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## Religion as a subject of cognitive interest to tourists : analysis of the phenomenon and products on offer for cultural-religious tourism

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## Religion as a subject of cognitive interest to tourists Analysis of the phenomenon and products on offer for cultural-religious tourism

**Keywords:** religious tourism, cultural tourism, pilgrimage, educational tourism.

### **Abstract:**

In the context of the current state of the discussion on religious tourism in Poland, the author justifies the need for separate research focusing on tourism related activities oriented towards cognitive experiences and connected with places and events linked with beliefs, yet unrelated to one's religious attitudes and not being part of one's practice of faith.

Numerous examples of tourist activities and available travelling options provide material for an analysis of typical destinations and for characteristics of products on offer for this kind of cultural tourism. Finally, the article points to the potential areas for research and problems requiring complex solutions for this segment of cultural tourism.

### Introduction

In the situation where on the one hand we can see the progressing secularization of Europe (and let us admit, this is also true for Poland – the fact is confirmed by the Church's own statistics concerning religious practice) and on the other hand we witness the increasingly rapid process of inviduation in religious attitudes, we can expect that sooner or later behaviours of tourists in their statistical totality will manifest individual's worldview. For a growing number of people religion is no longer an important component of life (or in fact it is completely dismissed), however they continue to be interested in religions as a foundation for their own culture, as an important ingredient of other cultures, or as a key to understanding historical events or works of art. This fascination provides motivation for tourists to explore places connected with the history of (various) religions, to visit former or still existing centres of spiritual life, places recognized as the cradle of various forms of religious cult, or regions with accumulation of outstanding works of art and architecture based on or resulting from religious beliefs or created for religious purposes, or to follow old pilgrims' routes. Not all of these behaviours can be classified as either traditional pilgrimage or the so-called "spiritual tourism", involving other methods of travelling instigated by religious need, which is connected with the search for the meaning of life, elements of asceticism or spiritual formation; such needs are fulfilled along the way to holy places, in such places or while participating in religious events. Undoubtedly there also exists tourism, which focuses on cognitive experience and a clearly defined key subject matter, in this case reflecting the traveller's personal interest in a religion or in religions. Such choices may result from long-time fascination or may be linked with a given incident in the tourist's biography; they may result from the context of his/her education or professional activity or simply from following current topics of public discourse, or even from seasonal promotion of specific travelling destinations; they can also be linked with anniversary celebrations of historical events. This study, first of all, aims at describing a number of specific behaviours of tourists and typical products on offer, which meet the resulting demand (so far this aspect has been neglected in considerations on cultural tourism in Poland). Secondly, it focuses on justifying the necessity for Polish researchers to recognize this form of tourism as a legitimate

subject matter for systematic analysis within the academic considerations and discussions concerning cultural tourism. Indeed, such a requirement is valid right now since, quite soon this may become a dominant form of tourism oriented towards religious goals. In addition to the introduction and conclusions the text contains three parts. The first one reviews the current state of Polish academic discussion focusing on religious tourism other than pilgrimages. The second part, taking into account selected examples, presents some related tourism products on offer. The third part is an attempt to categorize the major assets which are of significance for cultural travellers focusing on religious heritage, and to systematize the main methods of organizing related touring options. The research was conducted by means of thematic preliminary review in the following three areas: a) scientific analyses of tourism focusing on goals and topics related to religion, published during the last 20 years, b) up-to-date catalogues of products published by specialized Polish and European travel agencies – materials available during ITB Berlin international travel trade show and at the enterprises' websites, and c) proposals for region-oriented organization of tourism from throughout Europe (e.g. cultural routes, thematic tourism centres, local thematic routes). The main criterion was the destination of expeditions and the thematic focus of their programs, and the differentiating criterion was the presence or absence of strictly religious components (including: ritual and formation oriented) in the program or in products on offer. Due to the goal of the study (providing evidence for the phenomenon of cultural-religious tourism and justification for the need to independently discuss the subject rather than conducting systematic analysis) the review was conducted selectively and was closed once the obtained results allowed for confirming the hypothesis.

## 1. Does religious (non-pilgrimage) tourism exist?

The existence of touring activity different than pilgrimage yet aiming for sites related to religions and to places of worship has obviously been acknowledged in considerations of cultural tourism [Smith 1992; Vukonic 1996; Hey 1998; Timothy, Olsen, 2006; Hopfinger et al., 2012]. Such distinction has also been articulated in Polish studies of travelling. Over 20 years ago it was introduced into publications discussing the issues of tourism by the most devoted Polish researcher of this topic, Antoni Jackowski [1991]. In one of his recent publications he is trying to more clearly define these two types of touring activity [Jackowski 2010, p. 26]. Such distinction is also accepted by researchers of the phenomenon of tourism representing the circles associated with the Church [Ostrowski 1996, p. 354]. However, in accordance with the concept proposed by Jackowski, religious travellers are first categorized due to their motivations: exclusively religious, combined religious and cognitive, and exclusively cognitive or other [Jackowski 2010, p. 26], and as a consequence the latter group is no longer classified as religious tourists [p. 28]. Yet, such approach fails to adequately account for the actual diversity of the tourist traffic in places related to religions. Additionally, the list of destinations chosen by tourists who, as a result of their cognitive motivation, opt for expeditions focusing on religious themes is not limited to places of worship, contrary to what Jackowski seems to claim [p. 26].

