

THE SACRAL PLACES AND CENTERS IN TOURISM AS A SECULAR PILGRIMAGE

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Abstract: *The article deals with role of concept of sacral places and supreme centers in theory of tourism. The focus of this research is study religious roots of spiritual tourism, goals of pilgrimage and tourist journeys and tourism as a form of secular pilgrimages. Religion can be studied from different perspectives, such as historical, cultural, geographic, etc. However, one of important research aspects is a correlation between geography, sacral space and tourism. In this context, researchers talk about the geography of religion, which is very relevant for tourist movements too. The space has a 'center' that stands out and becomes the object of worship where many pilgrims and tourists come (Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Nazareth, Rome, Varanasi etc.). The common denominators of pilgrimage and tourist journeys are sacred places: places to which pilgrims travel can be elements of geographical environment and anthropogenic structures. Holy places' concept has also a very significant role in the works of Cohen (1984), a famous tourism theorist from Israel. He believes that, for existential tourists, a journey represents a search for some spiritual Center which, by analogy with a believer, has the meaning of the Absolute for the tourists. Arriving at that supreme center, a tourist hopes to satisfy certain essential spiritual needs, and to discover the highest values and ideals. The supreme center is a holy place for a tourist, who feels a great excitement and gets close to a state of ecstasy while approaching the place, wanting to unite with its spirit, to transcend his own being and to merge with the other side. Some authors also consider a tourist journey to be a form of pilgrimage. It implies visiting some other place in order to live more sublime life and return to the essence. A journey is always some kind of "rites of passage", transition, a walk through premeditated temptations, a form of initiation. A journey is a pilgrimage. It is always a desire to go higher and further.*

Key words: *tourism, religion, sacred space, supreme centers*

Introduction

One of the most important causes of the emergence of religion is undoubtedly man's awareness of his own death and the fear of it. Religion succeeds in giving comfort to believers by promising them life after death. It is actually a primordial urge of every living being to survive and live. However, all living beings are mortal, and death will come for them sooner or later. The desire for infinite life is never realized. Animals have the privilege of not having conscience, and therefore not having awareness of their own inevitable death, which

makes them in a certain sense immortal. One of man's greatest tragedies is not only the fact that he is mortal, but also the fact that he has awareness of it. It means that man is in a state of constant frustration, because he cannot satisfy the most fundamental urge – the urge for infinite life. Such a great burden is hardly bearable for most people, and religion appears as one of efficient ways of comfort, as a hope for salvation, for better life after death. Life after death is certainly one of the most urgent, the most fundamental and the most popular metaphysical problems, which is present in all civilizations and to which every, even the most average man wants to know the answer. According to numerous authors, one of the main causes of the emergence of religion lies in the fear of death, i.e. the desire for immortality. Pavićević (1980: 384) says: "The deepest roots of religion are, therefore, the urge and desire for safety and duration, expressed through the will to exist. The root of religion can also be in man's egoism. The desire for duration generated another (apart from God) religious idea, the idea of the immortality of the soul. The human grave is the cradle of religion." Therefore, religion appears as one of the ways of overcoming the fear of death. Religion promises life after death, even significantly better life, that is – immortality of the soul. Regardless of differences among religions, almost all of them give comfort to believers by promising them some form of immortality. Even if all other needs which religion satisfies become satisfied some day, death alone is a reason enough for survival of different forms of religions.

The question of one's mortality is closely related to the question of meaning and purpose of human existence. Namely, if death is indeed the end of everything, the spirit and body, complete nothingness, then it is one of the main reasons for purposelessness of human existence. However, if man as a whole or at least his soul is immortal, then the problem of life's meaning is largely solved, because with immortality, the realized meaning of life does not disappear by death, and if the meaning is not realized, there is always a possibility of infinite search for the meaning. The meaning of life can be preserved only with the hope of existence of posthumous life. For a believer, death is not the end of life and a definite departure into nothingness, but only a moment of transition from one way of life into another, significantly better way of life.

For believers, religious pilgrimage can have the function of search for evidence of immortality in order to support and strengthen their own faith. Visiting holy places and temples represents, among other things, a desire to get closer to life after death during this earthly life. It is a desire to get closer to God, who guarantees immortality. Going to holy places, various rituals and rites also have a function of deserving life after death, the possibility of going to heaven, not to hell.

