

1 Introduction to the Politics of Religious Tourism

Dino Bozonelos^{1*} and Polyxeni Moira²

¹*Departments of Political Science and Global Studies, California State University, San Marcos, USA;* ²*Department of Tourism Management, University of West Attica, Greece*

Abstract

This introductory chapter reviews the existing literature on the politics of religious tourism. Building on this scholarship, a working definition of politics of religious tourism is introduced, with the intent to better conceptualize the topic. In addition, most scholarly work focuses on politics within religious tourism, where the words ‘politics’ or ‘political’ are used to touch upon the political context of a sacred site. In contrast, a smaller number of articles have been written on political science and religious tourism. This latter category is more on the application of concepts, frameworks and theories developed in political science regarding the phenomena of religious tourism and pilgrimage. Finally, concepts such as governance, institutions and policy are re-examined within the discourse of religious tourism and pilgrimage.

1.1 Introduction

In 1975, HG Matthews wrote that tourism is ‘grossly lacking of political research’ (Matthews, 1975). Almost thirty years later, when Hall (1994) wrote his seminal work, *Tourism and Politics: Policy, Place and Power*, he repeated the same claim. Almost another thirty years have passed, and despite the exponential increase in research, a similar argument can be made regarding religious tourism. Despite the acknowledgement that religious tourism is a product of complex religious, political and economic relationships, these processes are either mostly overlooked, or at least assumed away. As a subfield, religious tourism is overwhelmingly located in traditional tourism research clusters – schools of business management,

schools of theology or in the departments of cultural geography, with the former taking the lead in publications. Given the contemporary emphasis on the phenomenological, religious tourism is often analysed reductively, usually in understanding the motivations and experiences of travellers (Durán-Sánchez *et al.*, 2018). The experience of the ‘consumer’ be it a pilgrim, religious tourist or a secular tourist just visiting a sacred site is maximized. Whereas the role of politics, including governance and governing institutions is often minimalized, deferring to neoliberal thinking on the importance of consumer behaviour.

The principle aim of this edited volume is to provide a comprehensive overview and framework of the study of the *politics of religious tourism*, a surprisingly neglected yet consistently present dimension of publications regarding

*Corresponding author: dbozonelos@csusm.edu

religious tourism. Many management professors and practitioners who write on the topic are aware that politics is present in their writings. However, their approach has been one of simple contextual use, with a priori assumptions about the role of politics in the management of sacred sites. Indeed, current scholarship is better understood as religious tourism *and* politics, as the literature is fragmented into various perspectives and approaches that best serve each author's disciplinary interests. Some element of politics is brought in to understand a specific context, but the application of political science theories and understandings to religious tourism are generally missing.

Surprisingly, few political scientists research religious tourism. Governance, management and access to sacred sites for pilgrims and religious tourists is nothing but political, often the result of centuries of negotiations or compromise, among many different stakeholders. Some of this may reflect the shift in focus in political science itself from institutions to behaviour. The behavioural revolution in the 1950s almost ended discourse on institutionalism entirely. Since then, political scientists have generally focused on the individual level of analysis, using econometric approaches and utilitarian assumptions to study political behaviour, such as voter preferences or interest formation (Franco and Bozonelos, 2020). The neoinstitutionalist revival in the late 1980s and 1990s helped reorient political science back to its roots. Neoinstitutionalism is best explained by North (1991), who reintroduced the importance of institutions. All behaviour, including the market itself, is guided by norms and expectations that are strongly embedded within institutions.

Still, we do not argue that we should only view religious tourism through a political science disciplinary perspective. That would be improper. Scholarship on religious tourism and pilgrimages has increased exponentially in conjunction with increasing numbers of people who travel for religious reasons (Durán-Sánchez *et al.*, 2018; Rashid, 2018). And while political science has much to offer, religious tourism is inherently multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary. No single discipline can claim sole authority to the study of religious tourism. Just like its secular form, tourism can be studied from a variety of social science and humanities

disciplines. Still, outside of economics, the application of the social sciences to the study of tourism is 'relatively weak' (Holden, 2005, p. 1). Even Holden's book, *Tourism Studies and the Social Sciences* ignored political science in favour of political economy, which has become a reoccurring theme in the research of tourism and will be discussed more at length below.

This is why Hall (1994) referred to the politics of tourism as the 'poor cousin of both tourism research and political science and policy studies' (p. 1). Through this metaphor, Hall describes this field of research as mostly ignored on purpose. He cites several reasons, including the unwillingness of decision makers to recognize the politics inherent within tourism; a lack of official interest by researchers, which stems from not taking tourism studies seriously; and the lack of comprehensive methods used to understand trends and analyses, outside of the methods used by scholars in tourism management. Holden (2005) echoed the sentiments of Hall, where he commented that social scientists often view tourism and the study of tourism as an 'area of study that is frivolous and not appropriate for mature scholars' (p. 1). And if tourism, which is arguably the largest global industry, is largely ignored by political scientists, then what are we to say about religious tourism, considered a niche market within tourism itself?