A more clear-cut distinction of tourism focusing on itineraries with religious profile was proposed by the author of this article in 2008. Basically maintaining the categories proposed by Jackowski, and at the same time consistently retaining the definition of cultural tourism proposed and justified by himself, he classifies both extreme groups as cultural tourists, at the same time pointing to the fluid borderline between them which is a pre-condition for the existence of the middle group, motivated by both religious and cognitive aspects [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008, p. 146–148]. Two years later the same author additionally clarifies the distinction (within the concept of tourism focusing on places, sites or events

connected with religion and therefore defined as religious tourism), by proposing separate definitions of religious-pilgrimage tourism and cultural-religious tourism [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010, p. 170]. Both types of travellers aim for places, sites or events of religious nature, yet the former are motivated exclusively or mainly by religious incentives and they focus on religious experience while the latter type of travellers are motivated by cognitive interests. They visit the same range of destinations, treating them as cultural heritage sites, or fulfilling their educational needs and the aforementioned experience, even if it is not ruled out, does not impact their decision concerning the journey. According to this author, because of the third group in the middle, those travellers who are driven by mixed motivations and follow mixed itineraries, the two analyzed phenomena cannot be treated independently and this additionally justifies the necessity to investigate them as parts of the same branch of cultural tourism.

Jackowski [2010, p. 29] claims that religious motivation is absolutely necessary, and this author believes such approach leads to excluding a large group of cultural travellers, who clearly are *interested* in religion yet are not driven by the aforementioned religious *motivations* (resulting from faith or religious needs). The group includes non-believers, or individuals whose experience of faith is not strong enough to instigate their journey to holy places, or indeed those who do not recognize the need to travel to such places in connection with the religious attitude they adhere to. Yet, they are interested in religious places and events seeing these as components of cultural environment – their own or other people’s (after all, there are Christians who are interested in other religions, their genesis, rituals and cultural function). On the other hand, the progressing laicism of public life and secularization of Europeans, also involving individuation in one’s spiritual life, the increasing detachment from church institutions and communities as well as decreasing importance of religious practices [Marianiński 2006], in the case of individuals interested in culture, do not necessarily lead to a loss of awareness regarding the Christian roots. Hence, those individuals continue to accept religion at least as an important (co-founding) element of their personal and collective (e.g. national) identity). Many people, who travel to holy places or other sites important for the history of religion, do not consider themselves to be members of Churches or other religious communities but they do accept the traditional religion of their culture (e.g. Polish Catholicism, or more broadly: history of Christian Europe) or even more so the religious attitudes of their own parents, and recognize that as a significant component of their cultural background. For these people such expedition sometimes is an occasion for viewing religion in a new light – in the context of integral approach to their own culture. In the case of other travellers (including numerous self-proclaimed atheists) the choice of such itineraries may result from and manifest their sentiments and a will to mentally revisit the world of their childhood and the faith of their possibly deceased parents or grandparents. Certainly, the list of reasons for travelling may be much longer, yet today there are no results of research which would allow for identifying the motivations most significantly impacting the demand for this kind of trips. Itineraries with “religious profile” include places related to biographies of historical figures linked with a religion, places important for the development of a religion (e.g. religious movements, conflicts), regularly held events associated with public worship or expression of religious experience (e.g. traditional or unique rituals; large gatherings), as well as material artefacts related to worship and religious life (large monasteries, hermitages, monumental cathedrals, collections of religious art, and other). All these constitute a list of destinations for individuals who in their free time travel exclusively to gain cognitive experiences. There are a growing number of such trips and cultural-religious tourism seems to be the most adequate concept for classifying behaviours of their participants. Notably, in our country there is a significant number (although not clearly identified due to a lack of detailed studies) of believers and those practising a religion, who do not accept the traditional form of the so-called “pilgrimage-trips” [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2008, p. 150]. These are frequently

based on low level services, their participants are mainly older people representing popular type of spirituality and they are guided by clergymen. Such trips are dominated by religious program (e.g. long traditional prayers and religious songs) even during the journey. The fact that some people do not choose this option does not mean they are not interested in religious subject matter. It can be assumed that a different type of product on offer will meet their expectations and will gradually contribute to the increase in tourism focusing on religious themes and allowing for cognitive experiences. The same results can be expected with regard to individual tourists if, in addition to the options designed for pilgrims, there are other products on offer focusing on holy places and other locations designated as or accumulating, or utilizing cultural heritage in its religious aspect.