Religious roots of spiritual tourism

For some modern tourists, going to the Center, the supreme spot, where there is a striving for transcendence and interweaving with the place, can also imply experiencing the presence of immortality in some moments of ecstasy. It implies that the journey can be a means of search for evidence and touch with material signs of immortality, i.e. mystical experiences that will enable the inner knowledge of immortality.

A tourist journey can also be a reflection of the urge to escape from death, if not completely, like in the previous case, then at least to delay it and, for a while, to forget about the inevitable encounter with death. A journey enables a temporary leaving the place where everyday life is conducted and where death is expected. At home, death has a familiar face. It is connected with well-known places, hospitals, cemeteries, chapels, often seen funeral rites, funeral marches, coffins, wreaths, graves, tombstones. Death is presented as a mosaic of images and situations at familiar places and with familiar people. Everything will be just like it was at funerals of friends and relatives, at which we were present many times; the only difference is that we, that is, our corpse, will be carried in a closed casket. We will never see that scene in reality, but in our imagination we saw it a thousand times. One of the ways to escape from the horrible imminent well-known scenario of one's own death is to get away from home, to go to a distant, unknown, exotic land, where the face of death is unknown, where we do not know hospitals and cemeteries, where we do not have friends and acquaintances, where hearse brand is unknown to us, where there might be no graves and coffins. Our carcass might be thrown to vultures or cremated, and ashes might be scattered in a holy river. Since we usually relate our own illness and death to abovementioned familiar places and situations, the escape from death and illness by means of a journey essentially represents an escape from such places and situations that we relate to death. To die far away, in Calcutta or Lhasa, is somehow different and easier than to die here, in Belgrade or Novi Sad, because the scene of dying far away from our home seems unreal and surreal. Outside the well-known scenery and set, far away from our cemeteries and funerals, we feel as if we were slightly immortal, death seems more abstract. Danojlić (1984) sees traveling also as an opportunity to escape from death: "There is a very strong and foolish hope, a thought that some day, by scampering across the border, we could fool our own death. Consciously or unconsciously, willingly or unwillingly, each of us has related his own destiny to certain conditions and areas. In all these areas, everything seems inevitable and promised, birth, life, work that you do, even death itself. When traveling, it seems to us as if we

eluded the local Death Office supervision. We deleted ourselves from the death list, and got out of death's sight."

Experiences that are classified as 'mystical' are usually associated with believers' religious fervor, the supernatural, and the experiences on the border between life and death. However, by studying 'self-actualized persons,' Abraham Maslow has identified an urge for a mystical or sublime experience, which according to him, should be differentiated from theology and supernatural forces, considering the fact that it is a natural, finite experience completely in the domain of science. A mystical or sublime experience is a feeling of enormous ecstasy, admiration, awe, losing the sense of time and place. It is an extreme enhancement of every experience which implies losing one's identity or transcendence of one's identity, for example: focusing on a problem, being in a state of strong concentration, having a strong sensual experience, enjoying music or painting to such an extent that it brings oblivion. It is transcendence, an escape from one's own ego, merging with the general, and the convergence towards supra-individual. A mystical experience is an altered state of mind, in which the borders of one's own ego are lost and self-oblivion occurs. The basis of a mystical experience is altering the state of mind by different methods and techniques of ecstasy, religious fervor, drug consumption, ritual games, love, creativity, enjoying works of people and nature, regardless of the fact whether it is expanding or narrowing consciousness. It is a loss of individuality, and achieving the desired unity with something greater, which is beyond the borders of one's own personality. 'Something greater' with which one desires a unity is called the Absolute. In this sense, Gardet (1983: 5) defines mysticism as an "experience of the Absolute." In the further text, his definition will be accepted, i.e. the definition which implies that mysticism is a desire to experience the Absolute (the ultimate and supreme goal of mysticism) by using irrational means, different techniques of escaping or sinking into one's own being.

Bearing in mind that people are unfamiliar with a great secret of world creation, the secret of death, answers to the questions where we came from and where we are going, and what the purpose of everything is, there is much space for different mystical visions of the great secret of human life and death. Considering the fact that science and philosophy did not succeed in providing answers to the major life questions and that many issues are unresolved, fundamental and inexplicable mysticism is still present in the modern world, because we do not have answers to the most important questions. A mystical experience and mystical understanding of the world (whether within or outside of religion) draw strength from the facts that we do not know answers to those questions and that some basic human needs are not satisfied. Not a single scientific

explanation and not a single philosophical or religious system is capable of explaining the world from all its aspects. That is why mysticism seeks the truth using irrational means – rational science did not provide satisfying answers to those questions. However, at the same time, mysticism is a means of self-defense. It satisfies the need for illusion where the truth is too painful and difficult to bear. Science proves that human body rots and decomposes after death, and the human soul disappears, that death is irreversible nothingness, and that there is no hope for us after death. Mysticism maintains hope that there is ‘something’ after death. It kindles the imagination, encourages hope, and arouses belief in the supernatural and metaphysical, in salvation, because in the struggle for survival, illusion is as useful as the truth. Life can be easier to bear if some mysticism is present in it.

