



RESEARCHING PILGRIMAGE

Continuity and Transformations

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Abstract: Pilgrimage is one of the oldest and most basic forms of population mobility known to human society, and its political, social, cultural and economic implications have always been, and continue to be, substantial. This study aims to examine key issues, arguments and conceptualizations in the scholarship on pilgrimage in order to better understand how it has changed over the years. The findings indicate a shift to a postmodern approach within the study of pilgrimage, particularly with regard to the increasingly obfuscated boundary between tourism and pilgrimage reflected in the terms secular pilgrimage and religious pilgrimage. Dedifferentiation has penetrated the scholarship in terms of its features and its multidisciplinary treatment by researchers. **Keywords:** pilgrimage, post modernism, religious tourism, dedifferentiation. © 2009 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

INTRODUCTION

Pilgrimage, one of the religious and cultural phenomena best known to human society, is an important feature of the world's major religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. A pilgrimage has been defined as "A journey resulting from religious causes, externally to a holy site, and internally for spiritual purposes and internal understanding" (Barber, 1993, p. 1). Today, pilgrimage is defined differently, as a traditional religious or modern secular journey. The phenomenon is currently experiencing resurgence throughout the world, as longstanding shrines still act as magnets to those in search of spiritual fulfillment (Digance, 2003).

Pilgrimage is one type of "circulation," which is a form of population mobility. During the first decade of the twenty-first century, mobility has become an evocative keyword and a well-known interdisciplinary field of study with a powerful discourse of its own. The concept of mobility encompasses large-scale movements of people, objects, capital, and information throughout the world, as well as more local processes of daily transportation, movement through public space, and the movement of material things in everyday life. Issues of movement—too little

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movement, too much movement, the wrong type of movement, or poorly-timed movement—are of great importance to organizations, governments, and the lives of many people (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry, 2006).

Present-day tourism studies employs a “new mobility paradigm” that offers a conceptual framework for understanding the nature of the tourism phenomenon (Bærenholdt, Haldrup, Larsen, & Urry, 2004). According to this framework, “places are seen as dynamic,” as “places of movement”. “Places are like ships,” posits Barrenholdt et al., “moving around and not necessarily staying in one location” (2004, p. 146). A recent survey of mobilities research stresses a number of important aspects of this emerging field of study, including focus on the relationship between human mobilities and immobilities; analysis of the relationship between mobility systems and infrastructural moorings; and the inter-relational dynamics between physical, informational, virtual and imaginative forms of mobility (Hannam et al., 2006).

But while the phenomenon of migration has gained much attention in the literature, different forms of “circulation”, and “religious circulation” in particular, have received much less attention (Eickelman & Piscatori, 1990). Nonetheless, these forms have no less an effect on the environment, and indeed may have an even greater one. This stems from the large numbers of participants, their cyclicity, and the large numbers of people which they affect (Nolan & Nolan, 1989). Pilgrimage also creates other population mobilities such as trade, cultural exchanges, political integration, and the less desirable spread of illnesses and epidemics.

Pilgrimages have powerful political, economic, social and cultural implications, and even affect global trade and health. Pilgrimage inevitably necessitates spatial movement and for this reason stimulates geographers’ concern with distances travelled and the phenomenon’s affect on behavior. Pilgrimage is also an important subject due to its scope and spatial influence: each year, an estimated three to five million Muslims make the Hajj (the annual Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca on a specific date), some five million pilgrims go to Lourdes in France, and approximately 28 million Hindu pilgrims visit the River Ganges in India (Singh, 2006). Researchers are beginning to recognize more fully the powerful and contingent roles of religion and spirituality on a range of scales, from the corporeal to the institutional and the geopolitical (Holloway & Valins, 2002).

This article examines how in recent years research on pilgrimage has shifted toward post-modernism. It also points to discrepancies between the ‘old’ paradigm, predicated on the assumption that religious elements lie at the core of pilgrimage, and the results of more recent studies of secular models of travel, which show that post-modernism furnishes an alternative and complementary approach to explaining the shifting boundaries between the post-modern tourist and the post-modern pilgrim. Studies focusing on these types of journeys are at the forefront of the postmodern debate over movement and centers, global flows, social identities, and the negotiation of meanings (Badone & Roseman, 2004).