Tourism related phenomena reported by a number of foreign [e.g. Richards, Fernandes 2007; Bader, Hopfinger 2012] and Polish researchers [related to both tourist areas in Poland and abroad: Banaszekiewicz 2010 p.175–176 – for Russia; Wilkońska 2010, p.65 – for Poland and Israel] confirm there are those “other” cultural travellers interested in religions, and describe behaviours typical for them. While discussing the phenomenon of tourism to holy places, Paweł Różycki specifically distinguishes “religion-neutral” or “secular” cultural travellers who visit such places treating them as cultural assets [Różycki 2008, p. 213]. In his overall analysis of issues related to tourism focusing on religious themes the same author adopts a broader concept of cultural tourism, also taking into account pilgrimages, and postulates that pilgrimages and trips to religious sites motivated by cognitive aspects should be treated as separate types of religious tourism [Różycki 2009, p. 158–159]. To fully outline the problem it is necessary to point out opinion which contradicts the aforementioned concept put forth by A. Jackowski. The leading German researcher of cultural tourism, Albrecht Steinecke [2007, p. 109] has reviewed reasons and a wide range of behaviours shown by tourists focusing on historical places and sites connected with religion, and recognizes them as one of the main groups of cultural travellers; on the other hand he refuses to use the term cultural traveller in relation to tourists (and most of all pilgrims) motivated by religious incentives because of these exclusive or principal reasons for their travel. This way he recognizes their pursuits as a separate type of travel behaviours.

## 2. Religion as an object of fascination. Examples of cultural-religious itineraries.

Taking into account the aforementioned arguments concerning cultural-religious tourism we can assume there is a group of tourists who do not look up to religion for the meaning of life or solutions to specific problems and for them a recreational tour of holy places or along pilgrims' routes is not designed to contribute to their spiritual formation or result in religious awakening. They are driven to take such trips by their interests or perhaps even deep fascinations and a wish to satisfy these. This part of the study contains a list of typical products of cultural tourism focusing on religious subject matter, yet without assuming religious motivation on the part of potential customers and without including an expected element of religious experience in the program. The author has intended it as a kind of *evidentia existentiae* – empirical evidence supporting the theoretical arguments and illustrating the main tendencies in designing such products and their components. The consecutive types of products (with descriptions listing typical destinations and options) are illustrated with more comprehensive presentations of the examples.

### 2.1. Thematic religion-oriented expeditions to destinations outside Poland.

Group travels with distinctive focus on religious studies are organized for instance by the Austrian travel agency Biblische Reisens specializing in religious tourism. The available options include: a 15-day expedition called “Biblical Environment” to the countries of the

Middle East [*Biblische Reisen* 2004, p. 13]; a 9-day tour of places in Greece known as large centres of Hellenistic cults in antiquity [p. 23]; an 8-day educational expedition focusing on the biography of Jesus and following his traces in Israel [p. 8]; a 9-day tour following the missionary trail of Paul the Apostle [p. 22]; and a tour of monasteries and old places connected with veneration of saints in Ireland [p. 39]. The program of all the listed trips organized by this tour operator includes sightseeing and other educational modules, containing activities most frequently carried out by the tour leader specializing in a given area of religions, as well as in the form of meetings with the so-called witnesses – representatives of either a given religion or custodians of the holy places. Participants receive specialist literature custom-tailored for the needs of the expedition and designed in accordance with its stages. No clergymen participate in such trips and the program does not envisage group participation in rituals (yet it frequently allows for watching them). Another example is an individual 8-day thematic trip in the form of pre-designed packages based on the themes of the Old Testament (here: the Laws and Talmud) on offer from an agency based in Munich and specializing in cultural tours [*Marco Polo* 2006, p. 20–21]. On offer from the same agency is a 16-day thematic tour along the trail of Buddhist pagodas (services include guiding and introduction to religious and historical issues, and specialist literature with the same contents). The largest German operator specializing in study tours suggests a classic 8-day theme trip throughout The Holy Land, along the trail of biblical events; the program includes educational visits guided by a specialist in religious studies [Studiosus 2007, p. 188n]. Similarly, West European pilgrim offices conducted by the Church, in addition to typical pilgrimages, organize educational expeditions. An example of such offering is a trip entitled “Search for the traces of Exodus on the Sinai Peninsula”; its program clearly combines sightseeing and educational aspect, and does not contain strictly religious themes (it is possible to take part in rituals in free time) [*Reisedienst FP*, 2001, p. 12–13].

Examples of cultural-religious tourism focusing on Judaism and its heritage include selected products in the catalogue of the Swiss travel agency called JCT, which specializes in organizing cultural expeditions throughout the world, following the traces and culture of Jewish people. One of these is an 11-day tour along the trail of Hasidic Judaism in Poland and Ukraine [JCT, Programm 2011, p. 16–17].

