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Conclusion

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The path to touch the sacred and holy is a metaphor referring to certain features of pilgrimage. A ‘path’ has a start and an end, symbolizes mobility to move from one point to another. ‘Path’ symbolizes physical and metaphorical mobility, i.e. it implies motivations and a strategy to reach a target. The result is a transformation: Persons change with each step they take, and do not return like they started. The target is twofold, and includes the activity of ‘touching’ and the object to be touched. ‘Touching’ enables physical experiences, and thus is an attempt to ascertain what someone believes in, but maybe cannot see or understand. Consequently, the sacred and holy are the targets to reach, the objects to touch, and the reasons to hit the road. Furthermore, the contact with the ‘sacred and holy’ results in the transformation and shapes it.

This volume takes a cross-disciplinary approach to evaluate the topic of metaphor. For this purpose, the authors investigate case studies to point out local and temporal features of pilgrimages in the Balkans. The social and cultural anthropological overview of pilgrimages in Christian communities of the Balkan also reviews theories. Especially the theories of Turner and Eade/Sallnow are still an important point of reference. However, while most of the contributions follow them, some (Lubanksa, Dugushina and Novik, Giakoumis, and Reuter) critique these theories and offer innovative theoretical approaches.

However, all contributions mention features that indicate a spatial dimension. Thus, a spatial theory can offer an appropriate approach to reflect these features. Especially, Kim Knott’s spatial theory (2005) suits for this enterprise because she offers a constructive definition: ‘place is that nexus in space in which social relations occur, which may be material or metaphorical and which is necessarily interconnected (with places) and full of power’.¹ Furthermore, according to Knott, places are ‘perceived’, ‘conceived’, and ‘lived’, i.e. people build places according to their needs and ideas,² which matches perfectly with the conclusions of the chapters. Applying this spatial theory to the case studies of pilgrimage leads for a better understanding of pilgrimage dynamics. The following concluding remarks present some major results of this volume from the perspective of Knott’s theory.³ This volume examines physical as well as metaphorical places and spaces. However, most of the case studies refer to certain places that should be reached physically. Mainly these places are monasteries and churches, but this category includes other meaningful sites like prisons, private houses, or cities. All these locations are parts of broader spaces considered as geographical or political entities. In the volume, smaller entities are mentioned such as villages, cities, and regions, plus transregional or transnational entities like states, Europe, or more specific the EU like Ladić and Hrovatin exemplify.

¹ Kim Knott, *The Location of Religion. A Spatial Analysis* (London, Oakville: Equinox Publishing 2005b), p. 134.

² Cf. Kim Knott, ‘Spatial Theory and Method for the Study of Religion’, *Temenos - Nordic Journal of Comparative Religion*, 41 (2005a), pp. 153–84 (pp. 162–63).

³ The authors indicated in this concluding chapter mainly refer to the participants of this volume. Therefore, the source will not be indicated unless required.

Among the metaphorical places, saints are the main places, because they played a significant role in the region, they established physical places or are reasons to establish them. Thus, saints also initiated the cults of pilgrimage directly or indirectly at physical places (cf. Giakoumis). Furthermore, metaphorical places include even objects such as relicts, icons, and statues of saints as well as natural occurrences like water and stones that are not obviously religious.

Physical and metaphorical places cannot always be sharply distinguished from each other. Thus, Gumenai exemplifies the interconnection of a monastery and an icon, i.e. of physical and metaphorical places. The plurality of pilgrimage places is what Victor and Edith Turner (1978) have called polycentrism. The interconnection of places results even in the production of new places and Giakoumis calls this as 'diffusion' to complement the Turnerian theory.

The connection between the considered places can take various meanings and shapes. In the chapter related to Onica, she illustrates the path to the 'sacred and holy' as connection of two worlds, i.e. the 'mundane' here and now on earth and the other world of the divine. Moreover, Lubanska concludes that 'live-giving energy' is what people in Bulgaria are looking for at pilgrimages, i.e. a kind of divine power, miracles, feelings, and experiences. At the same time, the author proves that to gain this energy people have to give or to do something at the places, for the saints, and/or with the objects. Thus, gaining energy seems to be the result of exchanging goods between human beings and the divine, while the physical and metaphorical places are supportive vehicles.

The perception of places depends mainly on the actors. Reuter shows in her chapter that the religious perception results from the entire context too. She concludes this from the differentiation of the actors' motivations and activities. Pilgrimages are completed by religious activities such as praying, celebrating feast days of saints, lighting candles, etc. Relevant to the findings of Reuter is the study of Necula who mentions that some of these visits are organized explicitly by parishes or dioceses. Thus, according to the author, the church as an institution is a main actor that uses pilgrimage as pedagogical method for educating people and building a faithful Christian community. Beside the church, Necula mentions even teachers and children to emphasize the religious-educational function of pilgrimage. Furthermore, Hrovatin connects the educational dimension of pilgrimage also with the influence on European culture. Among the church staff are clerics like bishops, priests and pastoral teams organizing pilgrimages. In another study by Varvounis, he concludes, clerics are responsible for preserving the religious character. Monasterial residents, monks and nuns, control if practices, behaviour, or even clothing on-site are acceptable, and keep the official traditions. Further tasks might be documenting pilgrimages, or even creating people's needs for pilgrimages as concluded by the results of Anđelković. Accordingly, intended consequences of pilgrimages are the religious transformation of people and the influence on their lives. Thus, pilgrimages organised by church aim a spiritual revival as Onica states in her chapter.

