungary, too. As part of the ritual, the pilgrims set off from the church and follow one of several routes up to the ridge. This pilgrimage, however, does not start at the church, but the preparations begin weeks or months before. The believers learn and practise hymns and prayers with their pastors' guidance. The people living in the neighbouring or farther settlements start

walking to Csíksomlyó. Their journey sometimes takes several days. They receive accommodation and modest supplies in churches and presbyteries or with families along their way, so they arrive at the site rather exhaustedly. Many pilgrims spend the night in the church or around it. On the day of the Pentecostal festival, hundreds of thousands of believers from Transylvania and Hungary join together and go up to the scenes of the masses. At the church and in the open-air, masses last all day long. Meanwhile, the believers can make confessions.

A special patch of colour of the pilgrimage is the presence of the “csángó” coming from areas of Romania behind the Carpathian Mountains, who wear their national costumes and – according to a custom dated probably back to the pagan times – pray over a sleepless night to admire Babba Mary’s face in the rising sun.

The Csíksomlyó pilgrimage has a number of meanings: it is one of the last, living mediaeval popular religious festivities; it is a spiritual event of Catholic Hungarians, an ethnic and religious minority within Romania; and it is held in a beautiful natural scene at late spring. It is an event where pilgrims can identify with popular religion, the Hungarian community and Catholicism. The masses drawn to Csíksomlyó each year demonstrate that religious tradition still remains a very powerful force in Europe.

The town of Santiago de Compostela is the end destination of one of the longest and probably the most established pilgrimage routes in Europe. Pilgrim routes from different parts of Europe join in at the northern part of Spain, the pilgrims traverse the Pyrenees and several smaller mountain ranges, and after getting through the 1,000-1,400 m high mountains in Galicia, they arrive in Santiago. About 200 thousand pilgrims set off every year to walk along the 800-kilometre-long route during 33-35 days (Brierley 2006). The contemporary pilgrims cover this distance carrying modern rucksacks and sticks, and are outfitted in highly advanced adventure gear. The route leads across beautiful bridges and gates, travellers can enjoy the sights of marvellous Romance and Gothic buildings and spectacular landscapes while they experience a sense of mutual helpfulness and the spiritual elevation of the pilgrimage.

The Camino was formed in the Middle Ages, and at that time, more people went along the route than nowadays. The destination of the journey is the grave of Saint James in the cathedral of Santiago de Compostela. During and at the end of the journey there are several pilgrim rituals which give the participants a very special feeling. The pilgrims often wear a shell symbolizing

their relatedness and carry walking sticks, and real or imitated calabashes which used to belong to the traditional wear of the medieval pilgrims. There are masses during and at the end of the pilgrimage and the pilgrims can take part in evening prayers. The route is well-built, signed with yellow arrows up to the end, and a network of ecclesiastic, territorial, regional and private pilgrim accommodation helps to put the travellers up. In effect, a new industry has come into being in order to supply the hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, and several settlements in Northern Spain make a living from providing for the pilgrims.

Conclusions

Religious tourism and pilgrimages as concentrated, spectacular mass phenomena have a significant place in the world's mountain tourism. The demand for this kind of tourism is increasing year by year, for several reasons:

- Global tourism is expanding and developing dynamically, and the tourist products have become more differentiated.
- The availability of leisure time increases in the developed world.
- To support religious tourism as a form of sustainable tourism development has become a generally accepted aim in many mountain regions.
- The demand for cultural and heritage tourism (which can be related to religious tourism) is increasing.
- The constant evolution of transport makes it easier for people to visit remote places.
- Religious destinations in mountain areas provide a safe environment for tourists who are afraid of uncertainty.
- The availability of information about pilgrimages and religious events on the Internet has significantly increased.
- Many travellers experience religious tourism as an expression of their religious and national identity.
- It gives an authentic experience, which is searched by more and more tourists.
- The development of services for pilgrims can stimulate the economic growth of otherwise relatively underdeveloped mountain regions.
- Pilgrimage scenes, routes and events receive increasing media coverage that contributes to their popularity.

Consequently, religious and pilgrimage tourism has been developing rapidly and dynamically on a global level, and may be considered among the tourist products with the highest potential. People set off for these journeys for a variety of religious and secular, cultural reasons. The scenes of religious tourism and the pilgrim routes require the development of tourist supply, so

they induce the economic growth of regions. Mountain areas with traditional sacred cultural and natural values, where other economic activities may be inherently limited, can particularly benefit from the stimulation of religious tourism, in the forms of improved service supply, employment creation and revenue generation.

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