#### **Example 1. Program of the tour “At the cradle of Hasidic Judaism”**

Organized by	Jewish Culture Tours, Zürich
Duration	11 days
Itinerary	Warszawa – Góra Kalwaria – Kock – Lublin – Leżajsk – Bobowa – Lesko – Przemyśl, Lviv – Kolomyia – Vyzhnytsia – Chernivtsi – Medzhybizh – Berdychiv – Bratslav – Brody.
Educational modules	5 thematic lectures, reading Hasidic literature with commentaries; meeting in the Jewish History Institute and city archives (e.g. in Rzeszów); meetings with witnesses of history.
Other major components	Thematic visits to synagogues, locations linked with biographies of Tzadics, and Jewish cemeteries; Shabbat dinner according to Jewish tradition; theatre performance (play based on themes related to Hasidic traditions); concert of Hasidic or klezmer music.
Religious elements of the itinerary	Optional: participation (observation) of synagogue liturgy

Source: [JCT, Programm 2011]

## **2.2. Examples of products on offer from inbound tour operators.**

In response to the demand for religious themes among cultural travellers, Polish tour operators organize a number of touring options within our country for foreigners. Examples of these include the options on offer from the travel agency Jan-pol from Cracow [*Treffpunkt*

*Polen 2012, p.20*], such as the tour of the sanctuaries in southern Poland, with no strictly religious program. On the other hand, the catalogue of options at the website of KulTour.pl, a travel agency from Poznań, contains a 12-day trip following the traces of Hasidic movement in south-eastern Poland and Ukraine [*KulTour.pl, www 2012*], as well as a 6-day tour of the main places where John Paul II lived and worked in Poland; the latter contains a comprehensive educational program (7 lectures, 2 meetings) and only optional strictly religious program [*KulTour.pl 2010, p.16*]. German speaking tourists can visit Małopolska Region with Travelprojekt Agency during the Holy Week and witness Easter customs such as Passion Play, and blessing of Easter food; there are no strictly religious options, but the program includes a concert of religious music, detailed explanation of St. Mary's Altar, and observation of the Good Friday celebrations at Kalwaria Zebrzydowska [*Travelprojekt 2012, p. 40n*]. Taking into account the fact that in Poland tourist traffic mainly focuses on Catholic sanctuaries and holy places, and these tend to be exclusively used for religious purposes, some of these touring options may look a bit exotic or controversial. Yet they should be understood as harbinger of the new context and style in religious tourism and new approach to cultural assets generated by religion.

**Example 2. Thematic tour entitled “Kirchenchor und Eiersegen in Krakau”**

Organized by	Travelprojekt, Kraków
Duration	4 days
Itinerary	Kraków, Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, Wadowice
Educational modules	A talk introducing Easter customs in Poland (1),
Other major components	Sightseeing: theme-oriented (1), biography-oriented (1), other (1); painting Easter eggs; Passion of Christ in Kalwaria Zebrzydowska, and ceremony of blessing Easter dishes, concert of religious music.
Religious elements of the itinerary	Participation in the ceremony of blessing Easter eggs and the Passion Play (observation); possibility to participate in liturgies of the Holy Week (free-time option).

Source: [*Travelprojekt 2012, p. 40–41*]

**2.3. Examples of products on offer from outbound tour operators.**

In addition to cultural tours of our country focusing on religious themes which are on offer for foreigners, Polish travel agencies also organize trips of this type to other countries for Polish tourists. These include options comparable to the aforementioned cultural-religious expeditions organized by West European tour operators and include wide range of educational and experience-oriented components (e.g. dramatized tours). Among these tours focusing on religious themes some are designed to contain more refined program. As an example we can mention an itinerary of places connected with Lutheran Reformation in Thuringia and Saxony-Anhalt suggested by KulTour.pl agency. The expedition, available in longer (8-day) and shorter (4-day) versions, focuses on religious studies and comprises numerous educational modules. The catalogue of products on offer from the same operator also includes a tour of German cathedrals [*KulTour.pl, www 2012*]. The group of religion-oriented trips, with reduced educational component, yet providing cognitive experiences includes the option on offer from the Polish tour operator Ecco-Travel, entitled “Holy Cities of India”, a 13-day tour of the sacred sites of Hinduism and Islam in northern India [*Ecco Travel, www 2012*]. A typical thematic trip to “The Holy Land”, with a 6-day itinerary focusing on Biblical sites but without strictly religious components is on offer from, e.g. Alfa Star, a travel agency from Radom [*Alfa Star, 2012, p. 22*]. It seems we can reasonably expect that in response to the growing demand from customers, who are interested in their own and in other religions and more and more often travel far and wide, this niche market will be gradually discovered and catered for by an increasing number of domestic entities. Then following the inevitable gradual shift in the preferences of Polish tourists from good-price factor towards quality the

programs will evolve in a similar way as it happened in the case of specialized western competitors.

