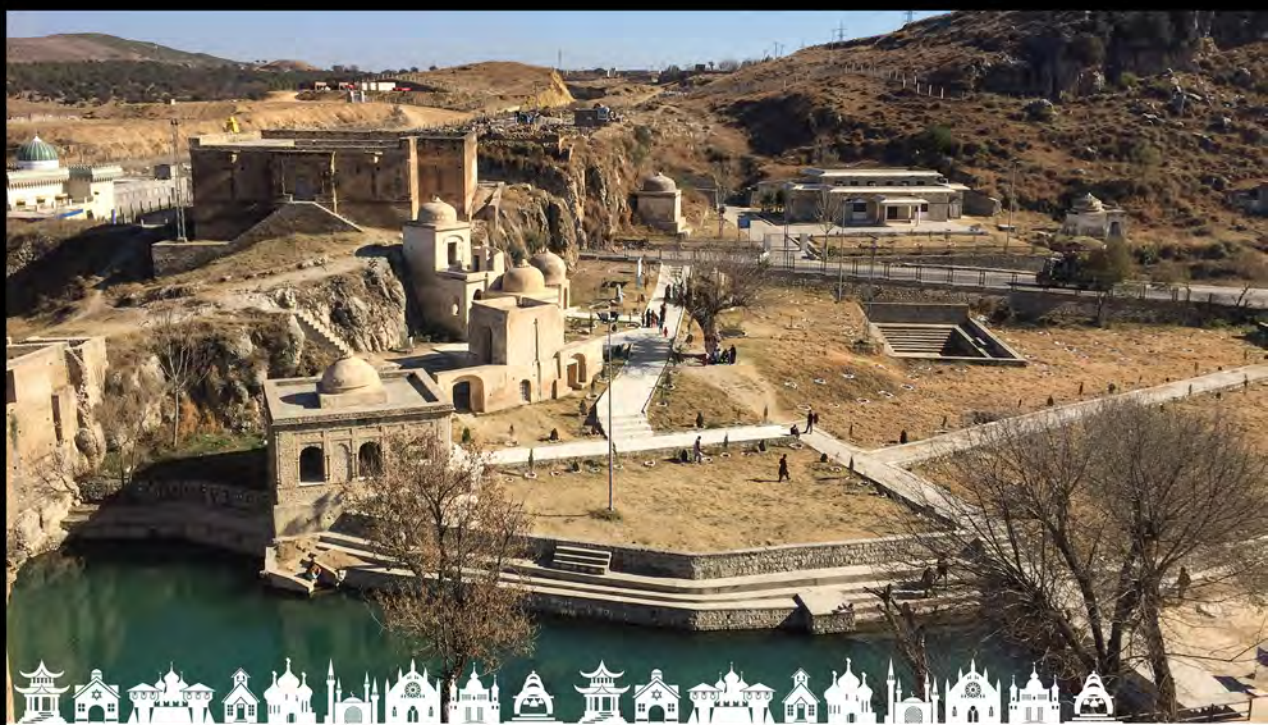


Religious Tourism in Asia

Tradition and Change through Case Studies and Narratives

Edited by **Shin Yasuda**, **Razaq Raj** and **Kevin Griffin**



CABI RELIGIOUS TOURISM AND PILGRIMAGE SERIES



Religious Tourism in Asia

Tradition and Change through Case Studies and Narratives

CABI Religious Tourism and Pilgrimage Series

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5 Religious Tourism in Azerbaijan: Current Challenges

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Introduction

Despite secularization, the phenomenon of religious tourism becomes more and more important; it involves people consuming narratives of places, which encapsulate their need for cultural and personal experiences. This chapter deals with the analysis of religious tourism possibilities in Azerbaijan. The potential for international travellers is presented. Analysis includes historical background and a reflection on the contemporary challenges of visiting religious places in relation to the themes of the country's history and heritage development.

