

Stanisław Liszewski

Pilgrimages or Religious Tourism?

The answer to the above question should be sought, in my opinion, in a much broader context of concepts and views connected with the development of man, free time and recreation.

The process of development of man in the context of spiritual values of tourism was presented very convincingly by Rev. Jerzy Pawlik, ThD (1996). In his paper presented during the First Congress of Polish Tourism (6-8.11.1995), he referred to the phases of development of man as “(stages of) growing”. First man grows upwards, sometimes in parallel or, later, also in width, and only from a certain moment on does man grow inwards, that is develops spiritually. A major influence on this growing upwards (physical development) and inwards (spiritual development) is exerted by tourism. This is the first reflection indicating a close relationship between the development of man and tourism.

However, in order to practise tourism and thus to develop, man must have a suitable amount of free time, meaning time which he may spend for himself, as he wishes and intends. The budget of free time, both in the scale of the day, the week or the year, is an extremely important factor determining the development of both an individual human being and whole societies. The term “free-time civilisation” is used more and more frequently to identify a manner and style of life of economically affluent societies.

Technological development has intensified considerably human life on the one hand, and on the other hand, it has forced the organisers of economic life to shorten the working hours, both in the scale of the day, the week and the year, thus releasing larger reserves of free time. Free time, however, is not only a function of technical or technologism, that it is a social phenomenon, the idea of which is for people to move (travel) for educational purposes and to restore their physical and psychic (spiritual) energy, with the exclusion of money-earning labour and any change in the permanent place of residence.

Let us ponder for a while, on what, in the light of the above definition, should be regarded as the prominent features of this social phenomenon now called to-

urism. Having considered it, one can decide, without the risk of making a major error, that the features of tourism include a temporary change in place of stay, specific motives for travelling and characteristic objectives.

Tourism is related to temporarily changing the place of one's permanent stay that is travelling. Travels can be effected by any means of transport now available, from walking on foot, to the most modern aeroplane, or in the future, as engineers are telling us, spaceship. The duration of such travels is not defined, although a dozen or so years ago it was considered that it had to include at least one night's accommodation away from home.

An important determinant of tourist travel is the motive behind it or the level of energy in man, not defined very precisely now, which makes him take a backpack, a bag or a suitcase, and leave home to make a journey not in order to earn money or do business but for some other purposes. But what purposes? Researchers studying the motivation behind tourist trips give a very long list of these. The top places are always occupied by motivation connected with the revival of physical energy (recreation, health improvement), restoration of psychic energy (escape from the working or living environment, meditation, prayer), but, above all, educational (seeing new landscapes, countries, customs, meeting people, etc.). Some also see a strong connection in terms of motivation between travelling and the season of the year, anniversaries, celebrations, etc. Quite often, the awakening of nature in the spring or autumn nostalgia motivate people to travel. A strong motive for tourist travels today is also to stay in certain fashionable countries, regions or places.

In addition to the temporary change of the place of stay or the motives determining these changes, a feature of the tourist movement is its aim. Like in the case of motivation, also the aims of tourist travels vary. Quite often the aim of a travel is recreation, both passive (a stay at the seaside) and active (walking in the mountains, riding a bicycle, etc.). This serves the purpose of regenerating one's physical energy and, using the term, used by Rev. Pawlik, of "growing upwards" that is becoming physically fit.

Another group of tourist trips includes trips to regenerate the psychic energy of man. Examples include both trips the objective of which is to visit sacred places, as well as an escape from civilisation, especially from the everyday environment or, on the contrary, looking for places or environments which make it possible to boost one's ego socially or intellectually.

The aim of travels considered as tourist travels, whether main or additional, is always, however, education. Travelling away from the place of one's permanent residence, man learns, consciously or subconsciously about new landscapes, meets new people, finds out about their living conditions, religions, customs, clothes, cuisine, etc., not to mention their values of material and spiritual culture, which are often the main purpose behind travelling.

Taking a tourist trip with a specific aim in mind, suitably motivated, one moves in geographical space, organising this space for the needs of various forms of

tourism. The geographical space in which man moves and stays for tourist purposes, is sometimes called the "tourist space", and the type of human activity and the aim of stay makes it possible to identify several types of such space. We can distinguish the following types of space, from the least to the most transformed and developed by man in terms of tourism: exploration, penetration, assimilation, colonisation and tourist urbanisation.