### Example 3. Program of the tour “German Cities of the Reformation”

Organized by	KulTour.pl, Poznań
Duration	8 days, short version: 4 days
Itinerary	Eisleben, Erfurt, Wittenberg, Augsburg, Worms, Marburg, Eisenach,
Educational modules	Thematic lectures (8): biographies of the reformers; genesis and main events of Reformation; its impact on German society and culture; Evangelical doctrine; characteristics of Evangelical communities.
Other major components	Thematic city tours (7); visiting related exhibitions (5), and sites related to biographies (Luther, Melanchthon) (5); dramatized tours (1); thematic meal (1), meeting with representatives of an Evangelical community (1).
Religious elements of the itinerary	A free-time option: participation in Evangelical Sunday liturgy

Source: [KulTour.pl, www 2012]

### 2.4. Network-based thematic projects on the example of “Wege zu Luther”

A classical example of cultural-tourism oriented approach to religious heritage, the German project entitled “Wege zu Luther” has been implemented jointly by a number of entities including: cities in which key events of the Reformation took place, entities collecting related artefacts, and institutions established for this purpose by Evangelical Churches. The project aims at achieving two main goals: 1) providing various components necessary for tour operators organizing thematic tours, such as sightseeing programs and workshops, lectures, or even all-day thematic symposiums for groups [Augustinerkloster, www 2012] as well as thematic entertainment (e.g. concerts), 2) ensuring tourist information and service packages for individual tourists, including accommodation in specific cities, and participation in events and workshops [Wege zu Luther, www 2012]. Under the project the specific cities have established tourist information units which organize thematic sightseeing, including dramatized tours and micro-events (e.g. supper “with Luther”, and topics related to Reformation); they also distribute guidebooks which make it possible for individual tourists to visit the places related to Reformation [Wege... in Wittenberg, 2011].

### Example 4. Tourism project: “Wege zu Luther”(network-based options)

Organized by	“Wege zu Luther” Association (cities of the Reformation and institutions: Churches, museums and other)
Places participating in the project	Erfurt, Schmalkalden, Eisenach, Eisleben, Wittenberg, Weimar, Magdeburg, Torgau
Educational modules	Lectures held regularly and at request (wide range), micro-events in museums, thematic days, discussion groups
Other major components	Dramatized tours and thematic sightseeing, thematic meals, thematic concerts
Services	Vacation packages for groups and individuals; tickets to thematic events
Religious elements of the itinerary	Complete information about services, participation is optional (invitation)

Source: [Wege... In Wittenberg; Wege zu Luther, www 2012]

### 2.5. Use of classical pilgrimage routes, on the example of “Camino”.

The most recent study on European cultural routes confirms that in the first years of the 21st century there has been a significant growth in the range of religious tourism, including pilgrimages; at the same time it shows, on the example of the popular pilgrims’ destination (Santiago de Compostela) that only slightly more than 50% of these travellers take such journey for religious reasons; the others reported mixed or cognitive motivations [EICR 2012,



p. 27]. According to the report of the sanctuary itself, based on data related to individuals asking for confirmation of their visit, over 6% of them gave *exclusively* non-religious reasons for the pilgrimage, while over 50% indicated mixed reasons [*Informe estadístico* 2011, p. 2]. An analysis based on detailed studies of the Spanish route and its users shows that along the Galician part of the Way, in addition to pilgrims and regular tourists we can encounter thousands of people, predominantly young, who are not Catholics or even Christian (e.g. Muslims and Jews), as well as those who do not adhere to any religion. Interestingly, these authors claim that for many of these people the journey provides an occasion for intended confrontation of the Christian and medieval ideas and values materialized in the form of heritage with their own worldview and attitudes as well as those of their travelling companions; indeed, aided by literature prepared for them, they frequently re-interpret that heritage [Lois Gonzalez 2012, p.187–188]. Some European travel agencies organizing cultural tours offer individual packages for the journey along the Way, with a program which does not include strictly religious components [*Ikarus Tours* 2012, p. 21]. Other tour operators organize holidays during which participants stay in the area for a number of days, and can take short hiking trips along selected sections of the Way, participate in guided tours by coach, and can take advantage of specialist literature and... a luxury hotel [Tigges 2012 p.44–45].

#### **Example 5: Program of individual cultural tour of the Way of St. James**

Organized by	Ikarus Tours, Königstein, Germany
Duration	12–13 days
Scope/places	Selection of 4 sections of the Way (France-Spain): St. Jean Pied de Port – Pamplona; Pamplona – Burgos, Burgos – Astorga; Astorga – Santiago de Compostela.
Educational components	Literature related to the theme and the area's landmarks
Other major components	Flights, hotel booking, transport of luggage, optional booking of sightseeing
Religious components	Not included; possible if arranged by the tourists themselves

Source: [*Ikarus Tours* 2012, s. 21]

## **2.6. Other religion-oriented itineraries as destinations of cultural tours**

The best evidence for the independently existing options designed for non-religious travellers can be found in official statements made by entities coordinating cultural routes based on religious heritage. For instance, an official presentation of the Cistercian Route made after it was designated as a Cultural Route of the Council of Europe explains the reasons for appointing a coordination body: „*The Cistercian heritage represents: a cultural common heritage, an example of 'strong management' of land, a contribution to education and knowledge*”. As we can see the key statement of the document does not contain any reference to religion [EICR 2010]. On the other hand, the purpose of the Charter of Cistercian Abbeys was to establish an association of the current owners of these sites and their representation for the purpose of “culture and tourism related” endeavours [Charte www, 2012]. Another example of such offering is the Cistercian Way in Wales, which allows for thematic visits to post-Cistercian churches [*Cistersian Way, www* 2012]. An example from Poland is the Hasidic Route – a large scale project which is being carried out in several places of south-eastern Poland [FODŹ, www 2012]. The route designed (mainly) for non-Jewish public draws on religious concepts and biographies of outstanding leaders of this movement and it mainly comprises sites which once had religious functions (synagogues, cemeteries); yet, for obvious reasons the touring options do not include strictly religious components, other than in the form of a presentation. Similarly, included in numerous guidebooks are local versions of thematic routes focusing on Jewish heritage (e.g. in Tarnów [Bartosz 2002]), where religious contents prevail; these are created for individuals with cognitive motivation and this is reflected in the contents and composition of such publications.