Azerbaijan is a country in south Caucasus, located near to the largest lake in the world, the Caspian Sea, which is to the east of this almost 10 million-population country. Today Azerbaijan is a secular country, which has predominant Muslim religious communities, but also some Christians and Jews. Secularism is clearly articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of Azerbaijan (Articles 7 and 18). Soviet atheism stamped a deep imprint in the minds of the people, and thus Azeri are not religious; Islam here is more of a cultural tradition (Valiyev, 2005). However, secularism comes together with religious revival and inner struggle between various Islam branches and their representatives

(Wiktor-Mach, 2017). The country has a rich religious heritage and underdeveloped potential for religiously motivated tourists. It could attract Muslims, Christians and Zoroastrians. Caucasian Albania was a Christian country, which existed in the current territory of Azerbaijan from the fourth to the seventh centuries.

Over 2 million international arrivals are recorded in Azerbaijan. According the State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan (2016) the motivation of tourists is leisure and recreation (668,800), business (632,300), visiting friends and relatives (542,000), treatment tourism (36,500), religious tourism (11,500), other (115,100). The direct contribution of tourism to GDP was 2.8% in 2015 and 4.1% in 2016 (World Travel and Tourism Council, 2017).

The top ten countries/regions from which tourists came to Azerbaijan in 2015 were: Russian Federation (685,500), Georgia (571,600), Turkey (288,600), Iran (149,600), EU countries (Germany, UK, Italy, France, Spain etc. 109,000), Ukraine (55,100), Kazakhstan (27,100), Uzbekistan (15,100), USA (13,200) and Belarus (10,700) (State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2016). The potential for religious tourism for some of the tourists coming from these countries/regions poses an interesting prospect.

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Religious objects/artifacts in Azerbaijan are considered as the part of cultural tourism (Center for Analysis of Economic Reforms and Communication, 2017). Other main tourism sectors are wellness and health tourism, mountain and winter tourism, sport tourism, business tourism, ecotourism and beach tourism. Distinct differences exist between the Azerbaijan capital Baku and other regions. Baku and its surroundings are considered a priority area for international tourism.

An analysis of the perspectives of religious tourism in Azerbaijan is presented in this chapter.

Religious Tourism as a Form of Tourism

Different conceptions of pilgrimage and religious tourism can be analysed. Also different terminology is used. However, we could define several trends contributing to the notion of religious tourism. Value-based tourism conceptions involve such definitions as valuistic journeys (Liutikas, 2012), spiritual tourism (Norman, 2011, 2012), holistic tourism (Smith, 2003), Smith and Kelly, 2006), personal heritage tourism (Timothy, 1997) and pilgrimage (Morinis, 1992). All these include the search for or manifestation of spiritual/religious experiences, or secular or non-religious value orientations.

In many pilgrimage journeys, social, leisure, cognitive or other inner motives outweigh religious and spiritual ones (Liutikas, 2014). Raj and Griffin (2015) stated that 'cathedrals and churches increasingly becoming tourist attractions as well as places to worship'. Commercialization and consumption of sightseeing, globalization and secularization encompass a diverse range of motivation and behaviour on the part of visitors to religious objects. Tomasi (2002, p. 21) points out the difficulty of finding a distinction between pilgrimage driven by faith, and tourism for cultural and recreational purposes, because 'they are organized in the same manner as mass tourism'. Stausberg (2011) noticed that the term 'religious tourism' is often used without any definition; in some cases religious tourism is embedded in other forms of tourism such as cultural heritage tourism.

Rinshede (1992) and Vukonic (1996) agree that pilgrimage is just one form of religious tourism. Religious tourism also includes religious conferences and other events such as feasts or conventions, and visits to religious places, as part of a tourist's itinerary. We can distinguish three common notions of religious tourism: (i) religious tourism and pilgrimage are the same phenomenon; (ii) pilgrimage is considered to be a special form, or specific part, of religious tourism; (iii) pilgrimage differs from religious tourism, which is considered to be an intermediate form between religious pilgrimage and secular tourism (Liutikas, 2012). To summarize, religious tourism could be defined as that type of tourism where participants are motivated for religious reasons, either in part or exclusively (Liutikas, 2006, p. 43).