Postmodernism is a complicated concept, or set of ideas, that has emerged as an area of academic study since the mid-80s. The term is hard to define because it is used in a wide variety of disciplines and fields of study, including art, architecture, music, film, literature, sociology, communications, fashion, and technology (Klages, 2007). One characteristic of the researchers who employ this approach is the tendency to challenge existing theories and reject the clear-cut divisions within the prevailing scholarship. This article shows how the trends of deconstruction (or of breaking down existing theories), the prevalent tendency to emphasize the subjective over the objective, and the increasing attention paid to individual experiences are all consistent with the new post-modern approach to pilgrimage research.

THE MAIN TRANSFORMATIONS IN PILGRIMAGE RESEARCH

This section characterizes the changes that have taken place in pilgrimage research by reviewing the literature on the subject. It analyzes the concepts, theories and paradigms that have been added or changed within the ongoing pilgrimage research. It also shows how pilgrimage studies have changed direction due to new theories in the field of tourism, which serves as the basis for most of the significant changes and redefinitions that have occurred thus far.

From Differentiation to Dedifferentiation

Smith (1992) claims that in current usage the term “pilgrimage” connotes a religious journey, a journey of a pilgrim, especially one to a shrine or a sacred place. However, its derivation from the Latin *peregrinus* allows broader interpretations, including foreigner, wanderer, exile, traveler, newcomer and stranger. The term “tourist”—one that makes a tour for pleasure or culture also originally evolved from Latin, namely from the term *turnus*: one who makes a circuitous journey, usually for pleasure, and returns to the starting point. But Smith (1992) also claims that contemporary use of terminology that identifies the “pilgrim” as a religious traveler and the “tourist” as a vacationer, is a culturally constructed polarity that blurs travelers’ motives.

Until the 70s’, the field of tourism studies barely existed (Nash, 2005) and studies of the relationship among religion, pilgrimage and tourism frequently approached religion and tourism as two separate subjects warranting little interrelated or comparative treatment. This is surprising considering the fact that the development of leisure, and therefore tourism, is incomprehensible without an understanding of religion and the practice of pilgrimage in ancient times (Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Vukonić, 2002).

Initial dedifferentiation between tourism and pilgrimage began to emerge in the 70s, when MacCannell (1973) argued that the tourist as pilgrim was searching for something different, for authenticity. Later that decade, Graburn (1977) characterized tourism as a kind of ritual,

suggesting the existence of parallel processes in both formal pilgrimage and tourism that could be interpreted as ‘sacred journeys.’ These journeys, he contended, are about self-transformation and the gaining of knowledge and status through contact with the extraordinary or sacred.

Since then, research has been dealing with the complicated economic, political, social, psychological, and emotional relationship between pilgrimage and tourism. Since then, theories have concentrated on different typologies of tourists and pilgrims as part of the differentiation between visit-related experiences and real life (Cohen, 1979, 1992; Smith, 1992, 1989; MacCannell, 1973).

Over the past two decades, a new focus on pilgrimage has emerged via researchers interested in the field of tourism, who have explored interesting political, cultural, behavioral, economic and geographical research subjects (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Many of these new works reflect a tendency toward dedifferentiation, and some researchers have argued that the differences between tourism, pilgrimage and even secular pilgrimage are narrowing (Bilu, 1998; Kong, 2001). Since the 90s, analysis of this relationship has focused on the similarities and differences between the tourist and the pilgrim (Cohen, 1992, 1998; Collins-Kreiner & Kliot, 2000; Digance, 2003, 2006; Ebron, 1999; Frey, 1998; MacCannell, 1973; Smith, 1992; Timothy & Olsen, 2006; Turner & Turner, 1978; Vukonić, 1996). This distinction has been misplaced in that the religious and secular spheres of tourism are quickly emerging, as religious tourism assumes a more prominent market niche in international tourism.

A number of researchers have recognized that the ties between tourism and pilgrimage are unclear, blurred, and poorly classified. This relationship is the subject of Eade’s (1992) article, which describes the interaction between pilgrims and tourists at Lourdes, of Bowman’s (1991) work on the place of Jerusalem in Christianity, and of Rinschede’s (1992) description of the touristic uses of pilgrimage sites. Cohen (1992) also maintains that pilgrimage and tourism differ with regard to the direction of the journey. The “pilgrim” and the “pilgrim-tourist” peregrinate toward their socio-cultural center, while the “traveler” and the “traveler-tourist” move in the opposite direction. This distinction applies particularly to journeys where the destination is a formal pilgrimage center. However, journeys to popular pilgrimage centers, which are typically “centers out there,” will often be characterized by a combination of features typical of both pilgrimage and tourism.