All people are mystics more or less, if not all the time then at least during the most difficult life situations, whether they are aware of it or not. Berdyaev adamantly exclaims: "I claim that all people are in a sense mystics, but they do not want to admit it holding to their pseudo-rationalistic consciousness, people are charitable to that gloomy light of a kerosene lamp, I claim that all people, more or less, had some mystical experience. Because of that I believe in objective truth of mysticism and in its reality. In modern highly-developed countries, where atheism and scientism rule, religion and mysticism are increasingly repressed by the development of science and technology. In that world, the need for a mystical experience represents something shameful and socially unacceptable. Therefore, people do not dare to admit to themselves that they have such a need, and they will certainly not try to satisfy it. That is why the people who have such needs travel to countries where mysticism is commonplace and where it is not shameful to have mystical experiences."

A journey can be characterized by the search for mystical experiences, i.e. places and situations in which they can be realized. Trips to distant exotic lands and regions that are attracting more and more tourists have a character of seeking mystical experiences which cannot be found in everyday life at home. In exotic countries, mystical rituals are a part of everyday life. In those places, there are numerous temples and shrines, people, rites and rituals through which it is possible to achieve a mystical experience, much-needed to a modern man who wants to regain a faith in something. Visiting mysterious and enigmatic temples and tombs, holy places in India or Nepal, for example, attending and initiating a variety of secret rituals which lead to ecstasy and alteration of the state of mind, in fact represent an attempt to satisfy the need for a radical change of oneself, for a complete escape, or at least a temporary break from a banal existence, the need for self-

oblivion and merging with the general and transcendence. Regardless of the fact that this phenomenon related to traveling has not been studied enough, it is evident that such a human need exists and that it can be satisfied by changing places, going away from home to mystical countries and towns.

However, not all tourists who visit mystical places are actual authentic mystics. Most of them want to 'try a little bit' of a mystical experience because it is exotic, and then they want to return to the previous state and talk about the experience for years. There are only few true mystic tourists who travel the world in a state of trance, so from the aspect of quantity, this form of tourism is insignificant. However, it does not mean that those journeys should not be an object of theoretical studies, especially because the issue is very interesting.

The goal of pilgrimage and tourist journeys

Believers and tourist leave home and go on a journey in order to visit a certain place and return home. The purpose of journey is not in staying, considering the fact that it is necessary to return home. Its purpose lies in the travelers' aspiration not to return home 'the same' as they were when they left. It is desirable that something happens at the journey, some revelation, cognition, an encounter which will change the personality and transform it in such a way that it will be completely different in the future. The place which travelers leave represents a frame in which everyday life is spent, with all its banalities and repetitions. The familiar urban landscape in which life is conducted is a profane space and ultimately banal surroundings, which does not have anything mystical, sublime or intriguing which would generate transcendence. The act of satisfying fundamental spiritual needs of potential tourists or believers is not, according to the definition of tourism and pilgrimage, possible at home. The cause, the meaning of the world and immortality cannot be comprehended and realized here. They are always out there in some other space. Religion considers them to be in some world beyond this one, in a higher heavenly space, and for tourism they are in some unfamiliar place and foreign country. However, in order to create a material bridge between this and that world, between the Earth and sky, between man and God, religion also possesses places in this world which have the ability to satisfy spiritual needs of pilgrimage. The mutual geographical goal of pilgrims and tourists is reaching some point in space to which the power to satisfy certain needs and ideals is attributed.