A very interesting example of joint projects initiated by cross-border regions and focusing on options for travellers interested in religious themes, the Via Sacra Route located in the German-Czech-Polish border area allows for a “travel across the millennium of Central European piety” [*Begegnungen... 2011, p.6*]. Designed mainly for individual tourists, the trail leads to a variety of places: historical pilgrims’ destinations (such as the Holy Sepulchre in Görlitz, sanctuary of St. Mary in Hejnice), masterpieces of religious art (the large Lenten Altar Cloths in Zittau), living communities of reformatory religious movements (such as Herrnhuters) and existing monasteries which survived through the reformation of the surrounding (abbey in Panschwitz-Kuckau), unique religious buildings (Grace Church in Jelenia Góra, Church of Peace in Jawor), biblical garden in Oberlichtenau and other.

Polish trails focusing on religious themes are brought to life very slowly. A leader among these is the Wooden Architecture Route in Małopolska – new publications designed for tourists are published here each year, and during tourist season thematic concerts are organized; this shows a gradual shift in the program towards tourists with cognitive and aesthetic motivations. Options of non-religious nature are also available in some sites of the Cistercian routes (e.g. visiting the cathedral in Pelplin by night), yet the progress does not occur uniformly along the entire routes, which makes it impossible to use their potential at a level comparable with the Cistercian routes in Western Europe.

#### Example 6. Normandy Abbeys’ Route

Name of trail, location	Abbayes-Normandes, Normandy, France
Scope	9 routes (from 3 to 15 sites): old monasteries, churches; thematic and regional museums; castles.
Educational options	Lectures – regularly held and at request; periodical exhibitions.
Other components	thematic sightseeing, series of concerts.
Services	booking group visits, accommodation and local trips.

Source: [*Abbayes, www 2012*]

#### Example 7: Map of the Via Sacra Route



Source: Mikos v. Rohrscheidt A., 2010b, based on: [*Via Sacra. www 2012*]

## 2.7. Religious events used as an option for overnight stay

Tourists interested in religions visit regularly held events (such as church fairs in well-known historical sanctuaries or related events, such as the arrival of walking pilgrims) as well as traditional celebrations of major holidays (in the case of Christian customs – mainly Easter and Corpus Christi). Popular events of this type outside Europe include the celebrations of Ganesh Chaturthi in Bombay which are witnessed by large numbers of guests from our cultural zone. According to surveys and analyses conducted by Indian institutions focusing on tourism, numerous Buddhist religious events in India are most frequently visited by Japanese, Korean, Burmese and Thai people, who are mainly followers of Buddhism; the fifth most frequently represented are the Chinese, who are not Buddhist, yet come to India for a few days on those occasions in hundreds of thousands. Taking into account the programs of their stay, other than tours and ordinary sightseeing, they can be considered cultural-religious tourists [*Indians Keep 2004, p.4–5*]. Christian celebrations which are witnessed by the largest numbers of tourists include the Holy Week in Seville accompanied by traditional church services and processions. Participation of tourists in other religious “fiestas” in Spain for reasons wider than purely religious has been discussed elsewhere [Buczowska, Malchrowicz, 2011]. The range of options is exemplified by the program on offer during the Holy Week in Seville designed for individual tourists, including the program of processions and services as well as sightseeing routes and “guaranteed” viewing places for each day [*Semana S. Traveller, www 2012*].

### Example 8. Program of a group tour “Where India prays”

Organized by	Dr Tigges (Switzerland)
Place/Name of event	Varanasi (India), festival of Deepavali
Duration	11 days
Major thematic components of program	Participation (by observation) in celebrations (many times), lecture and conversation with a Brahmin-priest, meeting with students of school of spirituality, visit to ashram with a lecture, yoga practice with introduction, specialist literature, introduction (talks) by tour leader, concert of religious music.
Other components of the service	Flights, accommodation, board, tour of the area, Ganges River boat trip.

Source: [Dr. Tigges, www. 2012]

## 3. Brief characteristics of the destinations and products of offer for cultural-religious tourism

Taking into account the above considerations and the analysis of the aforementioned projects and touring options we can compile a list of typical attractions popular among cultural travellers interested in religions, as well as types of expeditions organized for them and the most frequent components of tourism products designed for groups as well as for those travelling on their own.