Pilgrims and tourists are distinct actors situated at opposite ends of Smith’s continuum of travel, which first appeared in 1992. The poles of the pilgrimage-tourism axis are labeled *sacred* and *secular* respectively. Between the two exists an almost endless range of possible sacred-secular combinations, with a central area (c) which has come to be referred to generally as “religious tourism”. These combinations reflect the multiple and changing motivations of travelers, whose interests and activities may change—consciously or subconsciously—from tourism to pilgrimage and vice versa. Jackowski and Smith (1992) use

the term “knowledge-based tourism” synonymously with “religious tourism”. Most researchers identify “religious tourism” with the individual’s quest for shrines and locales where, in lieu of piety, they seek to identify with sites of historical and cultural meaning (Nolan & Nolan, 1989). Smith (1992) understands the difference as stemming from individual beliefs and worldviews.

According to Gatrell and Reid (2002), tourism, like pilgrimage, is embedded within a complex of socio-spatial processes that are historically, culturally, and locally dependent. Both are complex systems comprising perceptions, expectations and experiences (Gatrell & Reid, 2002; McCann, 2002; Petric & Mrnjavac, 2003). Badone and Roseman are the first ones to claim in 2004 that: “Rigid dichotomies between pilgrimage and tourism or pilgrims and tourists no longer seem tenable in the shifting world of postmodern travel” (2004, p. 2). Thus in their book *“Intersecting Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage and Tourism”* they seek to highlight the similarities between these two categories of travel that have frequently been regarded as conceptual opposites.

Although modern tourism is regarded as one of the newer phenomena in the new world, we are reminded that the origins of tourism are rooted in pilgrimage. This dedifferentiation has indeed been one of the main subjects of current research.

Expansion of Areas of Research

Areas of research and analyzed sites have transcended the “officially sacred.” A change in the focus of pilgrimage research could be observed in the work of Eade and Sallnow (1991). They formulated a new approach with a view that was broader from political, cultural, and behavioral standpoints, and which incorporated the perspective of tourism. This new approach reflects the heterogeneity of pilgrimage, as it appears in theoretical and analytical studies, and introduces a new basis for comparing pilgrimages throughout the world which regards the journey as an arena for competing religious and secular discourses (Eade & Sallnow, 1991; Lewis, 1991).

Over the years, debates surrounding the definition of “tourism,” “pilgrimage,” and other terms have expanded, particularly since the 90s, when various researchers contributed knowledge regarding secular sites and secular aspects of pilgrimage research (Badone & Roseman, 2004; Digance, 2003; Margry, 2008; Reader & Walter, 1993; Seaton, 1999, 2002). In recent years, researchers have started to acknowledge that other places are also worthy of full investigation, referring to spiritual festivals and sites, war memorials and graves, secular shrines, sports activities, sacred constructions, and other experiences (Margry, 2008; Reader & Walter, 1993). Alderman (2002) used the term “pilgrimage landscape” to highlight the relationships between people and place. No place is intrinsically sacred. Rather, pilgrimages and their attendant landscapes, like all places, are “social constructions” which do not simply emerge but undergo what Seaton (1999, 2002) calls “sacralisation”—a sequential process by which tourism attractions are marked as meaningful, quasi-religious shrines.

In addition, the word “pilgrimage” itself is increasingly being used in broader and secular contexts—for example, in order to refer to visits to war graves, celebrity graves and residences, and churchyards and funerary sites as sacred and secular pilgrimage. One instance is Elvis Presley’s mansion and tomb in Memphis (Alderman, 2002; Reader & Walter, 1993).

Margry’s (2008) recent book on “modern secular pilgrimage” examines a variety of sites (ranging from Graceland to the veterans’ annual ride to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial to Jim Morrison’s grave in Paris) in light of man’s existential uncertainties in the face of a rapidly changing world. Margry comments on the modern media’s multiplication of images that renders the modern pilgrimage a quest without an object, concluding that “the definition of the term pilgrimage is in need of re-evaluation” (13). Using new ethnographic and theoretical approaches, his book offers an innovative understanding of the non-secularity of the “secular” pilgrimage and considers whether it is appropriate to include it within the pilgrimage phenomena.