Religious tourism differs from pilgrimage and comprises more cultural and holidaymaking aspects. Religious tourists visit religious objects and sacred places mostly for cultural and cognitive reasons. Religious places are viewed as important destinations and cultural attractions in their own right because of their history or artistic value (Timothy and Olsen, 2006). Tourists may have an interest in the religious history of the region, to understand particular rites and traditions, to educate co-travellers about their religious beliefs or to find authentic experiences (Shackley, 2001).

Religious tourism sometimes merges with cultural tourism. Cultural tourists' itineraries include visiting religious sites (churches, ancient temples etc.). Such visits usually are short-term, with a group guide pointing out architectural, aesthetic and historical aspects. For such tourists, religious sites are considered cultural monuments. Interpretations provided by audio guides and guidebooks have minimal religious content (Gosar and Koderman, 2015).

The needs of religious tourists differ from those of pilgrims. Religious tourists prefer cognitive development, recreation and aesthetic satisfaction; they usually buy goods and souvenirs, food and drink, and new experiences following religious rituals and traditions. Pilgrims' proximate need is spiritual renewal, communication with God and manifestation of religious values. Both groups of travellers must satisfy basic (food, drink, accommodation, toilets) and social (security, communication with co-travellers) needs.

Travellers on 'valuistic' journeys (the term encompasses the manifestation of religious and non-religious values) can often be distinguished from other travellers and tourists by the fact that in most cultures they are recognized as such, because the journey is an opportunity to manifest their personal or social identity. The identity of religious pilgrims and sport fans is emphasized by the demonstration of specific clothing and attributes, chants and specific rituals (Wann *et al.*, 2001).

However, the main difference distinguishing religious tourists and pilgrims is the motivation of the traveller and his/her inner disposition. Religious and spiritual motives are primary in religious pilgrimages, and the idea is very clear: reaching the geographical destination and also expressing personal or social identity and values (Liutikas, 2012).

Motives for taking any journey depend on many things, the most important being lifestyle, life experience and social and cultural influences. Identity expressed during the journey is not a spontaneous action but rather is maintained by consistent attention and specific actions. Rituals performed at the sacred places awaken people's worldviews, identities and relationships (Schirch, 2005, p. 17). The level of ritualization and structuralization is higher in religious pilgrimages than in religious tourism. Religious tourists are often free to choose religious rituals and symbolic physical acts, in contrast to religious pilgrims who perform rituals as an integral part of their pilgrimage experience.

Religious Tourism Resources

Azerbaijan is quite a secular country, yet there exist some interesting resources for religious tourism, e.g. the shrine of Zoroastrianism (Ateshgah) and Islamic and Christian heritage sites. Resources for religious tourism are located in almost every region. Travellers engaged in religious heritage can take routes that highlight the most important sites of the three religions mentioned.

Zoroastrian Heritage

The Zoroastrian religion was entrenched before Islam and Christianity in the territory of

Azerbaijan. This is one of the oldest religions; its descendants can be found in India and Iran. Zoroastrians appreciate the natural world, trying to stay in compliance with ecological principles. Water and fire play an important part in their rituals. Zoroastrian traditions influence one of the main holidays in Azerbaijan – Novruz. This is a celebration of spring and new year.

One possible destination for tourists interested in religion is the Zoroastrian Fire Temple in Baku – Ateshgah. This was the holy place for Zoroastrians. The current temple was built in the 17th–18th centuries and was used also by Hindus. It is a pentagonal structure. In the centre there was a pillar altar with eternal fire. Natural gas was used for the eternal holy flame. Around the altar were a number of small cells that were used by pilgrims. It was a place that attracted pilgrims from all over the region. The temple was used till the end of the 19th century. Now there is a museum introducing the Zoroastrian religion and the history of the temple.