If the politics of tourism is the poor cousin of both tourism research and political science and policy studies, then the politics of religious tourism is the poor second cousin, twice removed on the stepfather's side. Given the lack of attention, the question to logically ask, is why should we even try to analyse and study the politics of *religious* tourism? As Hall (2017) notes, 'tourism is deeply embedded in politics and indeed, politics in tourism' (p. 3). Sacred sites are inherently political in nature and have been for centuries (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Religious and political divisions directly impact religious tourism destination sites. In addition, religious traditions and political ideologies often combine to shape important characteristics and attributes, from how the space is physically arranged itself, to site management, to visitor access, and also to safety and security. Olsen (in this edited volume) explains that as sacred sites are inherently contested, they become politicized. The author refers to the 'textured or layered politics'

that exist within these landscapes. Tensions can bubble up quickly and even the most minute of issues can become politicized. This is especially true when such sites are contested by different stakeholders, religious groups and/or governing authorities, and in the case of the Old City of Jerusalem, all at once (Isaac *et al.*, 2016).

Often, the question that arises is who 'owns' the site? In other words, who is the ultimate decision maker when it comes to the governance and management of the destination? Timothy and Olsen (2006) refer to this as the 'politics of place' (p. 28) and Shackley (2001) writes that sociopolitical control is one of the most significant factors governing access to sacred sites. In today's global tourism, the default answer is the private corporations and entities that are directly involved and, for many sites, that may be the case. However, governance and management are much more convoluted when the site is contested. Jobani and Perez (2020) identify several contested sites in their book: the Devil's Tower National Monument, the Babri Masjid/Ram Janmabhoomi in India, and the Western Wall, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (Tomb), and the Temple Mount/Haram al-Sharif in Jerusalem. Other contested sites include Hagia Sofia in modern day Istanbul as well as the Temple Lot in Independence, Missouri. The politics of ownership, access and interpretation are of not just local and national political importance, but often global as well.

Tourism can be used both as a source of political power and for political capital (Hall, 1994; Shackley, 2001; Charles and Chambers, 2015). Tourism issues, such as overtourism, have emerged as salient political concerns and sources of contention. Local resentment at how tourists behave and also how tourism impacts daily regime can at times impact elections (Shackley, 2001; Novy and Colomb, 2019). As an industry, tourism is a powerful economic engine, at times accounting for 10.3% of global GDP (WTTC, 2022) and up to 10% of the world's total employment. The policy impacts of tourism are evident, particularly through tourism development, which has become a vital ingredient for economic progress (Bähre, 2007). For some countries, tourism might be the *raison d'être* for development, where a country might initiate a tourism site where one did not exist before. This is even more evident when it comes

to poorer countries where tourism often constitutes a larger sector of their economy (Bianchi, 2002; Stabler *et al.*, 2010; Edgell and Swanson, 2019). Finally, tourism as a practice and as an act, are tied to the cultural milieu of that state, which in turn, can be inherently political. Which historical and cultural sites a country promotes, and which sites a country demotes, are part of the cultural politics. This has become more relevant with the growth in dark tourism, a more modern development where thanatopsis can become easily controversial (Korstanje and Olsen, 2020).

Religious tourism however, can have an ever greater societal impact. The World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) has placed an emphasis on the growth of religious tourism. Secretary-General Taleb Rifai has identified three benefits of religious tourism: awareness of common heritage, local economic development and cultural understanding. Yet, politics is intimately intertwined with sacred sites. Even though the UNWTO does not specifically point to politics as a challenge, it is implied throughout (Griffin and Raj, 2017). The physical spaces are considered centres of 'emotionally charged visions of life' (Friedlander, 2010, p. 125). They have meaning beyond what would be associated with a profane tourist site, such as a beach resort, or even with a cultural tourist site, such as a monument to those who have fallen in war.

At its core, politics is the study of power. As Elliott (1997) writes, 'politics is about the striving for power, and power is about who gets what, when, and how in the political and administrative system and in the tourism sector' (p. 10). It involves the struggle in any group for power that will give one or more persons the ability to make decisions for the larger group. Power is defined as the ability to influence others or impose one's will on a population. Where power comes from, how power is expressed and managed, the ethics of power – these are all major questions that the discipline of political science is often tasked with addressing. This broad perspective is what allows the study of politics to be applied to any subject, discipline or field of research, including that of religious tourism.

This edited volume on the politics of religious tourism focuses on how power is exercised in religious tourism. If power is defined as the ability to influence or impose will, then power

is often expressed through governance, institutions and policy. Governance is not an easily defined concept. As Hall (2012) writes, governance is an emerging frame in tourism public policy and planning literature. Governance can be defined by Fukuyama (2013) as 'a government's ability to make and enforce rules, and to deliver services, regardless of whether that government is democratic or not.' For religious tourism, governance has become an increasingly recognized component.

Closely correlated to governance is the concept of institutions. Institutions are defined as organizations or activities that are self-perpetuating and valued for their own sake (O'Neil, 2021). They consist of the organizations, norms and rules that structure government and public actions. Institutions are an important feature in religious tourism, where religious arrangements are baked into stone (Bozonelos, 2022). Religious leadership, religious customs and rituals and the compromises reached between increasingly secular societies and both indigenous and immigrant religions cannot be assumed away. They represent the struggles for power that are inherent in modern politics, and the institutionalization of these dimensions are featured strongly in both the governance and management of sacred sites. Scholarship on institutionalism and tourism in general has been rising (Falaster *et al.*, 2017). Yet the lack of application of institutionalism, and more specifically neoinstitutionalism, is surprising. Institutions are 'carriers of history' and understanding the path development of current arrangements is important (David, 1994). Indeed, this may explain why case studies appear to be the most dominant method used in religious tourism research. Context is needed as each sacred destination site has unique aspects that are often not generalizable to other locations.