Another interesting development has been the attempt to classify tourists as pilgrims in the context of heritage and root seeking tours. Through her examination of a US homeland tour to Senegal and Gambia, Ebron (1999) shows how an historic site can be shaped into a successful tourist destination commemorating a remembered past. She also sheds light on the ways in which culture can be produced as a commodified object. These findings indicate the creation of a strong sense of unity, which brings us back to Turner and Turner (1969) model of ritual process and the ways in which ritual helps create and sustain group cohesion. Ioannides and Cohen Ioannides (2002) examine patterns of Jewish travel in the United States, describing them as “Pilgrimages of Nostalgia.”

Today, this kind of tourism is also referred to as “dark tourism,” the act of travel and visitation to sites of death, disaster and the seemingly macabre (Lennon & Foley, 2000; Stone & Sharpley, 2008). It is also known as “thanatourism,” which has been similarly described as “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death” (Seaton, 1996, p. 15).

“New Age” spiritual travel also features a growing market for pilgrimage, personal growth, and non-traditional spiritual practices (Attix, 2002; Seaton, 1999, 2002; Stone, 2006). In addition, an increasing amount of research has focused on modern secular pilgrimages in which the search for the miraculous is a feature shared by religious and secular pilgrims alike. Religious and secular pilgrims often share the trait of searching for a mystical or magical experience. These experiences are described in different ways: as transformations, enlightenment, life-changing events, and consciousness-changing events. Still, words seem inadequate to describe such experiences, which are often not amenable to reason (Digance, 2003, 2006).

Given the simultaneous status of pilgrimage as center, periphery, and liminal, these processes and places occupy a unique space in the imagination of both religious and secular tourism—what Soja (1980)

has referred to as a “third space.” By perceiving religious sites as a “third space” that transcends and connects the lived-in and planned world, researchers should be able to deconstruct the social practices of tourists at religious sites. Viewing religious sites as a “third space” (Soja, 1980) further develops the dedifferentiation trend discussed above, thus enabling researchers to avoid the simplified notions of “religious traveler” or “vacationer” as pilgrim and tourist respectively (Cohen, 1992; Smith, 1992). Indeed, this revised religious tourism approach, based in part on the notion of “third space”, acknowledges both implicitly and explicitly the interdependent nature of the two actors and the social construction of a site as being simultaneously sacred and secular (Gatrell & Collins-Kreiner, 2006).

Overall, the extant literature reveals that the differences between tourism and old-fashioned pilgrimage are narrowing, although scholars are still hesitant to make unequivocal assertions on this point. For example, Digance (2006, p. 37) claims that “while there are many similarities, the conclusion looks at distinguishing between the two (tourism and pilgrimage) by proposing that being motivated to undertake a pilgrimage as ‘an act of faith’ is fundamental to traditional religious pilgrimage, and is lacking in modern secular pilgrimage. However, that distinction also creates some difficulties, leaving one to ponder if there is any meaningful real difference at all.”

From “External” and “General” Elements to the Individual “Inner Experience”

Until the 80s, most pilgrimage research concerned the overall sociological features of the community undergoing a liminal process, or the sites themselves (location, characteristics and meaning). Most studies also presented pilgrimage as a general phenomenon (Nolan & Nolan, 1989, 1992; Vukonić, 1996).

For example, Turner and Turner (1969) introduced several fundamental social ideas into the study of pilgrimage, channeling the study of these phenomena along entirely new paths. Their basic thrust was that pilgrimage can be analyzed in homologous terms proposed in their concept of the “ritual process.” Turner and Turner argued that pilgrimages typically involve a stage of liminality, resembling that in which novices find themselves in the transitory stage between two established social statuses.

The literature has also focused a great deal of attention on the “visitor experience” and the psychosocial dynamics that drive pilgrimage (e.g., Cohen, 1979, 1992, 1998; MacCannell, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1969, 1978). In 1973, MacCannell, was also among the first to characterize tourism as a quest for the “authentic” and as representing the pilgrimage of modern man. MacCannell (1973) also claimed that contemporary tourism embodies many of the same characteristics as pilgrimage. He claimed that the tourist is perceived as a pilgrim in the current modern secular world. Unfortunately, however, the tourism-pilgrimage analogy has tended to blur the distinction between the religious and secular and has resulted in the uneven treatment of both. It

also has limited the scale and scope of comparative analyses (Vukonić, 2002). Moreover, current industry trends indicate that religious tourism has great economic potential and contributes to regional growth.