From the point of view of a profane experience, the space is homogenous, and every point in it has a relative significance and the

function of criteria and needs on the bases of which estimation is conducted. For a religious experience, the space is not homogenous and it is not relative. It is divided into the strong sacred space and the amorphous profane space. We can ask a basic question: why is it like that? Why does a believer experience the space in a different way? For a believer, God, located somewhere in the sky, is completely elusive, invisible and untouchable. Since it is possible to go to the other world only after death, it means that believers have no opportunity to come into direct physical contact with God during their lifetime. However, the human need for contacting God is irresistible and believers have a need to see and feel some material signs and evidence of God's existence, which would strengthen their faith. Therefore, the church and believers themselves have been finding and creating those material signs. God returns from the sky symbolically, through holy places and objects, which create a bridge between this and the other world. His abstract visions of God, good, truth and immortality, man has tried to exteriorize and transform into a visible material form. Striving to support his faith in God in his own salvation, man has transformed the visions of his mind into material objects, and he has given a divine symbolical meaning to existent natural objects. Leach (1983: 58) says: "For anthropologists, religious rites represent the most important area where this kind of material symbolization is reflected. All metaphysical entities are created as an initial conception in the mind; in order to think clearly about the ideas which are presented by words like God and spirit, we have to externalize them. There are two ways to do that: telling stories and myths in which metaphysical ideas are demonstrated with activities of supernatural beings, enlarged unnatural people and animals; and creating special material objects, buildings and places which serve for presenting metaphysical ideas and their mental environment." Wanting to materialize and support faith in the creations of his mind, man has also searched for signs in space, different natural objects and phenomena which present evidence of God's existence. If such phenomena did not exist or natural phenomena were not enough, man himself has been making objects and buildings at specific places marked with divine signs. Those places at which, according to myths and legends, a miracle happened, someone saw God, the Virgin Mary, or Angel, automatically become points in space which have significantly larger value and higher meaning than the other space, even when it is only a tree or stone. Those points at which God provided material evidence of his existence represent focal points of ritual activities and a bridge between this and the other world. Holy places, which are and are not on this world (for example, churches for which believers say that they are God's home), represent a material mediatory bridge. Holy places are spots at which this and the other

world meet. They are places where God is the closest to man and where a realization of ideals is possible. That is the reason why those places are the basic goal of pilgrimage. However, in accordance with the human need to reduce the world to One, most religions maintain the idea that the most important supreme point in space exists, which is, by its significance, higher than others. It is the Center of religious world and the absolute fulcrum. It is the essence, the center of the world, the most sacred spot which symbolizes the Absolute or some of its characteristics. Those points provide a touch with the transcendent. They represent the axis of the world (*axis mundi*) and the point of orientation which brings order into cosmic chaos. Such places which symbolize the center of the world can be mountains, holy towns, pillars, temples, but also rocks, trees, graves, stones, springs, forests, rivers, caves, islands, lakes, and the like. They enable communication with Gods and represent a secure fulcrum in the middle of amorphous fluidity of profane space which is seen as chaos. In every religion, the most important goal of pilgrimage is reaching that sublime holy place. However, it does not exclude journeys to other, less important holy places. Some of those supreme holy places of various religions are: Koptos, Thebes, Luxor, Karnak, Memphis, Abydos in ancient Egypt, Mount Olympus and Delphi in ancient Greece, and various holy places that are still very active and visited, such as Mecca, Jerusalem, Benares, Lhasa and others. Believers do not travel to these places only looking for the absolute; they also expect some other earthly or otherworldly benefits. The Muslims expect from the Hajj in Mecca to bring them forgiveness for all their sins. The Brahmins believe that bathing in the Ganges, a holy river, provides them access to heaven, and if they shave their head and body at the mouth of the holy rivers of Ganges and Yamuna, they believe that they will get a million years of happiness and blissfulness for every hair that falls in the rivers. The Catholics believe that visiting Lourdes will cure even terminal patients. There are numerous examples in various religions that pilgrims expect from visits to holy places to bring them not only benefits in the other world, but also to satisfy some of the most urgent needs in this world, such as health. However, the main reason for gatherings of believers is the act of uniting with God, which is accomplished by the fascination that believers have when they come to a holy place, and also by various religious rites which aim to cause religious fervor, falling into a trance, and the like. Those are the most basic motives and characteristics of religious pilgrimage.