Christian Churches

Christian travellers could be interested in the history of Caucasian Albania. The name of ancient Caucasian Albania does not have a connection with the Republic of Albania. The Caucasian Albanian territory was located in present-day Azerbaijan as well as in southern Dagestan in the fifth century. The state bordered Caucasian Iberia (present-day Georgia) in the west, with Sarmatia in the north, with the Caspian Sea in the east and with territories of Armenia in the south-west. The name of the country, Albania, was first mentioned in 331 BC when the locals took part in the battle against Persia. Already in the second century BC Albania was known as the united kingdom that was under Roman influence. In the fourth century, Albania fell under Sassanid influence and the kingdom became part of the Sassanid empire. It is known that the Albanian king Urnayr arrived in Armenia in 313 AD, where he was baptized by St Gregory the Illuminator, the same one who brought Christianity to Armenia. The grandson of St Gregory the Illuminator, also named St Gregory, was invited to lead the Albanian and Iberian churches after the death of king Urnayr. Unfortunately,



Fig. 5.1. Ateshgah temple-museum, Baku.

St Gregory was killed and his body was buried in the monastery of Amaras (currently Nagorno-Karabakh).

Caucasian Albania became a Christian country. Armenian, Albanian and Iberian kings fought against the Sassanid king Yazdegerd II in 451, who wanted to convert his whole empire to Mazdaism. The battle was lost and Christianity survived. The Albanian Church carried out missions, and founded and supported monasteries in the Holy Land. The Archbishop of Albania resided in the capital, Gabala, in the fourth century. In the sixth century he moved to the new capital Barda. The Christian Church of Caucasian Albania flourished till the seventh century. At the beginning of the eighth century, Islam came to the region. The Caucasian Albanian state was incorporated into the Islamic Rashidun caliphate. However, the Caucasian Albanian Church remained until 1836. The Church became a subordinate body of the Armenian Apostolic Church in the eighth century but they had separate patriarchs and self-government. In

1836, the Russian tsar Nicholas I issued a decree, and the Albanian Church was connected to the Armenian Church (Fautré, 2013).

Living descendants of the Caucasian Albanian Church are the Udi Christian community. They had to put a lot of effort in order to save their identity and not to amalgamate with the Armenians after 1836. Some of them worshipped in their homes, avoiding visiting new Armenian churches. The Caucasian Albanian Udi Christian Community was registered in 2003. It is estimated that the Udi ethnic population is about 10,000 throughout the world; half of them live in present Azerbaijan (Mobili, 2012); mostly they live in Nij and Oguz in north-western Azerbaijan. The Udi language belongs to the lezgian branch of the north caucasian language family. These people managed to keep their language, culture and religion over the centuries, including ruling periods of czarist Russia and Soviets. Some of them assimilated with Armenians in the 19th century, some of them with Azeri, but most of

the younger generation created families with members of their ethnic group. The only functioning church of Caucasian Albania is in Nij. It was built in the 18th century and was renovated in 2006.

A number of former Caucasian Albanian churches have survived in the north-west. Most are abandoned and wrecked; others have been turned into museums. The majority of churches were built during the reign of Vachagan the Pious (ruled 487–510 AD). It was the golden age of Christianity in Azerbaijan. Many churches were built in the 12th and 13th centuries. Today there are some 20 Caucasian Albanian churches that exist, from Gabala to Balakan. It is estimated that there are more than 150 Caucasian Albanian architectural heritage sites (churches, monasteries or their remains). The most interesting churches could be visited in three to four days. A new religious tourism route has been developed (Bakı Gənclər Klubu, 2012). However, the majority of Caucasian Albanian churches are abandoned. These are the most important locations to have been included in the itineraries of religious tourists:

- Kish (the 'Mother of churches', now a museum)
- Sheki (one church is a museum, the others are abandoned)
- Yukhari Tala village (abandoned)
- Nij (the only active church is Jotari; other churches in the town (Bulun and Gyoy) are abandoned)
- Qakh (Lakit) (complex of 7 churches, abandoned)
- Ilisu (ruins)
- Qum village (the walls of church have survived)
- Mamrukh village (near Zagatala) (abandoned ruins)
- Balakan (abandoned, in woodland)
- Pipan (abandoned, in ruins).