Out of governance and institutions comes policy and policymaking. Edgell and Swanson (2019) define policy using the Merriam-Webster dictionary: 'a definite course or method of action selected from among alternatives and in light of given conditions to guide and determine present and future decisions'. Policy is the final outcome of governance, and the execution of policy is how institutions self-perpetuate. There is no debate over how important governments are for contemporary religious tourism and pilgrimage.

This niche industry could not survive without some measure of government involvement. Governments provide political stability, security, legal frameworks, essential services and basic infrastructure that are fundamental to the perseverance of a sacred site. In addition, national governments retain sovereignty over country access. This includes immigration procedures, border controls, and flying over and into national territory.

Tourism policy can be defined when definite courses or methods of action are taken together to provide a framework from which decisions can be made that affect, develop or promote tourism (Goeldner and Brent Ritchie, 2012; Edgell and Swanson, 2019). Still, government is not the only voice. In democratic governance, multiple actors are involved. Referred to as pluralism in political science, this is an open participatory style of government in which many different interests are represented. In democracies, government policies should roughly correspond to public desires. Including interest groups such as industry associations, religious orders all come together to form the 'heavenly choir' of democracy. Of course, the comment is made that this choir sings with a distinct 'upper-middle class accent', which reflects the stronger influence that wealthier groups and individuals have in modern democracies.

The same critique could be applied to the governance of sacred sites as well, and particularly with sites that are contested. Stronger, more powerful religious groups, or groups that align with the dominant religious tradition in that democracy, will often yield more influence when it comes to religious tourism and pilgrimage policy. This is certainly the case in multireligious democracies such as India, with Prime Minister Modi's alliance with the Hindutva movement leading to government support for Hindu temples and sanctuaries, sometimes at the expense of minority religions (Iqbal, 2019). This even more true in faltering or fragile democracies such as Sri Lanka, where the government has historically relied on Buddhist monk support for oppression of Tamil Hindu guerrilla groups. Such monks would often bless the Sri Lankan soldiers and others who would prioritize and promote Sinhalese heritage and the protection of the Buddhist character of the nation (Lam, 2020).

Yet, this also tends to be true when it comes to authoritarian countries. These governments find themselves closely aligned with the more conservative elements in their societies, which, more often than not, includes religion and religious figures. We see these close connections in countries such as Russia, where President Putin has forged a close relationship with the Russian Orthodox church. We also see it in Saudi Arabia, where the al-Saud family has maintained a mutually beneficial alliance with the Salafists, a movement begun by Mohammad al-Wahab in the 1700s. This is also evident in countries where the authoritarian regime is not aligned with the dominant religion. A good example is Myanmar, where the military regime has an off-again on-again relationship with the Sangha, or Buddhist clerics. The Sangha often rally against the military regime, often followed by a reprisal. However, they cannot completely isolate the clerics as they are revered by the Buddhist majority.

1.2 What Is Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage?

The definitions of what is a religious tourist and what is a pilgrim, and the distinctions between the two, are important for the politics of religious tourism. The motivations of a religious tourist vis-à-vis a pilgrim matter. However, the institutions that envelop the sacred site are just as important. Certain religious destinations are not set up for religious tourists and are designed with the pilgrim in mind. A good example includes Mount Athos in Greece where a permit, or *diamonitirion*, is required for entry (Mylonopoulos *et al.*, 2009). Other sites are only for members of the religious community in good standing. Only Muslims can enter Mecca and only Orthodox Jews are expected to attend Lag b'Omer, a festival that celebrates Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a second century Jewish mystic on Mount Meron. Still other sites are more accessible or available to non-followers or non-believers. Generally, this is the case with Buddhist religious tourism sites where efforts have been made to accommodate and market to non-Buddhists.

The distinction between the pilgrim and the religious tourist has been an issue under study

for many years by the scientific community (Jackowski and Smith, 1992; Rinschede, 1992; Vukonić, 1996; Robichaud, 1999; Collins-Kreiner and Gatrell, 2006; Digance, 2006; Timothy and Olsen, 2006; Stausberg, 2011; Eade and Dionigi, 2015). According to Olsen and Timothy (2006), '... gaps exist in the perceptions of the differences between pilgrimage and tourism from the perspectives of religion, the pilgrims themselves, the tourism industry, and researchers.'

Jackowski and Smith (1992) believe that true pilgrimage takes two forms, depending on the goals and the mode of travel alike. In the first form, the driving force is the religious feeling (pilgrim) while in the second the driving force is the quest for knowledge (religious tourist). Pilgrims dedicate their time to meditating and praying, performing religious rituals, and while they travel they visit specific sancta. Most of these pilgrims are not informed about the historical or cultural (i.e. the non-religious) significance of the cities, the towns and the villages they pass through. Their initial goal is the 'special pilgrimage' to a worship centre, in which curing a sick person or saving one's soul and acceptance to heaven can occur. On the contrary, religious tourists are the individuals whose major motive to travel is to a large degree the quest for knowledge. They seek information and experiences through the journey and the communication with people, the areas and the towns they pass through. Religious tourists usually visit the area-centre and participate at least in one part of the rituals. Rinschede (1992) considers that religious tourism is a form of tourism where the participants travel either partially or exclusively for religious reasons. In fact, it is his belief that religious tourism is a subcategory of cultural tourism, highlighting the fact that those who participate in organized pilgrimages usually spend an extra day to visit selected cultural religious tourist sites (Moirá *et al.*, 2009). Robichaud (1999) believes that religious tourists are a cross between tourists and pilgrims. They travel, having religious motivation but they are not aware of how to approach their spiritual goal as they are surrounded by professional travel advisors, follow predefined travel packages, participate in organized group meals, and follow standard routes, missing their real religio-spiritual goal. Their journey may be