Tourism as a form of secular pilgrimage

A modern tourist is usually not a believer or pilgrim, but he still, aware of it or not, possesses certain needs characteristic for pilgrims. A

tourist also asks the question about the meaning of existence. He is also tormented by his own mortality and the fear of nothingness. While a believer is satisfying his fundamental needs by believing in religious dogmas, an atheist is trying to satisfy the same needs in different ways. However, atheists are not immune to different forms and ways of satisfying those needs that are close to religion. By expanding the term of religion to a system of orientation and an object of belief, Fromm (1979: 78) thinks that there is no person in the world who does not have religious needs, although someone can consider himself to be a nonreligious person. Man needs a frame of orientation and objects of worship that become a vital necessity for his emotional balance. Those can be values, ideals, forefathers, father, mother, soil, earth, class, religion, and hundreds of other entities, which are considered to be sacred. Fromm also believes that man needs an object of loyalty, which will be the focal point of all his aspirations and the basis for all his actual, not only proclaimed values. Such an object mobilizes energy, elevates the individual above the isolated existence, with all his doubts and uncertainties, and gives him the meaning of life. Being loyal to the goal which is beyond his isolated ego, he transcends himself and leaves the prison of absolute egocentricity.

Analogous to religion and parallel to it appears so-called 'secular religion.' The object of belief and worship of secular religion are not some otherworldly categories, but earthly values, ideals, leaders, and the like, and they are absolutized and divinized. For a nonreligious man, for a believer in secular religion who considers himself to be a nonreligious being, a flag, hymn, promise, some ideals, historical persons, leaders, and the like, can be sacred. They are absolute divine values, which are worshipped. When it comes to pilgrimages, as we discussed, analogous to religious pilgrimages, there are different forms of secular pilgrimages to battlefields, graves or birth places of some important people, mausoleums, etc. Bearing in mind the fact that, for an atheist, those places are filled with sublime meaning, at the same time they have a greater meaning than other places and the environment. We return to the religious feeling of inequality of space, i.e. different views of the sacred and profane space. Namely, an atheist also, willingly or unwillingly, experiences certain places as the most significant or more significant than other places – those are his holy places. Eliade (1980: 12) says: "Regardless of the degree to which the world desacralization reached, a man who chose profane life has not succeeded in destructing completely religious behavior. We can see that even the most desacralized existence still preserves traces of the religious valuation of the world... Yet in the profane space experience... there are privileged parts of space, different than the other parts by quality, such as the landscape of birth place, the

place where the first love occurred, a street or part of the first foreign town that we visited in youth. All those places have, even for an honestly nonreligious man, a special unique quality. Those are holy places of his private universe, as if that nonreligious being has experienced a revelation of some other reality, different from the one that he participates in with his everyday existence.”

For a modern man, experiencing certain points in space as holy places has an extreme significance for emergence and development of some forms of tourism. A tourist does not have some specific, exclusively touristic needs, in the same way that a pilgrim does not have exclusively religious needs; he only aspires, as we explained, to satisfy his fundamental needs through a journey. He wanders the world looking for his own Center which will, according to his intuition, be capable of satisfying those needs and ideals, and if they are stronger and cause a higher degree of frustration because of the lack of satisfaction, the place where a tourist expects to satisfy his needs will be more absolutized and worshipped. Every social group and every individual has a specific center in which everything will be solved: Moscow was the center of world communism; Rome is the center of Catholicism; Amsterdam and Kathmandu are centers of free consumption of opiates; London is the center of rock culture; San Francisco is the center of free love, etc. However, not all tourists seek their Center outside of the world and culture in which they live. The majority of ordinary tourists only wants to see foreign countries, their customs and people, but they are always essentially bound, with their body and spirit, to the center from which they came, and they return to it. However, a minority of existential tourists, who are the closest to the term of pilgrimage, is intellectually and emotionally bound to the chosen spiritual center which is placed somewhere out there, in some other space, outside their society and culture. In a survey published under the title “The Real Life of Frenchmen,” conducted by Arbois and Schindlow (1978: 64), some questions referred to tourist travels as a part of real life. In this context, the following response was given: “I’ve dreamed of traveling. Since long time ago. Maybe since forever. I dream of going to the USA and North Africa. I hope that someday I will have enough money to do that. I have an impression that I will go there to find my roots, in the sense that every being is one world and that it has other roots, apart from actual biological and geographical, and those roots are in the countries with which the being is in spiritual harmony and with which it has a profound connection. I feel that I belong to those overseas countries.” In this case, it is evident that the person feels that the place of residence is insufficient for their needs. It is a feeling that some people have, a feeling that they

