

PILGRIMAGE TOURISM BASED ON NITRA TOWN EXAMPLE

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Abstract: *The aim of the article is to present the analyses of pilgrimage centre at Nitra Castle. The pilgrims are coming to this place to pay tribute to patrons St. Cyril-Constantine and Methodius who are also patrons of Europe.*

We would concentrate mainly on the analyses of infrastructure of pilgrimage centre, spatial development of pilgrimage centre and on its catchment area.

Key words: *pilgrimage tourism, religious infrastructure, visit rate, catchment area, spatial development of pilgrimage centre*

INTRODUCTION

Religiousness and also religiously motivated tourism is historically fixated in Slovakia. From 9th century, regional metropolis of Nitra have played important role in the process of Christianization of Central and Eastern Europe (Korec, 1994).

Even four decades of religious bondage between 1949 and 1989 could not erase the religious tradition. The full religious freedom could be reached only after the events of November 1989 and therefore the importance of religious tourism has simultaneously increased.

The aim of the article is to point to geographic aspects of religious tourism on the example of St. Cyril-Constantine -Methodius pilgrimage in Nitra.

OVERVIEW OF LITERATURE

The long period of religious bondage in Slovakia have caused that this issue is relatively thinly elaborated in Slovakia. It is presented in the works of Čuka (1998), Bubelíny (2008) or Krogmann (2007) and focused on the analysis of the centre in Staré Hory or religious centres in Nitra Region in which the attention is paid to history, infrastructure, visit rate and perception of the centres by their visitors.

The works of Matlovič (2001) and Poláčik and Judák (2005) are focused on the typology of the centres of religious tourism in Slovakia. Eliašová (2004) points out the importance of pilgrimage tourism in the context of the tourism in Slovakia.

In the works of foreign authors e.g. Liszewski (2000), Jackowski (2000), Jackowski, Soljan (2008) and Ostrowski (2000), the problems of the relationship between religious and pilgrimage tourism are treated on the theoretical level. Moreover, the works of Pusztai (2004) or Pásková and Zelenka (2002) connect to this discussion regarding the content.

The majority of works is oriented on a selected pilgrimage centre in which its history, sacral area, infrastructure and issues of its placement are analysed. We can mention the works of Czyrwik-Soljan (1993), Jackowski, Soljan (1995), Mróz (2008), Rinschede (1989, 1990) or Pihet and Violier (1993) and many more.

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In the similar extent, we can find the works of Jackowski (2005), Hodorowicz (2008) or Mróz (2007) which are focused on the analysis of the visit rate and motives of coming to the pilgrimage centres. The sources for their analyses usually come from the questionnaire method on which also the works oriented on the perception aspect are based. We can name e.g. the study by Pihet and Violier (1993) who evaluate fluency of transport, quality of accommodation, offer and willingness of personnel in the restaurants in Lourdes. The study by Pocaş Santos (2001) is very similarly focused and by means of questionnaire method it dealt with the perception of the level of cleanness of public places, the perception of retail network and parking possibilities in Fatima. Based on the perception, Collins-Kreiner and Kliot (2000) realized the segmentation of Christian pilgrims coming to Israel determining pilgrim and non-religious tourist as edge types.

CHARACTERIZATION OF THE PILGRIMAGE CENTRE

From the Christian point of view, the territory of Nitra Region has rich tradition based on the arrival of the missionaries St. Cyril-Constantine and Methodius to Great Moravia. It was Nitra City that has played important role in propagation of Christianity to Central and Eastern Europe (Korec, 1994).

The creation of pilgrimage tradition in Nitra has its beginnings after the year 1989 and its purpose is to pay tribute to Slavonic missionaries. From the beginning, the destination for pilgrims was Kalvária which is considered by Matlovič (2001) to be the centre with nationwide importance. The contemporary centre of the pilgrimage, which is held on 5th July (non-Slavonic nations commemorate St. Cyril-Constantine and Methodius on 14th February), is from the year 2006 Hradný vrch build from limestones and dolomites. It is better suited mainly for historical reasons and especially at this place it is possible to assume the arrival of St. Cyril-Constantine and Methodius. The pilgrimage is a part of the Ceremonies of St. Cyril-Constantine-Methodius held in Nitra City.

The topics of the cult of pilgrimage, which is organized by the Diocese, are relics of both missionaries.

The pilgrimage precinct is located close to the castle with the Cathedral of St. Emeram. It consists of historically and architecturally three different churches: Lower Church (18th century), Upper Church (17th century) and Romanesque Church (11th century). According to Valent (1995), the relics of St. Svorad and St. Benedict and also relics of St. St. Cyril-Constantine, which are Pope Paul VI is gift from the year 1969 (1100th anniversary of St. Cyril-Constantine's death), are stored in Romanesque Church from 11th century.

The pilgrimage altar, which is the centre of sacral area, is build in the parking lot under the north-east walls of the castle every year (picture no. 1). Its exact location has not been fixed in one place yet.

Plastic stools for guests are a part of the sacral area. In the precinct, the elevated place was adjusted for the movable TV instruments.

Considering the restricted capacities for the pilgrims in the nearest surroundings of the open air altar, the large screen was installed in the eastern hillside.

Picture no. 1: *The open air altar during the pilgrimage*



Source: Krogmann, 2007

The infrastructure, closely related with the pilgrims, contains improvised confessionals consisting of stools and kneelers. They were placed and discreetly dispersed in the area of former fosse (picture no. 2).

Picture no. 2: *Improvised confessions at the castle*



Source: Krogmann, 2007

At the same time and place as the pilgrimage was held, the three-day Diocesan Meeting of the Young culminated. As for the camping near pilgrimage precinct, they were provided with reserved places in the area of Diocese (picture no. 3).

