

Reseña de Publicaciones

Pilgrimage and sacred places in southeast Europe.

M. Katic, T. Klarin & Mike McDonalds (eds). 2014.

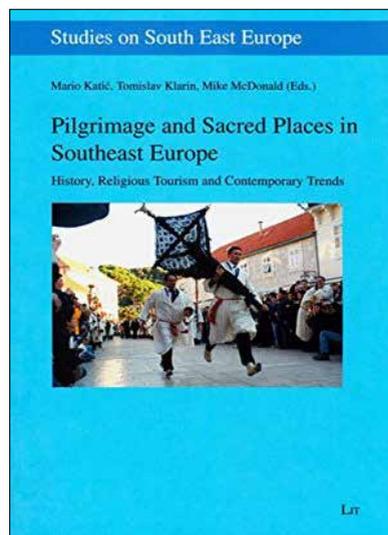
Zurich, Lit Verlag GmbH.

ISBN 978-364390504-8

Maximiliano E Korstanje*

University of Palermo Argentina

Religious tourism has posed as one of the main attraction in tourism industry worldwide, however, now we lack of a serious debate respecting to the fact any pilgrimage may be framed inside tourism. This book, which is edited by Katic, Klarin and McDonald, resulted from the event *Pilgrimage and Sacred Places in Central and Eastern Europe, place, politics and religious tourism*. Although pilgrimage is defined as an act of faith, devotion attraction. It is almost impossible to sum the rich argument of this guidebook in almost a book review, then we will discuss the common-thread of all chapters. It is difficult to believe that in a secular world, people are moving by religious purposes. Methodologically, there are a lot of differences between medieval pilgrims as have widely studied by historians, and religious-tourism, as editors add. This is the reason why, a project of this nature is not only necessary but illustrative. The breakthrough in technologies associated to more free time derived in the adoption of new mobile practices, which was adopted by modern parishioners in their pilgrims. As a modern activity, tourism demanded new infrastructure and transportation system, concerning religious tourism. Beyond the time, pilgrims today are not so different than medieval times, and of course, the travellers' motivations are determined by the needs of being out home. An additional problem to the applied research seems to be the conceptual discussion about religion and spirituality. Today, in postmodern times, a whole portion of society consider spiritual though they are not attached to any religion. In the current lines of research, the acceptance of pilgrims as tourists is not widely questioned by the academy. The discussion on all these themes is placed in this book to launch a new conceptual platform in pilgrim-related studies and of course this is the merits readers will find in exploring this trailblazing book. Methodologically, diverse case studies provide with fresh alternative meaning of what is religious tourism, but it represents its main weakness. There is no clear definition, since the number of chapters authored by diverse scholars, how we must consider travellers, tourists and pilgrims. A tourist may visit a sacred temple, without making any sacrifice while religious tourism may be not framed in any religion. Beyond the historical discussion,



* Ph. D in Social Psychology (University John. F. Kennedy, Argentina). E-mail: mkorst@palermo.edu

to our end, what characterizes tourism is not the quest for authenticity as the specialized literature suggests, but the “curiosity” for something new, instilled by modernity. Here because of time and space, we may not discuss to what extent tourism was present in ancient cultures, but what we have to be clear is that curiosity, as a vital element, is not present in the pilgrimage simply because travellers look for a “redemption”, which is based on gift-exchange nature. In a secular world, the gap between pilgrimage and tourism seems to be enlarged (Korstanje, 2015). Of course, the problem of sacredness has not received the correct attention. Maccannell precluded that sacred places exerted a great degree of attraction in public. Nothing is further from the truth, as Korstanje and George put it. Based on the Falkland’s case, they called the attention to the needs of reconsidering Maccannell’s view because he confuses authenticity with sacredness. This leads us to remind that the term paradise, which remains the archetype of any sacred space, stems from two words, “pairi” (outskirt) and “daeza” (enclosed area). Not surprisingly, the paradise exhibits a far remote area which is accessed only by means of sacrifice and hard-work. This is exactly the point that distinguishes pilgrimage which is marked by the suffering, with hedonist tourism. Another radical difference lies in the fact while pilgrims are subject to diverse risks and threats, tourists travel in atmospheres of “controlled-risk”. One might speculate that sacred spaces are physically and symbolically isolated from the daily life. The arrival of mass-tourism not only is not a valid option but also represents a moral offense to the Gods (Korstanje & George 2012).

What would be more than interesting to discuss is the trends of postmodernity to commoditize real sacred spaces into visual spectacles, subject to an “allegory” which is emptied from its original meaning. This is exactly how ideology works. This begs a more than interesting question, why temples, churches and synagogues receive in these times more tourists than parishioners?, are we prone to the decline of religion?, or simply a fictionalization of daily life?.

References

- Korstanje M
2015. “The Anthropology of Dark Tourism”, Working Paper 22 CERS University of Leeds, UK. Available at http://cers.leeds.ac.uk/files/2015/02/Korstanje_CERS_15.pdf.
- Korstanje, M. E., & George, B. P.
2012. “Falklands/Malvinas: a re-examination of the relationship between sacralisation and tourism development”. *Current Issues in Tourism*, 15(3), 153-165.
- MacCannell, D.
1976. *The tourist: A new theory of the leisure class*. Berkeley, University of California Press.

Recibido: 30/08/2015
Aceptado: 08/02/2016
Sometido a evaluación por pares anónimos