The Sheki area was on the route of the Great Silk Road. Quite a lot of Christian Albanian churches were built in this area. The most well-known church is the Kish church near Sheki. This is the only religious travel object in Azerbaijan that is mentioned in the index of the Lonely Planet 2016 edition on Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, under the category 'Churches'. It is believed that the first Christian

church in the Caucasus region was built in Gis (probably Kish village today). It is supposed that St Eliseus, who was one of the five disciples of Thaddeus of Edessa, built the church in the first century. Later, the church was considered to be the 'Mother of the Church'. It has contributed to the strengthening of Christianity in the region.

This church was built in the 12th to the 13th centuries and renovated in 2003. The restoration of the church was supported by Norwegian funds. Next to the church is a monument to the famous Norwegian traveller and historian Thor Heyerdahl (1914–2002). He came here and supported the restoration of the church. Today the church is a museum introducing Caucasian Albania and its Christian culture. This church-museum has been the main object for Christian religious tourists in Azerbaijan, visited by about 25,000 tourists each year. This church is included in the majority of travel itineraries for Azerbaijan.

The Soviets destroyed all Catholic churches in the country during the Soviet era. However, John Paul II visited Azerbaijan in 2002. The only one Catholic Church – St Mary's – was consecrated in 2008.

Islamic Heritage Mosques

In the seventh century, the Arabs came to the current territory of the country and Islamization of the area began. Various Islamic dynasties ruled the territory of Azerbaijan, such as Seljuq, Jalayrid, Shirvanshah, Safavid (representers of Shi'a Islam), Ottoman and Nadir Shah. Islam was represented predominantly by Sunnism until the 16th century. The Russians conquered Azerbaijani khanates at the beginning of the 19th century. Azerbaijan was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1920. Before the Soviet regime there were around 2000 active mosques; most of them were closed or destroyed during the Soviet period. There were 16 registered mosques and one Islamic school in Azerbaijan in 1976 and about 200 mosques, including unregistered places of worship, at the end of Soviet period (Motika, 2001, p. 112).

When Azerbaijan regained independence, the number of mosques began to grow once more. According to Valiyev (2005), today Islam



Fig. 5.2. Church-museum of Caucasian Albanian Christians in Kisk, near Sheki.

is experiencing a renaissance. Hundreds of new mosques were built and former mosques were restored. The majority of Azerbaijani people (85%) connect themselves to the Shi'a tradition. Divisions between Shi'a and Sunni Islam were nominal until 1992 (Valiyev, 2005). Some of the most visited mosques in Azerbaijan are:

- Biby-Heybet Mosque near Baku. One of the most famous mosques, this mosque was built in the 8th century and destroyed by the Bolsheviks in 1936. It was rebuilt in 1999.
- Rahima Khanim Mosque in Nardaran, also built in 1999.
- Juma Mosque, located in Baku old city. It was built in the 12th century on the former shrine of Zoroastrians. The current mosque was built in 1899.
- Haidar Mosque was built in 2014. This is the largest mosque in Azerbaijan. Tourists like to visit it in the evening when the special lighting accentuates the architecture.
- Ashabi Kaf Mosque and cave in Nakhchivan, famous for the story of sleepers (Surah 18 of the Quran). Several places claim to be the cave in the story, but Nakhchivan people believe it to be in Ashabi Kaf.



Fig. 5.3. Haodar Mosque in Baku.