called pilgrimage but in reality, these travellers are alienated and shift from pilgrims to tourists. The wellness, the comforts, the cosmopolitan surroundings of travels and luxury hotels, the digital cameras and the video cameras which accompany many travellers, the commodification of the sacred objects, the need for lodgings, meals, organized events, etc. remove the spiritual element from the pilgrimage and restrict it to the touristic element. Smith (1992) makes a similar distinction with regard to the motives of religious tourists. She created a position framework whose two polarities are the *sacred* and the *secular*. Between the two endpoints there are unlimited possible combinations of sacred and secular. In the middle, there is what is called 'religious tourism'. In fact, this figure confirms the view expressed by Pearce (1991) that the travellers' motives are various and changing and their interests and, by extension, their activities may easily shift from pilgrims to tourists and vice versa. Vukonić (1996) claims that religious tourists, after having met their religious needs, subsequently behave as tourists, meaning that they need accommodation, food, to buy souvenirs, etc. Turner and Turner (1978, p. 20) believe that the religious tourist is half pilgrim and half tourist.

Of course, we should bear in mind that a pilgrimage is also shaped, apart from religious beliefs, by the influence of other factors prevailing each time, such as political (e.g. in Poland the church is a symbol of the national identity and unity of the Poles), economic, social, etc. (Jackowski and Smith, 1992, p. 105). Furthermore, historical factors can have a considerable impact on pilgrims (e.g. in the Holy Monastery of Agia Lavra built in 961 CE in Greece, the religious and the historical element coexist as it is the site where the Greek Revolution against the Ottomans was launched in 1821 and where the bullet-ridden Banner of the Revolution is kept today).

According to Moίρα (2009, 2019) pilgrimage and religious tourism are two different social phenomena in which 'religiosity' is their common element, regardless of whether it is active or inactive. Thus culture, religion and tourism create a 'symbiotic' or 'complementary' relationship. These social phenomena are (a) the *pilgrimage*, where the spiritual element of faith dominates and which is manifested in the

appropriate conditions distinguished by spirituality, rigour, temperance, observance of the standard, mental preparation, etc. The pilgrim is a traveller, a 'seeker' for the ultimate coveted goal, the pilgrimage. This effort is reinforced by the 'spiritual reward' he expects from the realization of the pilgrimage and the expected satisfaction from the achievement of his goal. Therefore, a pilgrimage is characterized by all the activities of individuals or groups in areas, places and monuments of religious importance with the predominant motive being the spiritual ascent from earth to heaven, i.e. pray/communicate with the deity, the fulfilment of a vow, or the substantial participation in religious ceremonies and events, as part of the individual's religion, (b) *religious tourism*, as a subcategory of cultural tourism, where the religious element of the place or event is utilized with tourist criteria as cultural heritage. The cultural aspect becomes a common component of tourism and religion. Thus, religious tourism is characterized by all the activities related to the travel of individuals or groups to areas, places and monuments of religious-cultural importance with a dominant motive of contact with the religious element of the host place as part of culture. Therefore, a religious tourist is not always a believer.

The typology and the ranking of the visitor/religious tourist or pilgrim is not only of academic interest, but also practical, as it influences his choices in all phases of the journey. Initially, the destination choice depends on whether it appears more or less attractive in relation to their desires, motivations, and needs. Then, the organization of the trip, the options during the trip, for accommodation, food, visits, souvenir purchase, etc. differ. For example, the pilgrim who wishes to fast during the pilgrimage has different needs from the needs of the religious tourist. Also, the behaviour of the pilgrim in the sanctuary is different from that of the religious tourist. Understanding the above is necessary both to meet the needs of visitors and to manage them (Moira *et al.*, 2009; Moίρα, 2009; Moίρα, 2019).

The distinction between a religious tourist and a pilgrim has a different meaning depending on the management body (public or private) the definition depends on each researcher's discipline (economy, sociology, politics, law etc.) and their expectation. For example, from the view of religious organizations, pilgrims generally

are not considered to be tourists, because they travel for spiritual reasons. On the contrary travel agents, hotel managers, etc. consider all travellers as tourists because their presence generates economic benefits and is relevant to economic growth (Moirá *et al.*, 2009; Μοίρα, 2009; 2019).

For governments, the inclusion of the pilgrim in the general category of 'tourist' emphasizes purely economic criteria, ignoring travellers' motivations. In reality, this generalization and the 'artificial increase' in tourist numbers responds to a purely 'economist' perception and the need for a constant increase in numbers. In fact, this generalization, which is truly a political action (Μοίρα, 2022) artificially reinforces the importance of the tourism sector (Bodson and Stafford, 1988).