### 3.1. The most popular types of attractions

These include: places historically connected with the origins of specific religions, sanctuaries (recognized sacred places); sites linked with biographies of renowned persons (founders and leaders of religious movements) in particular, locations of their long-term activity and their resting place; museums with religious profile (including exhibitions of religious, historical and artistic nature); monumental, outstanding or unique landmarks, and complexes representing religious architecture; historical pilgrimage routes; local thematic

routes; existing denominational communities open to contact with tourists (including those with options allowing visitors to stay at their place, not necessarily for formative reasons, where the program includes open discussions and symposiums); various types of events, especially regularly held religious festivals which are not limited to acts of piety but include more elaborate rituals and associated historical customs; artistic (e.g. music) festivals and thematic concerts held in sacred locations; unique denominational cemeteries.

### **3.2. Types of tours and other options**

Review of catalogues of products published in the last two years shows that in this segment of cultural tourism the most frequent options are several days long study tours (with educational emphasis) whose itineraries lead mainly to: areas important for the history of a given religion or the origins of a religious movement (The Holy Land; sacred places of Buddhism and Hinduism; German cities of Reformation, etc.); routes designed for tourists and focusing on religious themes (such as Cistercian routes, trails of religious minorities) or comprising historical complexes or sites related to religion (e.g. wooden architecture routes); biographical routes (devoted to great religious leaders); historical pilgrimage routes (accessed on foot or by coach). Additionally, a lot of available travelling options allow for a few day visits to places regularly hosting religious events with a wealth of rituals and associated folklore: in the case of remote destinations these are almost exclusively products designed for groups, in the case of those located at a short distance (e.g. in Europe) these are mainly packages designed for individuals. In the countries with more developed touring options and larger demand related to cultural tourism (e.g. Germany, Italy, Spain) there is a growing number of network products combining religion-oriented options available in various places and creating modules which can be selectively used by tour operators and (more and more often) by individual tourists. Similarly, cultural travellers interested in religions sometimes take advantage of the option of the so-called open visits to some religious communities, unless these contain programs of obligatory religious practices; yet in this case it is difficult to differentiate between products for cultural-religious tourism and spiritual tourism.

### **3.3. Characteristic components of the services on offer.**

Depending on the type of trip, the options available at the location, or the kind of site there are large differences in the services on offer, yet taking into account the author's own analyses and other studies [particularly: Steinecke 2007, p. 109–119] we can distinguish the most frequent components. A vast majority of such options have educational profile, some also allow for experiencing aspects of culture. In addition to the obligatory component of thematic sightseeing (in some locations in the form of dramatized tours, or visits by night), a frequently encountered component involves comprehensive introduction to the topic of the expedition in the form of a talk delivered by an expert tour leader/guide or person representing the site as well as specialist comments accompanying specific points of the itinerary. Participants receive specially designed publications on the topic. Participation in rituals is a frequent element of the program (and obligatory in the case of products focusing on specific events), yet as a rule it only involves observation. If participants of the tour adhere to the same religion and denomination as the community involved in the festivities, they may actively participate in the strictly spiritual celebrations. Yet this is the general assumption of religious tourism that active participation is only possible as an option, which in many cases is not even included in the official program, but the free time schedule is adjusted to make it possible. Programs of group tours often contain meetings with representatives of the religious group which is being visited. Thematic artistic events (concerts, performances) can be found in programs of longer visits designed for groups, in event-oriented as well as network-based options, in specific sites visited along the routes and in packages on offer for individual travellers. Museums and thematic collections are often visited. Some types of touring options

include festive, traditional or thematic meals as well as workshops or other experience-based activities related to the profile of the given location.

### **3.4. Cultural profile of a religious traveller**

Due to the lack of detailed studies it is hard to describe participants of this type of tours in detail. Analysis of the most frequent products on offer in this segment as well as online comments on and descriptions of previously experienced trips allow for a conclusion that these are typical cultural travellers, open to various forms of educational components which are presented in an attractive way. The difference between other tourists representing this large group (e.g. those participating in classical study tours) and religious travellers is that the latter are particularly interested in and focus on specific (religious) themes and sites. This fascination impacts their preferences related to both the type of selected option (with specific type of educational components, the possibility to encounter followers of a given religion and witness liturgy), and the destinations (mainly those described in 3.1.). Besides those travelling to participate in events, tourists from this group are more willing to take longer trips lasting for many days, which again makes them similar to participants of study tours [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2009, p. 122n]. Because of these qualities, which impact their willingness to use numerous and more complex services, these individuals are greatly valued customers of travel agencies and entities offering local and thematic packages. A segmentation research focusing on visitors to various types of the aforementioned sites would allow for identifying their behaviours and expectations in more detail which would lead to designing tourism adequate products.