Various religious traditions, feasts and rituals form part of religious tourism's resources. Observing religious activities can be of interest to particular tourist groups. Quite often, the common rites of various religions are influenced by local customs and local characteristics. Celebration of the Novruz holiday features four elements: water, fire, earth and wind. A youth jumps over burning bonfires, and torches and candles are lit. Although Novruz is not a religious feast, some of its traditions come from Zoroastrianism. Ramazan Bayram (Eid al-Fitr, the end of Ramadan) holiday and Gurban Bayram

(Eid al-Adha or Festival of Sacrifice) are related to Islamic tradition. The Udi Christian community celebrates traditional Christian feasts such as Easter and Christmas.

SWOT Analysis of the Perspectives of Religious Tourism

A SWOT analysis was done in order to evaluate the potential and perspectives of religious tourism in Azerbaijan. The analysis summarized

internal (Strengths and Weaknesses) and external (Opportunities and Threats) conditions of development of religious tourism in Azerbaijan. The monitoring of religious tourism resources and internal environment was realized in the summer of 2016. However, it is important that this exercise is undertaken regularly (Bennett and Strydom, 2001).

Religious tourism is a complex and diverse phenomenon. However, several important elements were included in the analysis:

- characteristics of the religious tourism sites;
- tourism infrastructure and site management;
- availability of tourist services;
- trends in tourism policy.

Azerbaijan represents a very favourable area to discover new religious routes. The main positive aspects or strengths may be presented as follows:

- A fair amount of religious tourism and religious heritage places, especially in the north-west. Interesting and ancient history of the Christian Church in Caucasian Albania. The Fire Temple, Ateshgah in Baku, is included in a list of UNESCO World Heritage Sites.
- Attractive and scenic landscape of religious tourism sites could help to create tourism sites and sights.
- Authentic experience of visiting abandoned religious sites. The search for authentic experience has become a core trend in contemporary tourism. Religious tourists could experience 'spirit of place' or authentic 'sense of place'. The remoteness of these sites adds a feeling of experiencing untouched and uninterpreted religious sites, which is a vital element of the tourist experience.
- The hospitality of local people towards tourists creates positive social interactions. Hospitality could be a means to better understand local life, history and traditions of the country.

However, the development of religious tourism faces some important limitations or weaknesses:

- Requirement of a visa to Azerbaijan. This limits the possibilities to visit Azerbaijan. An electronic visa system enabling a single

trip, up to 30 days, was launched at the beginning of 2017.

- Political – there is a need to set clear goals in Azerbaijani tourism policy. There is a lack of clear thinking regarding Azerbaijan as a tourism country. Today, only the capital Baku has been developed as the centre for business conferences and prestigious international events (especially sport).
- The attraction of the country is fragmented; the image of Azerbaijan as a place for religious tourism is very limited, and tourism policy is more oriented towards other aspects.
- Promotion of religious tourism sites and religious routes is very marginal. There is a lack of coordinated effort to promote the region as favourable to religious tourism. There are no developed routes for religious tourists in the north-west. Information about religious tourism is rarely distributed to tourists.
- There is no tradition of Azerbaijan as a country for religious tourism. One of the reasons was the Soviet regime, which destroyed mosques and prohibited religious festivals and ceremonies. Revival of religious life started in the last decade of the 20th century.
- Lack of tourism infrastructure could create problems for some religious tourists (insufficient transport, accommodation, entertainment). The majority of Christian sites related to Caucasian Albanian heritage need restoration and adjustment to tourists' needs. There is lack of services for tourists, especially in the regions.

Garayeva and Naumov (2016) identified similar limitations or challenges influencing religious tourism in Azerbaijan: 1. Poor state of conservation of religious sites. 2. Poor transportation and accommodation facilities in most regions. 3. Lack of specialized information about religious heritage. 4. Lack of special tours to religious sites. 5. Lack of promotion centres and absence of tourist information centres. The authors conclude that 'Azerbaijan has not yet recognized its potential as a religious tourism destination and there is an absence of enough attention to religious heritage throughout the country' (Garayeva and Naumov, 2016, p. 12). Seyidov and Adomaitienė (2016) noticed that there is a slow improvement in tourism flows to destinations distant from Baku. Improvements

should also be made to services (e.g. comfortable transportation) and human resources in the tourism sector.