1.3 What Is the Politics of Religious Tourism?

To properly answer this question, we must ask a preliminary question, what is the politics of tourism? The politics of tourism is understood by Hall (1994) to be the study of power arrangements, which are 'inextricably linked to a given set of value assumptions which predetermine the range of its empirical application' (p. 13). Simply stated, politics matter and policy has impact. Following Hall, we define the politics of religious tourism as '...the exercise of political power in religious tourism and pilgrimage and the study of power arrangements.'

Hall's book, *Tourism and Politics*, mostly focuses on policy development at several levels of analysis, with discussions of what the political context generally looks like at each level. One of the more relevant conceptualizations is his bifurcation of policy analysis into 'internal process orientated criteria of adequacy' and 'outcome-orientated criteria of effectiveness on impact'. The former is where academics often bring in theories to explain how such processes have developed, whereas the latter is often written by anyone who can assess the impact of governance and policy. In this latter category is where the field opens up and why we see so much interdisciplinarity when it comes to the politics of tourism.

In a later book, *Tourism and Public Policy*, Hall (1995) brings together both parts to develop the field of *tourism public policy*. This involves policy analysis where both the causes and the consequences are studied in an attempt to provide a unified approach to the subfield. Hall makes sure to note that institutional arrangements are significant in tourism. Institutions place restraints on policy makers. This is antithetical to the neoliberal notion that market forces should guide tourism and/or tourism development policy. Telfer (2015) notes that an expectation has developed that tourists and tour companies should be free to operate as they see fit across international borders. Any state intervention is seen as onerous and should be either minimized or eliminated altogether. Likewise, Sharpley (2015) notes that development is often the *raison d'être* for tourism. As it is such an effective source of employment and income, countries consider it a growth industry. In addition, tourism can serve as a vehicle for wealth redistribution where investment and the transfer of wealth to an underdeveloped area can have significant economic benefits. Given this view, it is logical to see why many tourism scholars are quick to dismiss or overlook institutional arrangements. It simply does not fit into their paradigmatic approaches to tourism.

These understandings are also apparent in the study of religious tourism. For example, Hall's earlier bifurcation of politics of tourism into 'internal process orientated criteria of adequacy' and 'outcome-orientated criteria of effectiveness on impact', or as I refer to them, 'looking within to explain' and 'looking outside for impact', are quite relevant for the study of the politics of religious tourism as well. Bozonelos (2022) refers to the 'looking outside for impact' approach as *religious tourism policy studies*, where outside variables are considered, such as the behaviour of the tourist and/or pilgrim, such as motivations and experiences, or the importance of the sacred site for the regional economy. This is evident in both editions of Raj and Griffin's (2015) book, *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*. In both volumes, the chapters are mostly focused on consumption of the religious tourism site and how the site is managed to meet those consumer expectations. Less discussed are the institutional arrangements that may or may

not bound the decisions of the consumer. Clarke and Raffay (2015), and Trono (2015) come closest to addressing the role of institutions in the second edition, with the former addressing stakeholder theory in religious tourism and the latter about how various entities work together to develop a religious site.

This discourse then leads us to bifurcate current scholarship into two areas of research when it comes to the politics of religious tourism.

Politics within religious tourism: this area focuses on the political dimensions associated with religious tourism. Politics within religious tourism is where the bulk of the scholarship is located. In this area of research, often the words 'politics' or 'political' are used to touch upon the political context of the sacred site. A good example is the seminal volume by Timothy and Olsen (2006) on religious tourism. A search for politic* in their book yielded 47 results, excluding references and author bios. In each of these instances, some form of the word politics was either used as part of the phrase, 'social, cultural, *political*, economic' and 'socio-*political*', or as a catchall phrase, such as, '...they are affected by the *politics* and social trends...' (p. 114). This trend is repeated in a myriad of other articles and books on religious tourism and pilgrimage (see Katic's book *Pilgrimage and Sacred Places in South-east Europe*, where politic* is mentioned 79 times).

Other more recent works have focused on the political contestation of sacred sites. Eade and Katic (2014) note that anthropologists have been much more willing to focus on power dynamics and resistance to those dynamics in sacred sites. Yet they notice that little attempt is made to analyse the institutions that are the repositories for that power. Their book, *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe: Crossing Borders* provides much needed context to the political challenges in the region. Jobani and Perez (2020) identify several contested sites in North America, including the Devil's Tower National Monument, where Native American tribes contest how their sacred sites are imagined in modern discourse. They explore church-state governance models as context for how contested religious places are managed. Barkan and Barkey (2015) investigate state policies and how the behaviour of political authorities affect shared religious destination

sites within the former Ottoman Empire. Finally, Raj and Griffin (2017) provide a broad view of conflict and religious tourism. Their edited volume not only encompasses political contestation, but also how religious tourism development can lead to conflicts within a society.

Another research area has centred on the impact of political violence, such as terrorism, on religious tourism sites. Chowdhury *et al.* (2017) specifically discuss religiously motivated terrorism and how holy places have become uniquely targeted. Chowdhury *et al.* (2021) further discuss the impact of terrorism and link the motivations of terrorists with their targeting of specific shrines and sacred sites. Isakhan (2020) uses social movement theory to discuss how the targeting of Shi'a sacred sites in Iraq by the Islamic State led to a successful mobilization effort to protect them. This 'shrine protection narrative' has been instrumental in uniting the often fractious Shi'a militias into a potent political coalition. Finally, Korstanje and George (2021) develop the notion of religious tourism security, where the tourist and pilgrim's perception of risk is central in understanding if the site is secure. In addition, they highlight that while a pilgrim might be willing to tolerate a less secure environment, a religious tourist may not.