essentially do not belong to the country they were born in, to its people, society and culture, because people were placed in a particular country by birth without their own will. Therefore, they might have a feeling that they belong to some other world, which is one of the more profound causes for visiting foreign countries. Tourist journeys appear to be a consequence of inability to find the meaning of existence at home, and also a consequence of some other unsatisfied ideals. Therefore, on the basis of available information about the outside world, an individual creates mental images of countries and towns in which his ideals can be realized. Imagination builds, deforms and idealizes images of these distant regions, so that they are absolutized and deified, and they become the object of worship, like holy places for pilgrims. A Muslim can live anywhere in the world, but for him the center of the world is Mecca. An existential tourist can live in any region of the world, while some other part of the world can be his individual spiritual center. Tourists, like pilgrims, travel to a point in space that represents a symbol, a material embodiment of their highest spiritual needs. However, it is easier for a believer, considering the fact that a certain religious center which is the goal of pilgrimage has already been given to him. On the other hand, a tourist, atheist or agnostic does not have any *a priori* center. He has to feel or sense what his individual center is and then, by going to that place, to make sure that it really is his spiritual center. If it is not, he seeks further, first in himself, and then throughout the world in order to find a new center. The whole life of an existential tourist can be spent in a futile search for the utopian focal fulcrum of his existence.

As the highest ideal, at the very top of the hierarchy of values, is the idea of the Absolute, the supreme good, truth, freedom, the measure for all things. The Absolute appears in the form of various anthropomorphic ideas, primarily as a reflection of the human urge to find the first cause in one entity, and to find the ultimate meaning and the immortality of existence. For a believer, as we discussed, the Absolute is God, who embodies the highest human ideals and provides answers to all questions. For a believer, everything that is related to God, that possesses divine attributes, has an absolute value, whether these are religious symbols, holy figures or places where, according to legends, a miracle occurred, proving God's existence. Such places are objects of worship and pilgrimage for believers, because they present a symbolic materialization of God or some of his characteristics on earth. Sublime temples, magnificent cathedrals, tombs, monuments, archaeological remains of ancient towns, hazy mountain peaks, hidden places in the jungle, distant and exotic countries and towns, are for a modern man - a tourist, a symbol and material trace of the lost Absolute, a mysterious sign for

which he constantly searches at some other place, because by definition, it cannot be found here. Rougemont (1983: 26) writes about the absence of material traces of the Absolute in the West and their presence in the East: "In India, everywhere you can see pilgrimages, shrines, places and quarters of holy towns, trees, rivers and sacred animals, men and women who kneel at doorsteps, curbs and roadsides, or stand alone in front of their idols. You can also see overall misery. In Europe, there are only few pilgrimages and temples in the areas where a church tower is the highest point of a village or town; there are several hundred ancient castles, which are, for mystics, the symbols of the soul witnessing respect for the sacred, but the sacred is excluded from life and surrounded with large industrial suburbs and technology scenery. In the USA, there is not a single holy place apart from churches built in a factitious lavish Gothic style, topped by skyscrapers; there are no pilgrimages and genuine castles. Lowlands and big cities are void of mystery, cleaned from every trace of primitive religion and pious respect for objects, plants, animals, or the supernatural. However, moral comfort and material abundance are highly divided among all classes." This view indicates that, when it comes to searching for the Absolute, the direction of tourist movements usually goes from the West to East. The West and East are antitheses: the West is twilight, evening, the foot of the mountain, the left, awkwardness, an eclipse, a demon of utilitarianism and the blind force, oblivion of spiritual purposes, body and materia, unrestrained action, passion, spoilage by material passionate relationships, seduced and confused cognition, and exile. The East is dawn, morning, height, the right, extreme refinement, light, angel, the ultimate purpose, soul, initiation, wisdom, revival, inspiration, cognition, and original indigenization.

Existential tourists, like believers, are experiencing growing excitement while approaching the holy place of their personal spiritual universe. They want to be alone in front of the object of worship, in order to be able to unite with it and, in a moment of transcendence, to experience unification with the absolute. Those tourists tend to experience certain points in space as the ultimate meaning, as the symbol and materialization of the absolute. They have a personal center of the world, which is filled with the supreme meaning and in which they want to find themselves some day. For some people it is Machu Picchu or Kathmandu today, and Lhasa or Bombay tomorrow, for others it may be Paris, San Francisco or the peaks of Durmitor. That center is a reflection of insatiable human urge to find the essence, the first cause, *telos*, and the absolute, as the supreme meaning of fulcrum. When he visits a holy place, a believer tries, through various rituals, to come to an ecstatic state, to fall into a religious trance that will allow him at least short