Cohen (1979) argued that while tourists travel *away from* the centers of their societies in search of authentic experiences, the pilgrim's journey is toward the center of his or her world in search of reality and spiritual identity. The nature of the tourist experience has received much attention in tourism research (Cohen, 1979; MacCannell, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1969, 1978).

To understand the dynamics of the visitor experience, Cohen (1979, p. 180) maintained that the tourist cannot be described as a "general type" and proposed five primary modes of the tourist experience based on the place and significance of the given experience in the total world-view of the tourist: their attitude to a perceived "center" and the location of that center in relation to the society in which the tourist lives. Cohen's five modes represent a spectrum, ranging from the tourist's experience as a traveler in pursuit of mere pleasure to that of the modern pilgrim on a quest for meaning at someone else's center.

Cohen (1979, p. 183) identifies these modes as recreational, diversionary, experiential, experimental, and existential. The existential mode is typical of travelers who are fully committed to an elective spiritual center external to the mainstream of their native society. This mode is exemplified by pilgrimages and pilgrimage experiences. Cohen claims that tourists travelling in the "existential mode" are similar to pilgrims. Both are fully committed to an elective spiritual center external to the mainstream of their native society and culture, because they feel that the only meaningful "real" life exists at the center (Cohen, 1979, p. 186).

The multidisciplinary inventory project carried out in Europe under the leadership of Mary Lee and Sidney Nolan is an example of this approach of examining "external" and "general" elements. It presents systematic information on 6,150 Christian holy places in sixteen Western European countries, and describes and interprets the various dimensions of contemporary European pilgrimage with a focus on their environmental location (Nolan & Nolan, 1989). They also raised the related complex issues regarding three types of groups who visit religious sites: traditional pilgrims, members of organized religious tours, and mass tourists simply checking off sites on their vacation itinerary.

Since the 90s, it is apparent that the individual and his or her personal experiences have become the focus of interest. Researchers such as Smith (1989, 1992), Cohen (1992), Fleischer (2000), Collins-Kreiner and Gatrell (2006), Poria, Butler, and Airey (2003, 2004) and many others have started to examine these aspects more closely. We can see that over time, by means of a gradual process, there has been a transformation from researching "external" and "general" elements to researching the individual "inner experience." We can also observe a change from viewing pilgrimage as a general and comprehensive phenomenon to its analysis as an individual, and hence a more pluralistic phenomenon.

This transformation has progressed in three stages. The first stage involved the analysis of typologies, and Eric Cohen's typology of visitor experiences is a good example. The second stage involved the deconstruction of typologies, including classification of visitor experiences into sub-types; for example, the placing of pilgrims along a scale of pilgrimage experience (Collins-Kreiner and Klot, 2000). The third stage was to understand that a visitor may have diverse experiences, and may switch from one to another. As suggested by Poria et al. (2003, 2004), a visitor's experience and mental state may change in time and intensity according to his or her own personal characteristics.

Movement from "Object" to "Subject" and from "Objectivity" to "Subjectivity"

As we have seen, earlier works emphasized the way the objective, namely the pilgrimage, provided one kind of experience or another, and regarded the experience as a direct consequence of the objective itself. More recent scholarship has portrayed the experience as dependent on the pilgrimage, but also on the visitors themselves and their own perceptions of their visit and overall experience.

Currently, research stresses the importance of what the pilgrims themselves say about their pilgrimage, since they constitute its main component. Sociological studies and especially ethnographical works discuss the importance of this issue in the current literature (Badone & Roseman, 2004; Ebron, 1999; Frey, 1998; Reader & Walter, 1993). As a result of this perception, it is now clear that each person may interpret his or her own experience differently, and that it is no longer sufficient to focus solely on the experience offered by the objective. In this way, current pilgrimage research emphasizes subjectivity.

Important new works on heritage sites coming from the same angle were published in 2003–04 by Poria, Butler and Airey, who diverge from the traditional approach that focuses on the sites alone. Future studies, they argue, must explore not only the individual impressions of visitors but their differing experiences and their spiritual and practical needs. They demonstrate the utility of this approach with regard to sites such as the Western Wall in Jerusalem and Anne Frank's house in Amsterdam.