Political science and religious tourism: this area involves the application of theories in political science to religious tourism. Most of what has been written falls within *religious tourism policy and development*, where local, national or supranational agencies partner with religious officials and private market economic actors to use sacred sites as part of their economic growth plans. This overlaps with the religious tourism policy studies category described above, with the difference being that much of theory in these writings come in the form of political economy, where scholars study the 'ever-evolving nexus of relationships between state governance and economic transactions' (Coleman and Eade, 2018).

Reader (2014) discusses how academics often want to separate the sacred from the mundane, particularly when it comes to economic actions and decisions. However, economic forces, such as commercialization and personal consumption have always been present at pilgrimage sites. Market dynamics are crucial for the success of any religious destination site.

Pilgrimage can be built *through* the marketplace as well. Coleman and Eade (2018) add to Reader's analysis and posit that there might be multiple agencies involved in the construction of pilgrimages. Economic and political relations are used to steer pilgrims in a particular way. Proper governance is then an important feature for success. Finally, Bozonelos (2022) breaks down the recent discussions on the political economy of religious tourism. In each of these works, institutions have a central role.

1.4 Conclusion

The politics of religious tourism is fraught with complications. Understanding 'who gets what, when and how', how scarce resources are distributed, including to whom, in what amounts, and under what rules, are questions that are not always easily answered. Politics is how a society makes collective decisions. Yet when it comes to the governance of religious tourism sites, policy decisions often focus on the economic benefits, a trend that is reinforced through neoliberal discourse. However, sacred sites are not just important economically. They can have cultural importance and even national and global implications. Focusing on just the economic

benefits ignores the roles that stakeholders have in the management and promotion of sacred sites. Often expressed through institutions, these stakeholders, be it religious organizations, cultural associations, or other entities, are intimately involved in the governance of religious tourism and of destination sites.

However, this complexity should not be the major obstacle to researching the politics of religious tourism. Instead, complexity should be viewed as an opportunity to delve further into the issues. As mentioned before, there are quite a few different approaches that exist from *politics within religious tourism* to *political science and religious tourism*. In addition, there is *religious tourism policy studies* and *religious tourism governance*. Each one of these research areas can benefit from the application of theories, frameworks and concepts from political science, policy analysis, public opinion and from the respective subfields within each area. The subfields of international relations (IR) and comparative politics (CP) within political science have much to offer religious tourism. IR theories of soft power and constructivism are applicable and have already been applied in tourism. The same can be said for neoinstitutionalist writings. In sum, there is a plethora of opportunities for future research.

References

- Bähre, H. (2007) Privatization during market economy transformation as a motor development. In: Burns, P.M. and Novelli, M. (eds) *Tourism and Politics: Global Frameworks and Local Realities*. Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, UK, pp. 33–58.
- Barkan, E. and Barkey, K. (2015) . : *Choreographies of Shared Sacred Sites: Religion, Politics, and Conflict Resolution*. Series: Religion, Culture, and Public Life, Columbia University Press, New York, pp. 1–32. DOI: 10.7312/bark16994.
- Bianchi, R. (2002) Towards a new political economy of global tourism. In: Sharpley, R. and Tefler, D. (eds) *Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues*. Channel View Publications, Bristol, UK, pp. 265–299.
- Bodson, P. and Stafford, J. (1988) The economic paradigm in tourism. *Téoros, Revue Québécoise de Recherche Appliquée en Tourisme* 7(3), 3–5.
- Bozonelos, D. (2022) The political economy of religious and spiritual tourism. In: Olsen, D. and Timothy, D. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism*. Routledge, New York, pp. 36–52. DOI: 10.4324/9780429201011.
- Charles, E.T.A. and Chambers, D. (2015) The salience of tourism in politics. In: Chambers, D. and Rakic, T. (eds) *Tourism Research Frontiers: Beyond the Boundaries of Knowledge*. Emerald, Bingley, UK.
- Chowdhury, A., Razaq, R. and Clarke, A. (2021) Impact of terrorism and political violence on sacred sites. *Journal of Islamic Tourism* 1(1), 34–46.