transcendence and unity with God. An existential tourist, in his absolute point of Lambda, also tries to penetrate through the membrane of banal everyday self-understanding and to make a contact in some way, to unite and permeate himself with the place of embodiment of the absolute, and in that way to reach the state of self-oblivion and self-transcendence. Only a moment of mystical experience at a certain place is enough for an existential tourist to regain his faith that, perhaps, there is something in darkness. Tourists also try to make a contact with the place in different ways and to unite with it. Sometimes a unity comes spontaneously. Everyone has had this experience: while traveling, one suddenly reaches a place that seems familiar to him, as if he saw it in dreams, or perhaps he has never seen it before, but it makes him feel so happy and peaceful that he would like to stay there forever. The next moment the magic disappears, the borders between one's body, mind and the place return, and the person returns to the initial state of separation from the world.

In addition to these unexpected and rare moments of spontaneous permeation, there are different techniques that can enhance mergence and fusion with the place, that is, to the point of Lambda. Some of the most important techniques of connecting with the place of the absolute are: a visual contact, intense concentration because of a visual experience, and the landscape, in order to absorb the images and based on that, conduct the appropriation of space and interaction with it; touching the object in order to come into direct physical contact with it; experiencing with other senses: temperature, wind, smell and other characteristics of places; the absorption of something, such as drinking water or wine, consuming food, and breathing air and certain odors; marking one's physical presence by signing one's name or tossing a coin into a fountain; taking souvenirs, such as stones, flowers, twigs, various objects, etc. All those actions are different forms of the intention to unite with the place, by sinking one's body into the place, or bringing a part of the place into one's body, or both. The ultimate possible goal and purpose of existential tourism and pilgrimage is finding a place in which something spontaneous or forced will happen, a moment of transcendence and union with the Absolute.

The irresistible magnetic force of divine ancient monuments and distant exotic places, their mysterious aura of metaphysical meaning, is not an inexplicable mystery. It is a projection of the idea of the Absolute to those objects outside one's place of residence, that have certain objective inherent qualities, because of which they are considered to have a deeper meaning and divine significance. The cause of this phenomenon should be looked for in people's inability to find the meaning of everyday life, and in their increasing awareness of the ultimate purposelessness of

existence. Tourist journeys, as a way of searching for the absolute point, are only a modern myth, utopia, whose primary function, like the function of religion and pilgrimage, is to provide additional material elements for people, so that they could create a pink cloud of illusions and self-deception around themselves, because living in deception is easier than facing the terrifying scientific truth which does not give any hope or comfort. A journey can support faith in the existence of the supreme entity, some imaginary Absolute, which is above people. Insatiable thirst and nostalgia for the Absolute are actually a reflection of the human urge for the cause, meaning, and immortality, which cannot be found at home, and therefore, they are sought everywhere, even in some distant places. A tourist journey can also be a search for a meaning in space, a search for secret signs, which only a lonely traveler will be able to decipher.

Conclusion

So keeping this in mind, it's about communicating with otherworldly through the holy places that are in placed in the real geographical area and which are symbolic materialization of the metaphysical ideas. Tourists, as well as pilgrims, seek the supreme sacred centers where this side horizontal intersects with the metaphysical vertical, connecting this world with heaven and invisible absolute. These focal points, toward which converge the sacred and profane, allow material contact with the absolute, transcendence and mystical experience. In the developed secular and atheistic world, in parallel with the development of science and technology, irrational or mystical are increasingly being pushed. Therefore, those who feel such a need to travel to countries in which mysticism poses a socially accepted part of everyday life, (India, Nepal, etc.). Regardless of insufficiently researched field of this phenomenon in the context of travel, it is certain that such a need exists in certain categories of people that can be met by going to countries and places that are commonly labeled as mystical and exotic (and dominated by the principle of games *mimicry* and *ilinx* opposite pair *agon - alea* which dominate in the West). Finally, all the tourists who go to mystical places are not authentic "mystics", the majority of them only wants "to try a little bit" of mystical experience as an integral part of their exotic trips and to return to its previous state. As the number of real passengers - mystics who move around the world in search of the holy places is relatively little, this category of travel is of little importance. However, this does not diminish its qualitative value and the possibility that this type of tourism should deeper be theoretically analyzed, especially given the fact that mass tourism, as a homogeneous category,

"break up" on increasing number of segments among which journeys in search of otherworldly have their own place.

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