Tourism literature focuses most of its attention on tourism's affect on the local population and extremely little on its effect on the visitors themselves. Only recently have researchers started to examine the effect of visits on the visitors in a more specific manner (Maoz, 2006; Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005; Poria, Biran, & Reichel, 2006) or after their return back home (Frey, 1998).

From the "Either-Or" Approach to a "Both-And" Approach

The scholarship on pilgrimage has also undergone a transformation in texts and discourse, as the "either-or" approach in theories yields to a "both-and" approach. Until the 80s, scholars engaged in debates and manifold controversies in this realm. One example is the well known

debate over Eliade's (Turner & Turner, 1969) concept of the "center of the world" and Turner and Turner's concept of the "center out there," concerning the location of holy sites.

Eliade's (Turner & Turner, 1969) concept of the "center of the world," through which the *axis mundi* passes, provides a plausible context for a theory of pilgrimage. Despite his focus on the history of religions, Eliade never relinquishes his perspective that a pilgrimage is a religiously motivated journey to the very center of the world, or to one of its representations. For the individual pilgrim, that center may also be remote in the sense that he or she lives far away from it. But this remoteness, according to Eliade's interpretation, is more than just locational-geographical.

One of Turner and Turner's fundamental ideas was that pilgrimage centers are typically located "out there." While this peripherality is certainly geographic, it is also and perhaps more significantly symbolic and cultural. This is because most pilgrimage sites are marginal to population centers and to the socio-political centers of society. These peripheral centers are often located beyond a stretch of wilderness or some other uninhabited territory, in the "chaos" surrounding the ordered "cosmicized" social world. Nevertheless, as a focal point, pilgrimage centers provide a paradoxical conceptualization—a "center out there" (Turner, 1973, pp. 211–214; Turner & Turner, 1978, p. 241).

"Communitas," as defined by Turner and Turner (1978), refers to specific group dynamics which take place in an assembly of pilgrims. Such encounters create new social situations in which all pilgrims are temporarily equal, having come together for the purpose of a sacred journey. Pilgrimage is a liminal phenomenon for the pilgrim, who leaves home to journey to a far-off "center out there" (Turner, 1973; Turner & Turner, 1978). This detachment from everyday life enables the pilgrims to intensify their understanding of the spiritual meaning of their faith. It also, however, places them in a milieu where they are often more open to new experiences, ready and willing to meet new people, hear new things, and reconsider some of their previously unquestioned assumptions.

While Turner and Turner's (1978) work on ritual stands out as one of the most influential theories in anthropology advanced during the twentieth century, this "Turnerian paradigm" has recently come under scrutiny. For example, in *Contesting the Sacred* (1991) Eade and Sallnow directly challenge the concept of communitas.

This "either-or" approach of the theories, however, has yielded to a "both-and" approach. In his study on pilgrim activities at sites in Thailand, Cohen (1992) sets out a typology of pilgrimage centers that can be construed in terms of the relative emphasis on each of these tendencies. Specifically, he proposes distinguishing two poles in pilgrimage center type s: "formal" and "popular."

Formal centers are those in which primarily serious and sublime religious activities are emphasized; the rituals at such centers are highly formalized and decorous, and conducted in accordance with orthodox precepts. Though folklorist elements are not absent, they play a

secondary role and at times are even suppressed by the authorities. The pilgrims' principal motive for journeying to such centers is to perform a fundamental religious obligation, to gain religious merit, to take a vow, or to improve their chances for salvation. The principal pilgrimage centers of a religion, often constituting the apex of a pilgrimage system, come closest to this type of center.

However, since the 90s, with pilgrimage and tourism increasingly coming to be viewed as a post-modern phenomenon, the literature has offered little criticism of the validity of the sundry theories. Instead, each researcher presents a different aspect of the phenomenon, employing his or her own approach, methodology and experience in studying the subject. Of course, it appears clear that not all the approaches offered can be correct, but issues of "right" and "wrong" seem less important in the post-modern world, and may not even exist.