Where in this broad context of considerations can we locate religious tourism and pilgrimages?

Discussing various motivation and aims of human travelling, both A. Jackowski (1998) and Rev. M. Ostrowski (1996) refer to religious tourism as a form of human movement motivated by the need to visit sacred places, its objective being to go through a spiritual experience.

In the light of earlier considerations on the main features and the definition of tourism, the existence of a form such as religious tourism is doubtless. Religiously motivated travelling has all the features of this social phenomenon which we have qualified as tourism. People participating in this movement move in geographical space, and their main aim is to revive their spiritual energy that is to be closer to God. This aim is to be satisfied with a stay in a sacred place or places. Travelling in a motivated way, with a clearly defined objective, these people participate at the same time subconsciously (but it would be better if it were a conscious effort), in the educational process, by seeing and remembering many unique landscapes, places or meeting people. Sacred places themselves, inside shrines or close to them, are almost always very interesting objects of architecture, culture or arts.

Thus, religious tourism, which is one of the forms of tourist movement, is characterised by the motivation behind it, its aims and its destinations (sacred places). This tourism retains, however, all the basic features of the movement generally called tourist movement, which include a temporary change of one's permanent place of residence for a purpose other than earning money. Two other attributes of the tourist movement are regeneration and restoration and even enrichment of the spiritual condition of man, seeing new landscapes and learning about both material and spiritual values.

Among the oldest forms of the movement of man in geographical space is the making of pilgrimages, which, in contemporary Polish, are identified with travelling undertaken for religious motives to a place considered sacred.

Without going into the very interesting history of pilgrimages, we need to indicate, however, the substantial differences between religious tourism discussed before and pilgrimages.

According to Rev. Ostrowski (1996) a pilgrimage is above all a religious act, and its main aims include penance, thanksgiving for divine grace or praising God. It is distinguished from other forms of the tourist movement by the different behaviour of the pilgrims during their travel and at their destination. The aim of this travelling suggests its contemplative nature, and the time of travel is filled with prayer,

solemn meditations and deep thoughts. Participation in a pilgrimage does bring spiritual revival to man and improves his psychic condition.

The pilgrimage movement has all the features of the contemporary tourist movement. It takes place in geographical space resulting in temporarily changing the place of one's permanent stay, there is a very specific motivation and objective involved and its effect is the regeneration of the psychic and spiritual condition of man.

What raises doubts in the discussions is the fact whether the educational objective, which is one of chief attributes of tourism, is also pursued during pilgrimages. At this point I wish to give a negative answer to the question put by Jackowski (1998) "Can contemporary man going on a religious pilgrimage ignore the landscapes, cities and heritage places passed by?" I assert that he cannot, and, more importantly, does not do it. During a pilgrimage, going on foot or using some means of transport, a pilgrim who pursues his main objective which is a religious act, as if "incidentally" finds about the space of his travel, its natural, cultural and social aspects, and thus achieves the educational aim which is a determinant of the tourist movement. This is by no means the principal or most important objective, but its pursuit also enriches the pilgrim with new, previously unknown ideas.

In conclusion, I confirm that pilgrimage is a special form of religious tourism which, owing to its motive and objective, should keep its traditional name formed over centuries. There is nothing wrong, however, in including this form of specific travelling of people in the broadly understood social phenomenon, which consists in moving about and regenerating physical and psychic condition and which we generally call tourism. In the most general and simplified terms, this phenomenon results in the regeneration of contemporary man who, working hard and living intensively, from time to time has to "recharge his batteries", both physical and above all psychic. And he does it in his free time, practising various forms of tourism, among which religious tourism, including pilgrimages, is becoming more and more common. This is also a clear indication that contemporary man, despite the development of technology and civilisation, feels the need, as never before, to "charge his spiritual batteries for further life", also by going on pilgrimages or participating in religious tourism in general.

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*Stanisław Liszewski, Ph.D. Professor
Department of Geography of Towns and Tourism
University of Łódź
31 Kopcińskiego St., 90-142 Łódź*