Religious interpretation includes even perspectives of lay persons that do not belong to the church staff. Lay persons' religious practices and perspectives are often called vernacular, folk, or lived religion in contrast to the official religion controlled by the church (cf. Varvounis). Nevertheless, for the term 'energy' Lubanska concludes that some ideas of lay persons match with Eastern Christian theology, New Age spirituality and in her case teachings of Petür Dūnov, a Bulgarian theosophist.

The volume illustrates that besides the religious connotated perception of pilgrimage there are other, non-religious meanings. The meanings of pilgrimages and visited places always depend from the actors' needs. Hrovatin concludes this for political, cultural, and religious aspects. In contrast to local communities, diaspora communities inscribe their own meanings to pilgrimages. As Chryssanthopolou concludes, the descendants of immigrants visit places of their ancestors' origins to reassure themselves of their own roots. This emphasis and revitalisation of their origins proves their

patriotism, i.e. their political interests. At the same time, pilgrimages for diaspora communities connect their past with their future plans to visit places of their origins again.

Pilgrimages and their targets as physical and metaphorical places are consciously 'conceived' by actors, but they are also contingently formed by certain issues. As Dugushina and Novik conclude in their chapter, pilgrimages are always shaped by historical, political, and social circumstances. Historically, pilgrimages became very popular in the Middle Ages (cf. Ladić and Gumenâi). In that time, pilgrimage established cultural and economic connections, and enabled peaceful learning about various aspects of different cultures and civilizations. Nevertheless, even today pilgrimages in Moldova include pre-Christian traditions as Onica shows in her study. These pre-Christian traditions are what Varvounis defines as the current popular religiosity that is expressed in contemporary pilgrimage in Greece. According to Pantea, at the beginning of the twentieth century, pilgrimages have been connotated quite politically due to wars and border demarcations. During socialism, often the lay persons' religiosity continued, while religions were banned (cf. Giakoumis). The impact of socialism transformed pilgrimages and places, e.g. into visits to touristic spots. Since the 1990s and due to the new granted religious freedom, the establishment of the official church perspective is a rediscovery of tradition depending on the socialist politics of the individual states. Thus, regarding to post-socialist states, continuities and discontinuities become obvious.

Closely linked to the conception of places is the way actors live them, i.e. how they behave there and how they use them. This aspect refers for instance to the negotiation of religious differences at pilgrimages as another religio-political conclusion of this volume. While Pantea examines this issue for orthodox and catholic Christian communities in Romania, Dugushina and Novik illustrate the negotiations of interfaith coexistence between Christian and Muslim communities in Kosovo and Albania. In both cases, the borders between religious groups overlap with those of different ethnic groups.

However, during pilgrimage, actors do not only live their religions, rather than all aspects that characterize them. The chapters of Anđelković and Kouzas illustrate this by the interdependency of pilgrimage with tourism and economy. In addition to traders, Anđelković explains even how the local community profits from tourists. Moreover, the needs manufactured by the brotherhood illustrate the economic meaning of pilgrimages for the monastery and its residents as the main occasion to get money. Kouzas concludes that pilgrimage are interdependent social and economic processes.

Of course, all mentioned categories of actors can overlap or interact. Moreover, the actors' reasons, interpretations, and influences are interdependent. Nevertheless, some categories need more research. Little attention is paid on the role of gender and age of the pilgrimages (cf. Ladić or Chryssanthopolou). More investigation is also required on the role of journalists, and the media (cf. Anđelković), especially the social media. Finally, with respect to the feature of healing (cf. Lubanska), even the role of healers at pilgrimage sites and the perspectives from medical staff on this phenomenon are worth to be studied further.

The volume concludes that the investigated places are targets and symbols of a community with a specific meaning for the actors. Hitting the path to touch the 'sacred and holy' is not always religiously motivated. There are even touristic, political, social, or economic reasons that can motivate people what become evident by the differentiation of actors. Moreover, these reasons can be combined so that the results of transformation are quite ambiguous as Reuter concludes.

However, regardless of the actual motivations to come in contact with physical and metaphorical places, the original reasons to visit the places are based on religion. This raises the question of the relation between 'sacred and holy' and 'secular' that is also called 'profane'. Often, these attributes are defined as dichotomy. This volume offers two more perspectives: For Kouzas, the attributes complement each other with respect to time and space. In contrast, Reuter asserts that

'religious' and 'secular' refer to the meta level of how to interpret cultural patterns. Moreover, she applies this theory to the spatial structure of pilgrimage targets: the identification of an inner and an outer area reflect the ambiguity of meanings. These approaches to rethink the dichotomy open new perspectives for further research on pilgrimages in general and in Southeastern Europe in particular.

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