In this way, the "either-or" approach of theories is yielding to an approach of "both-and." Researchers speak of "interpretations" instead of "truth" or "falsehood." Individual researchers have their own assumptions and perceptions with which they interpret the world and its various social phenomena. Today, studying the meaning of pilgrimage transcends geography and sociology and involves an interpretative approach to seeking hitherto neglected alternative meanings. Present studies assume that pilgrimages are products of the culture in which they were created; hence, they tell us "stories" from political, religious, cultural, and social perspectives. These pilgrimages are products of the norms and values of social tradition and order and, at the same time, have also played a meaningful role in shaping such culture and tradition.

CONCLUSIONS

This article analyzes the main transformations that have taken place in pilgrimage scholarship in recent decades. It also reveals that the most significant changes that have taken place and the new direction taken by pilgrimage studies in general have been the result of new research theories in the field of tourism and mobilities. Throughout history, pilgrimage has stimulated much interest and writing, which can be understood in parallel to the practice itself. While the "old" paradigm was predicated on the assumption that religious elements were at the core of the journey, recent years have witnessed a growth in the number of researchers exploring various other aspects of pilgrimage, in accordance with their diverse disciplinary backgrounds. Today, researchers from a wide variety of disciplines are engaged in the study of pilgrimage: historians, theologians, sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, economists, geographers and many more.

These researchers offer new and innovative approaches and perspectives to the subject of pilgrimage, as well as to the traditional, well-known aspects of the phenomenon. The large number of books and publications that have been published on the combination of spiritual search and physical journey is one indication of the popularity and

importance of pilgrimage as a subject of academic study, one that is undoubtedly interdisciplinary (Digance, 2003; Timothy & Olsen, 2006).

The “tourism transformation” appears to be the uniting element in current pilgrimage research, although the literature on pilgrimage and religious tourism is still fragmented and lacks synthesis and holistic conceptualization (Timothy & Olsen, 2006). Dedifferentiation has also penetrated pilgrimage research in terms of its multidisciplinary treatment. We are witness to convergences with anthropology, sociology, history, religious studies, geography, and most recently, the fields of leisure and tourism. The cross-currents have become so substantial that, at times, it is difficult to distinguish between contributions from different disciplines.

The future of the Pilgrimage—Tourism Relationship

In light of the trends discussed here, I posit that the difference between tourism and traditional pilgrimage is fading while numerous aspects of similarity are emerging: both require spatial movement and involve an emotional desire on the part of individuals to visit sites meaningful to them. Overall, however, the visitor experience, whether we refer to it as pilgrimage or tourism, is in fact not homogeneous and comprises different types. The motivations of visitors are also highly diverse, ranging from curiosity to a search for meaning. Differing market segments of visitors go to the various sites, holy and not holy, and coexist. This coexistence occurs despite the fact that the reasons for the visits vary considerably, as do the activities taking place at the site.

As we have seen, the literature has paid special attention to the relationship between pilgrimage and tourism, which it often represents on a scale. But how does one distinguish a visitor on a genuine quest for prayer and spiritual peace from one admiring the work of 11th or 12th century builders, or another contemplating the tomb of a famous person? A key issue of this article relates to the existence of a continuum among different types of visitors—not arranged in accordance with their description as pilgrims or tourists, as in Smith (1992), but in accordance with the visit’s effect on the visitors themselves. Tourism literature typically pays a great deal of attention to the effect of tourism on the local population and relatively little attention to the effect on the visitors themselves (duration, strength, and level).

The differing experiences of the visitor, whether pilgrim or tourist, should therefore be represented on a scale based on the effect of the visit, in terms of time and strength. To what extent were they affected after their return home, regardless of their initial classification as tourist or pilgrim?

Three levels of change should be considered: external characteristics, perceptions, and attitudes. It is of course also possible that the visit will result in no changes whatsoever. A change on the first level will be evident in visitors’ external features, such as language, clothing, hairstyle and jewellery. Changes on the level of perceptions, or visitors’ outlook on life, beliefs and behavior, may begin to emerge as they adopt

new concepts from the place visited and the local population they met there. Changes on the third level involve a psychological change or a change in attitude. Current research on visits of Westerners to the East notes all of these types of changes. For example, researchers such as Maoz (2006, 2007), Sharpley and Sundaram (2005), and Collins-Kreiner and Sagi-Tueta (2010) have found that different visitors undergo different experiences according to their age, gender, social status, and other factors.