Attention to different kinds of tourism could boost the tourism market in Azerbaijan. The development of religious routes could create opportunities such as:

- Increased number of religiously motivated tourists and increased attractiveness of Azerbaijan. This would be of economic benefit for the region (and additional income for locals). Religious tourists could provide social benefits for the communities (generate new opportunities and encourage social change).
- Development of new tourism products and services (e.g. sightseeing spots, accommodation, local crafts and souvenirs). Repeat visits depend on tourists' satisfaction and experiences. New tourism products could affect the time spent at religious sites and the satisfaction from the visit.
- Creation of an image of Azerbaijan as a multi-confessional region, favourable for Christians. This could influence the decision-making of potential tourists.

Finally, the main threats identified were as follows:

- Increased possibility of disagreements between tourists and locals at religious heritage places, since tourists come with their own values, attitudes and expectations, which may clash with those of the locals. Tourists' past experiences in other countries could affect their expectations. Commercialization of religious sites could increase.
- Vivid competition from neighbouring countries in the south of the Caucasus such as Georgia and Armenia. These countries have many religious resources to attract Christian travellers.

Summary

Analysis of religious tourism perspectives in Azerbaijan shows the potential of this kind of tourism. Limitations of the development of religious tourism could be solved with some governmental regulation and private initiatives. Developing

tourism infrastructure, creating motivation to visit one or another place and extending accessibility to the regions are the main requirements for increasing international tourism in Azerbaijan. Providing information and organizing tours are the primary initiatives in the development of any kind of tourism. It is important to find the balance between the benefits of and the threats from development of religious tourism. Various existing and emerging projects associated with religious places show that religious tourism could play an important role in Azerbaijan's future.

The results of this analysis could be important not only to the scientific community but also to the policy makers and tourism practitioners. Religious tradition and heritage is becoming an important leisure activity. The ability to respond to religious tourists' needs could bring Azerbaijan's religious resources to life and benefit the tourism sector. In conclusion, key points that need to be taken on board by the Azerbaijan Tourism Board are:

1. Recognize religious tourism as a potential niche market that could be designated as a form of cultural or heritage tourism.
2. Develop religious tourism packages, addressing the needs of different traveller groups.
3. Improve tourism infrastructure and the status of religious objects, especially in the north-west part of Azerbaijan (heritage of Caucasian Albania).
4. Promote religious tourism possibilities and routes through the creation of self-guided and guided routes to various religious destinations.
5. Organize special religious feasts, events and festivals.
6. Hold special seminars on the possibilities of religious tourism for local communities and decision-makers.
7. Implement research on motivation of travellers; this would help target particular segments of travellers and offer tourism products segregated by themes.

The implementation of the above points will maintain cultural identity and preserve religious heritage for future generations. Central and local government should acknowledge the capacity of religious tourism to enhance tourism development and initiate a positive agenda that supports the promotion of religious tourism resources. The engagement of religious communities is, inevitably, essential.

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18 Discussion Questions

Please note, some of these questions can be answered fully in relation to the chapter in this book. However, many of them will require the student/reader to engage with the broader literature to explore and develop their ideas further.

Chapter 2

- How are heritage and religious tourism used as tools by the tourism industry?
- How can heritage/tourism result in the inappropriate overuse and commodification of religious sites, and how can this exploitation be mitigated?
- What are the risks, and the related potential benefits, in developing tourism in Oman?

Chapter 3

- Discuss the management strategy of entrepreneurs in the field of religious tourism by focusing on their interactions with consumers.
- Examine the impact of entrepreneurship in religious tourism by specifically investigating the relationship between producers and consumers.

- With reference to entrepreneurs and leisure culture, discuss the function of entrepreneurship in religious tourism.

Chapter 4

- Discuss and explain the importance of travelling in Sufism and the related focus on spiritual tourism.
- Evaluate the reason for visiting graves and places visited by holy individuals. How does the experience of the pilgrim contribute to their spiritual development?
- Critically discuss visiting graves with the intention of spiritual development through ziyara in the Islamic religion.
- Describe the role of travelling in relation to famous Sufi saints in south Asia.