- Chowdhury, A., Razaq, R., Griffin, K.A. and Clarke, A. (2017) Terrorism, tourism and religious travellers. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5(1), 1–19.
- Clarke, A. and Raffay, A. (2015) Stakeholders and co-creation in religious tourism and pilgrimage. In: Raj, R. and Griffin, K. (eds) *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*, 2nd edn. CAB International, Wallingford, UK. DOI: 10.1079/9781780645230.0000.
- Coleman, S. and Eade, J. (eds) (2018) *Pilgrimage and the Political Economy: Translation of the Sacred*. Berghahn Books, New York.
- Collins-Kreiner, N. and Gatrell, J.D. (2006) Tourism, heritage and pilgrimage: the case of Haifa's Bahá'í gardens. *Journal of Heritage Tourism* 1(1), 32–50. DOI: 10.1080/17438730608668464.
- David, P.A. (1994) Why are institutions the 'carriers of history'? Path dependence and the evolution of conventions, organizations and institutions'. *Structural Change and Economic Dynamics* 5(2), 205–220. DOI: 10.1016/0954-349X(94)90002-7.
- Digance, J. (2006) Religious and secular pilgrimage. In: Timothy, D.J. and Olsen, D.H. (eds) *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Routledge, London, pp. 36–48.
- Durán-Sánchez, A., Álvarez-García, J., del la Cruz del Río-Rama, M. and Oliveira, C. (2018) Religious tourism and pilgrimage: bibliometric overview. *Religions* 9(9), 249. DOI: 10.3390/rel9090249.
- Eade, J. and Dionigi, A. (eds) (2015) *International Perspectives on Pilgrimage Studies: Itineraries, Gaps and Obstacles*. Routledge, New York.
- Eade, J. and Katic, M. (2014) *Pilgrimage, Politics and Place-Making in Eastern Europe*. Ashgate Studies in Pilgrimage, Routledge, New York.
- Edgell, D.L. and Swanson, J.R. (2019) *Tourism Policy and Planning: Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow*, 3rd edn. Routledge, New York.
- Elliott, J. (1997) *Tourism: Politics and Public Sector Management*. Routledge, New York.
- Falaster, C., Zanin, L.M. and Guerrazzi, L.A. (2017) Institutional theory in tourism research: new opportunities from an evolving theory. *Brazilian Journal of Tourism Research* 11(2), 270–293. DOI: 10.7784/rbtur.v11i2.1310.
- Franco, J. and Bozonelos, D. et al. (2020) History and development of the empirical study of politics. In: Franco, J., Lee, C., Vue, K., Bozonelos, D., Omae, M. et al. (eds) *Introduction to Political Science Research Methods*, 1st edn. Academic Senate for California Community College. Available at: [https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political_Science_and_Civics/Introduction_to_Political_Science_Research_Methods_\(Franco_et_al.\)](https://socialsci.libretexts.org/Bookshelves/Political_Science_and_Civics/Introduction_to_Political_Science_Research_Methods_(Franco_et_al.)) (accessed 3 May 2023)
- Friedlander, L. (2010) Sacred geographies: myth and ritual in serious games. In: van Eck, R. (ed.) *Interdisciplinary Models and Tools for Serious Games: Emerging Concepts and Future Directions*. IGI Global, Hershey, PA, pp. 125–145.
- Fukuyama, F. (2013) What is governance? *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions* 26(3), 347–368. DOI: 10.1111/gove.12035.
- Goeldner, C.R. and Brent Ritchie, J.R.B. (2012) *Tourism, Principles, Practices, Philosophies*. Wiley, Maitland, FL.
- Griffin, K. and Raj, R. (2017) The importance of religious tourism and pilgrimage: reflecting on definitions, motives and data. *International Journal of Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage* 5(3), pp. ii–ix.
- Hall, C.M. (1994) *Tourism and Politics: Policy, Place and Power*. Wiley, Maitland, FL.
- Hall, C.M. (1995) *Tourism and Public Policy*. Routledge, New York.
- Hall, C.M. (2012) A typology of governance and its implications for tourism policy analysis. In: Bramwell, B. and Lane, B. (eds) *Tourism Governance: Critical Perspectives on Governance and Sustainability*. Routledge, New York.
- Hall, C.M. (2017) Tourism and geopolitics: the political imaginary of territory, tourism, and space. In: Hall, D. (ed.) *Tourism and Geopolitics: Issues and Concepts from Central and Eastern Europe*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK.
- Holden, A. (2005) *Tourism Studies and the Social Sciences*. Routledge, London. DOI: 10.4324/9780203502396.
- Iqbal, K. (2019) The rise of Hindutva, saffron terrorism and south Asian regional security. *Journal of Security and Strategic Analyses* 5(1), 43–63.
- Isaac, R.K., Hall, C.M. and Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (2016) Introduction. In: Isaac, R.K., Hall, C.M. and Higgins-Desbiolles, F. (eds) *The Politics and Power of Tourism in Palestine*. Routledge, New York. DOI: 10.4324/9781315740508.