All visitors have different expectations from their trips (Ebron, 1999; Frey, 1998). The question is how different? At one end of the scale are spiritual visitors (not necessarily pilgrims), spiritual sites and the spiritual experiences which constitute a search for new meaning in life. Visits of this type can change lives. At the opposite end of the scale are visitors who are not affected by their visit. Visitors may also move along the continuum during their journey, as in the case of Western visitors to the East who left their homes as secular visitors and returned home as spiritual visitors (Sharpley and Sundaram, 2005).

The time has come for the contemporary usage of terms (such as identifying “pilgrims” as religious travelers and “tourists” as vacationers) to allow broader interpretations in accordance with their Latin and Greek origins. The scale proposed here reinforces the emerging connection between the two mobilities of tourism and pilgrimage discussed above. It is difficult to distinguish between pilgrimages of the past and today’s tourism: both phenomena may be motivated by a desire for an experience that will ultimately add more meaning to life.

Toward Post-Modernity

As a result of the trends described above—in conjunction with the increasing dedifferentiation of different mobilities such as pilgrimage, tourism and secular tourism, and the increasingly narrow difference between people’s desire to find new meaning in their everyday lives (Urry, 2001)—the study of pilgrimage is being modified toward a post-modern analysis. This suggests that a theoretical change, and not only a methodological transformation, has taken place. The change in the theoretical foundation has involved elimination of distinctions that were accepted in the past, and a growing inability to distinguish between different conceptualizations and research areas, which are now being integrated.

This article described transformations on a number of different analytical levels. Some are theoretical or methodological, while others are empirical changes in the real world. A primary example of this multi-level approach to the changes is the treatment of “post-modernity,” as it is difficult to distinguish whether it is the world that has become post-modern or whether it is just the researchers who are developing post-modern approaches. In other words, it is difficult to distinguish between the means of analysis (“theories”) and the subject of analysis (“phenomena”). Are the theories changing (i.e. more attention to change, subjective experiences) or are the phenomena changing (i.e.

less consensus regarding a “cosmic center”, de-differentiation between pilgrimage and other forms of travel, etc) (E. Cohen, personal communication, July 07, 2008).

In this context, it appears that post-modernity can and should be analyzed only in modern terms, as post-modernist writings reflect that there exists (nor can there exist) no “post-modern paradigm,” because post-modernity is a critique (“deconstruction”) of modernity and devoid of constructive potential. The main points made in this article reflect this dynamic: there are no absolute criteria for judging interpretative versions and no remaining typologies. For example, individual experiences can change from moment to moment, and there are no clear-cut distinctions between pilgrimage sites and tourist attractions. The point is that although everything may be in a state of flux, we can nonetheless discover structures beneath the surface, as we have seen.

Many possible interpretations of the observed phenomena may exist, but post-modernist researchers cannot, based on their own understandings of their abilities, distinguish between legitimate and illegitimate interpretations, as they lack absolute criteria. For this reason, it makes sense to use the critical insights of post-modern critique and to observe post-modern trends in contemporary society, but to refrain from easily surrendering the very criteria of rational judgment on which the entire scientific enterprise is based on. In contrast to the “modern” quest for a single scientific explanation, what Cohen (2007) regards as a “postmodern” discourse rests on the premise that there exists no single solution. Rather, an issue can be approached on different discrete (and mutually incommensurable) levels, and hence diverse accounts of a phenomenon are possible.

The move toward post-modernism does not imply the collapse of all existing theories in the field of pilgrimage studies. The transformation is not as sharp and dramatic as some researchers would like to think. Current areas within pilgrimage research are still based on the existing theories, and the transition from modern to post-modern theory is still understood as an expansion, and not a contradiction, of existing theory. The question is whether further steps toward adopting post-modernism in pilgrimage research will threaten the ability to build future knowledge in a solid manner and result in a consistent understanding of the pilgrimage phenomenon. The “post modernization” of approaches to the phenomenon of pilgrimage has had the affect of allowing a multiplicity of legitimate interpretations and interpreters, and this appears to have provided a way out of the contest between competing explanations and research agendas.

SUMMARY

By reviewing the central themes in pilgrimage research which highlight the importance of new directions in the field, and drawing upon specific influential theoretical developments, I have contextualized recent work in the study of pilgrimage as part of the emerging area of

research of “mobilities” and shown how this area of research may be advanced. Indeed, postmodern ideas such as the possibility of co-existence of a multiplicity of truths—rather than the victory of only one privileged scientific one—are consistent with current trends in the research. **A**

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