Because the pilgrimage is held in July, it was necessary to provide the pilgrims with refreshment. For that reason, the volunteers in stalls provided gratis mineral water in plastic cups. They were placed in the spots with the highest frequency of pilgrims – near the pilgrimage altar and also along the access paths to the altar. Moreover, waste baskets were placed near the stalls in order to eliminate the pollution of the precinct.

Inside the precinct, the infrastructure was improved with suitably dispersed social equipment and medical help was prepared for pilgrims if it was necessary.

Picture no. 3: *Camping in the pilgrimage area*



Source: Krogmann, 2009

Although there were parallel actions held (the pilgrimage was the framework event of the Ceremonies of St. Cyril-Constantine-Methodius) in the surroundings of the castle, the mobile sale was almost absent. There were only two mobile sales stalls with the objects of religious theme.

The arrival of more pilgrims required also traffic restrictions. As for that, all access roads to the castle were closed and the traffic was organized by the police. The traffic police directed the arriving cars to side roads where car owners could find a place for parking (picture no. 4). During the cultural events held within the frame of Ceremonies of St. Cyril-Constantine-Methodius, the pilgrims could use shuttle transport. But from the viewpoint of the pilgrims, the shuttle timetable did not correspond with the beginning of the services.

Besides the already mentioned infrastructure exclusively bounded with the pilgrimage, very attractive for the tourists was the cathedral and also Diocesan Museum which presents the history of Great Moravia and among exhibits, the finest are the exhibits that belong to diocesan treasure.

The pilgrimage precinct has not got any accommodation and restaurant facilities. They are situated in various qualitative and quantitative structure in different parts of the city.

Picture no. 4: *Parking during the pilgrimage*

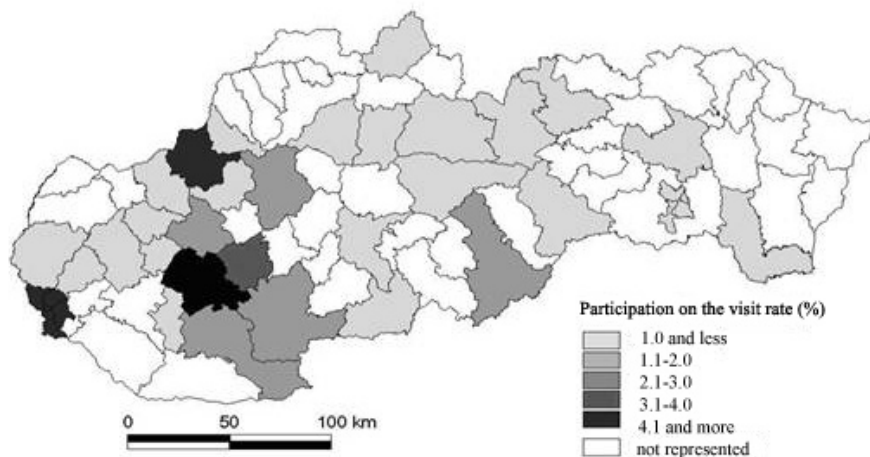
Source: Krogmann, 2009

ANALYSIS OF VISIT RATE OF THE PILGRIMAGE CENTRE

Because of the absence of hard statistical data, we had to rely only on the assumptions which determined the number of pilgrims from 7,000 to 10,000 persons.

Due to forementioned reasons, the catchment of the centre was determined by writing down the license numbers of the cars. The cars parked right on the access roads near the pilgrimage centre because there were no lay-bys. By means of reconnaissance, we noted down totally 154 cars from 30 different districts of Slovakia. Naturally, the districts of Nitra Region predominated and they were represented by 58 cases which is 37.6% (map no. 1).

Map no. 1: *Visit rate of pilgrimage in Nitra City based on districts of Slovakia (2009)*



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Nitra District evidently predominated when 38 cars were noted down what represents 65% of all cars from Nitra Region. Due to one-day duration of the pilgrimage, it is obvious that the visit rate from farther districts of Slovakia is lower. Moreover, we also have to point out the impact of the internationally important Marian pilgrimage held simultaneously in Levoča.

CONCLUSION

The pilgrimage centre at Nitra Castle has a short tradition. Compared to other pilgrimage centres, the event in Nitra is a part of the celebration of St. Cyril-Constantine and Methodius. By now, the stable place for the open air altar has not been decided. Based on the duration of the pilgrimage (1 day a year) the infrastructure of the pilgrimage centre is represented only by mobile shops.

Based on the catchment area of the pilgrimage, we noted down cars registered in 30 districts of Slovakia. The districts of Nitra Region predominated (37.6 %). Nitra District was mostly present.

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PÚTNICKÝ CESTOVNÝ RUCH NA PRÍKLADE MESTA NITRA

Zhrnutie

Pútnické miesto na Nitrianskom hrade má pomerne krátku tradíciu a na rozdiel od väčšiny iných pútnických centier je podujatie v Nitre jedným z viacerých v rámci Cyrilometodských slávností. Doteraz ešte nie je stabilne určené miesto lokalizácie poľného oltára. Vzhľadom aj na dĺžku púte (1 deň počas roka) je infraštruktúra v pútnickom centre reprezentovaná takmer výhradne mobilnými stánkami.

Z hľadiska spádovitosti púte sme zaznamenali automobily evidované v 35 okresoch Slovenska. Dominujúcimi boli okresy Nitrianskeho kraja (37,6 %). Z nich mal najväčšie zastúpenie okres Nitra.

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