### **Conclusions and suggestions**

Monitoring of statistics and available results of sociological research reflecting various aspects of the increasing secularization of younger generations of Poles allows for the assumption that, due to reasons mentioned in the introduction, the proportions of travellers choosing pilgrimage and those opting for cultural-religious tourism will rapidly change in favour of the latter option. The aforementioned examples, including available Polish tourism products, show that in Poland – just like in the case of the more developed segment in a few European countries – the growing demand in this area is more and more often met with adequate options on offer. Academic research of cultural tourism should regularly analyze the demand and supply within the area of cultural-religious tourism (i.e. other than pilgrimage-oriented, and not subordinate to one's faith). By definition participants of such expeditions travel for reasons different than religious and their travelling behaviours have been illustrated earlier by the selected touring programs and products designed for them. According to this author, due to both the complexity of the subject, and the fundamental difference in reasons and behaviours (possibly also social profiles) of the tourists, research on this type of cultural tourism should be conducted in parallel to the study of the phenomenon of pilgrimage and other forms of "spiritual tourism" (e.g. trips to various formation-oriented gatherings). Moreover, such research should apply methodology (and consistently: categories and terminology) used in cultural studies (including religious studies) rather than those used by theology. Furthermore, such analyses should be conducted independently from research focusing on other types of cultural tourism. This claim may be justified by a number of factors, such as: the specific qualities and the geography of destinations, varied sources of travellers' fascinations, obvious distinctiveness of the subject matter, methods and channels for recruiting participants, different methodology applied in constructing programs and designing local tourism products, requirements faced by personnel guiding such expeditions as well as theoretical models and practical use of educational modules – all of these differentiate cultural-religious tourism from other types of cultural tourism to a much greater

extent than, for instance, is the case with ethnic or literary tourism, which are subject to separate research.

The suggested analysis of cultural-religious tourism, including the domestic tourism sphere, should focus on: a) identifying the profile of cultural-religious tourist (by means of questionnaire with extended modules for personal information, reasons for travelling and segmentation-oriented survey concerning preferences), b) determining the scale of potential interest in this subject matter and in specific types of destinations as well as in types of travelling options as expressed by active cultural travellers participating in both pilgrimage-oriented and other religion-oriented tours (identifying the chance for alternative) as well as those who currently do not participate (identifying chances for attracting them), c) elaborating comprehensive typology of the existing products, including the level of their organization (by using case studies and expert studies) and d) reviewing and verifying the forms of presentation and interpretation (of beliefs, ideas and doctrines, problems, rites, events and places) and educational techniques, both existing in the programs of currently available tours and on offer in the visited locations. Scientific analysis of the domestic potential and products related to this type of cultural tourism could, and perhaps should, focus on e) recognized key problems connected with functioning of tourism, and it should make an attempt to indicate methods of solving or reducing these. Some of them have already been mentioned in a publication of results of other studies [Mikos v. Rohrscheidt 2010a, 2011]. These include: difficulty in actual accessibility of religious sites for tourists; lack of understanding from custodians of such sites for their functions other than pastoral (elements of cultural heritage which also includes religious tradition) and the related discrimination towards cultural travellers in comparison with classical pilgrims; poor infrastructure (including sanitary facilities); lack of integration with local tourist products (including thematic routes). A separate issue which should be investigated includes f) problems related to the organization of routes focusing on religious themes such as: the existing assets and their geography, most effective models for coordinating the operation of the route; enforcing standards of providing access to sites along the route; level of cooperation in designing network-based and package products, as well as system-based sightseeing options. In order to solve these problems it is possible to utilize the aforementioned well-tested examples of successful offerings, such as network products, routes and expedition programs

As a result of such analysis it will be possible to identify the essential facts related to cultural travels and relevant type of tourists (including the sources of their motivations and level of interest in specific types of attractions and services). It will also allow for compiling relevant information in a systematic form and for passing it on to university students specializing in tourism organization, as well as for establishing effective and attractive models of organizing expeditions and visits. The latter can be later made available to hosts of sites with religious profile, so that in response to the changing demand they will be able to modify their product and design it for new customers. This way science – in its small section focusing on free-time behaviours – will fulfil its essential function: explaining (a part of) the world and living environment and providing tools for its better organization. We cannot rule out one more, indirect, result, that – in accordance with hopes of religious circles – when designed in a new form and presented by means of neutrally-oriented education, the message of religion will find its way to a new group of people and will bring a change in their religious attitudes. Although this is not the purpose of cultural-religious tourism, joint efforts carried out by various entities (such as tour operators and site hosts) may be motivated by various reasons.

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## Religia jako przedmiot poznawczych zainteresowań turysty. Analiza fenomenu i oferty kulturowej turystyki religijnej.

**Słowa kluczowe:** turystyka religijna, turystyka kulturowa, pielgrzymki, turystyka edukacyjna

**Streszczenie:** W kontekście aktualnego stanu dyskusji nad turystyką religijną w Polsce autor uzasadnia potrzebę odrębnego badania poznawczo ukierunkowanej aktywności turystycznej odnoszącej się do miejsc i wydarzeń związanych z wierzeniami, nie wynikającej wprost z postawy religijnej i nie uprawianej jako element praktykowania wiary. Na podstawie licznych przykładów aktywności turystycznej i oferty tego rodzaju dokonana zostaje analiza typowych destynacji oraz charakterystyki oferty tej formy turystyki kulturowej. Wskazane są także potencjalne pola badań oraz problemy wymagające kompleksowych rozwiązań w odniesieniu do tego segmentu turystyki kulturowej.