- Isakhan, B. (2020) The Islamic state attacks on Shia Holy sites and the “Shrine Protection Narrative”: threats to sacred space as a mobilization frame. *Terrorism and Political Violence* 32(4), 724–748. DOI: 10.1080/09546553.2017.1398741.
- Jackowski, A. and Smith, V.L. (1992) Polish pilgrim-tourists. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19(1), 92–106. DOI: 10.1016/0160-7383(92)90109-3.
- Jobani, Y. and Perez, N. (2020) Governing the Sacred. In: *Governing the Sacred: Political Toleration in Five Contested Sacred Sites*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK. DOI: 10.1093/oso/9780190932381.001.0001.
- Korstanje, M.E. and George, B. (2021) Safety, fear, risk, and terrorism in the context of religious tourism. In: Olsen, D.H. and Timothy, D.J. (eds) *The Routledge Handbook of Religious and Spiritual Tourism*. Routledge, New York.
- Korstanje, M.E. and Olsen, D.H. (2020) Negotiating the intersections between dark tourism and pilgrimage. In: Olsen, D.H. and Korstanje, M.E. (eds) *Dark Tourism and Pilgrimage*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK.
- Lam, R. (2020) Sri Lankan government ties religious freedom to protection of Buddhism. *Buddhistdoor Global*. Available at: <https://www.buddhistdoor.net/news/sri-lankan-government-ties-religious-freedom-to-protection-of-buddhism/> (accessed 26 August 2022).
- Matthews, H.G. (1975) International tourism and political science research. *Annals of Tourism Research* 2(4), 195–203.
- Moira, P., Parthenis, S., Kontoudaki, A. and Katsoula, O. (2009) Religious tourism in Greece: the necessity to classify religious resources for their rational valorization. In: Trono, A. (ed.), *Tourism, Religion and Culture. Regional Development through Meaningful Tourism Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference, University of Salento 27th/30th October 2009*. Mario Congredo Publ, Salento, Italy, pp. 465–480.
- Mylonopoulos, D., Moira, P., Nikolaou, E. and Spakouri, A. (2009) Pilgrimage centers of Greece and tourism development. The legal framework of protection. In: Trono, A. (ed.) *Tourism, Religion and Culture. Regional Development through Meaningful Tourism Experiences. Proceedings of the International Conference, University of Salento 27th/30th October 2009*. Mario Congredo Publ., Salento, Italy, pp. 523–537.
- North, D.C. (1991) Institutions. *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 5(1), 97–112. DOI: 10.1257/jep.5.1.97.
- Novy, J. and Colomb, C. (2019) Urban tourism as a source of contention and social mobilisations: a critical review. *Tourism Planning & Development* 16(4), 358–375. DOI: 10.1080/21568316.2019.1577293.
- Olsen, D.H. and Timothy, D.J. (2006) Tourism and religion journeys. In: Timothy, D.J. and Olsen, D.H. (eds) *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Routledge, London, pp. 1–21. DOI: 10.4324/9780203001073.
- O’Neil, P.H. (2021) *Essentials of Comparative Politics*, 7th edn. W.W. Norton and Company, New York.
- Pearce, P. (1991) *Fundamentals of Tourist Motivation*. International Academy for the Study of Tourism. University of Calgary, Canada.
- Raj, R. and Griffin, K. (2015) *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*, 2nd edn. CAB International, Wallingford, UK. DOI: 10.1079/9781780645230.0000.
- Raj, R. and Griffin, K. (2017) *Conflicts, Religion and Culture in Tourism*. CAB International, Wallingford, UK. DOI: 10.1079/9781786390646.0000.
- Rashid, A.G. (2018) Religious tourism – A review of the literature. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Insights* 1(2), 150–167. DOI: 10.1108/JHTI-10-2017-0007.
- Reader, I. (2014) *Pilgrimage in the Marketplace*. Routledge, New York. DOI: 10.4324/9781315885704.
- Rinschede, G. (1992) Forms of religious tourism. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19(1), 51–67. DOI: 10.1016/0160-7383(92)90106-Y.
- Robichaud, P. (1999) *Tourist or Pilgrim?: Rescuing the Jubilee—The Heart of Pilgrimage Is Conversion, Not Travel; The Journey Is Only the Means to the End (Religious Travel to Rome, Italy as the Year 2000 Approaches)*. America Press, Inc, Boston, MA.
- Shackley, M. (2001) *Managing Sacred Sites: Service Provision and Visitor Experience*. Continuum Press, London and New York.
- Sharpley, R. (2015) Tourism: a vehicle for development? In: Sharpley, R. and Tefler, D. (eds) *Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues*. Channel View Publications, Bristol, UK, pp. 3–30. DOI: 10.21832/9781845414740.
- Smith, V. (1992) The quest in guest. *Annals of Tourism Research* 19(1), 1–17.
- Stabler, M.J., Papatheodorou, A. and Sinclair, M.T. (2010) *The Economics of Tourism*. Routledge, London. DOI: 10.4324/9780203864272.

- Stausberg, M. (2011) *Religion and Tourism: Crossroads, Destinations and Encounters*. Routledge, London.
- Telfer, D.J. (2015) The evolution of development theory and tourism. In: Sharpley, R. and Telfer, D.J. (eds) *Tourism and Development: Concepts and Issues*. Channel View Publications, Bristol, UK, pp. 31–73. DOI: 10.21832/9781845414740.
- Timothy, D.J. and Olsen, D.H. (2006) *Tourism, Religion and Spiritual Journeys*. Routledge, London. DOI: 10.4324/9780203001073.
- Trono, A. (2015) Politics, policy and the practice of religious tourism. In: Raj, R. and Griffin, K. (eds) *Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Management: An International Perspective*, 2nd edn. CAB International, Wallingford, UK.
- Turner, V. and Turner, E. (1978) *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture: Anthropological Perspectives*. Columbia University Press, New York.
- Vukonić, B. (1996) *Tourism and Religion*. Emerald Publishing Limited, London.
- WTTC (2022) Economic impact reports. Available at: <https://wttc.org/Research/Economic-Impact> (accessed 8 August 2022).
- Μοίρα, Π. (2009) *Θρησκευτικός Τουρισμός* [Religious Tourism]. Interbooks, Αθήνα [in Greek].
- Μοίρα, Π. (2019) *Θρησκευτικός Τουρισμός Και Προσκύνημα. Πολιτικές-Διαχείριση-Αειφορία* [Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage. Politics-Management-Sustainability]. εκδ. Φαίδιμος, Αθήνα [in Greek].
- Μοίρα, Π. (2022) *Τουρισμός. Ιστορία, Εξέλιξη, Προοπτικές* [Tourism. History, Development, Prospects]. Εκδ. Τζιόλα, Θεσσαλονίκη [in Greek].