Chapter 5

- What are the main challenges influencing the development of religious tourism in Azerbaijan?
- How can religious tourism be promoted in Azerbaijan more effectively?
- How will political trends in Azerbaijan affect religious tourism resources?

- What are the most important attributes of religious sites in Azerbaijan?

Chapter 6

- Discuss and evaluate whether nature is still important for spirituality in Asia in the 21st century.
- Critically discuss whether prayer and sacrifice are necessary components of pilgrimage.
- Evaluate and analyse whether pilgrimage or 'the sacred' are marketable tourism products in a secular world.
- How is *ekstasis* an element in tourism?

Chapter 7

- What was the role of the Academy in the study of religious tourism in recent decades?
- What were the reasons behind the fragmentation of tourism (as discussed by John Tribe)?
- What are the main limitations of religious tourism research in China?
- What are the challenges that religious tourism faces in China in the years to come?

Chapter 8

- What are the influential factors for the global development of religious tourism?
- Pilgrimage and religious tourism are often intertwined. Discuss.
- Identify the potential positive and negative impacts, and the related multiplier effects, in religious tourism.
- Much of the Indian tourism infrastructure cannot be considered to be of a world-class standard. Comment on how it is important to transform these systems to facilitate the pilgrims' convenience.

Chapter 9

- Discuss oral folklore and its role in creating cultural heritage. Is it important? In what

way? How should it be 'preserved'? Are there any risks connected with transforming it into written texts?

- Consider and highlight potential conflicts between folklore, science of history and religion in how to relate to traditions.
- What role does folklore and oral history have in educating and learning about self and society? Are there any significant differences when it comes to learning about self, ethics and morality compared to ethnic heritage?
- Can you see any conflicts/differences between how knowledge is constructed/understood in history, folklore and religious traditions? What are their strengths and weaknesses?

Chapter 10

- Religious sites are heavily influenced by narratives, which are constructed and controlled by the ruling social groups. How can this cause conflict and pressure for religious sites, and what can be done to ease the pressures and stresses so caused?
- What are the implications for a site of 'branding' its religious significance for consumption by tourists?
- How has designation as a World Heritage Site impacted on the Mahābodhi Temple?

Chapter 11

- What comparative advantages does Nepal have in being branded as the top world destination for Buddhist tourism?
- How realistic and feasible do you find the strategies recommended by the authors? What are the challenges in implementing these strategies? Can you think of some other effective strategies?
- How should the branding of Lumbini and Nepal be seamlessly integrated?
- Propose narratives and positionings for a tourism campaign that you believe would be highly effective.

Chapter 12

- Consider the peculiarities of the religious situation in contemporary central Asia.
- Highlight the main problems concerning Hajj and Umrah in central Asia.
- Discuss Ziyarat as a unique form of Muslim pilgrimage in central Asia.
- Explore Christian and Buddhist holy places as part of the Whole Cultural Heritage of central Asia and objects of religious tourism.

Chapter 13

- What are the factors causing the changes to the Aobao festival?
- What are the roles of the Aobao festival today?
- How could one protect a traditional religious festival in the modern world?

Chapter 14

- Discuss the feasibility to promote Buddhist tourism for Pakistan, an Islamic country.
- Propose a range of strategies and tactics for Pakistan's proposed Buddhist tourism campaign.
- Discuss the potential impacts of Buddhist tourism on Pakistani society.
- Discuss the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of this product, and in doing so comment on the proposed challenges any campaign may face.

Chapter 15

- Discuss the origins and development of Sikhism, commenting on how this faith integrates with other faiths in Pakistan.

- Assess the potential that Nankana Sahib has for development as an international site of pilgrimage.
- What barriers/challenges face those looking to develop Nankana Sahib as an international site of pilgrimage?

Chapter 16

- What distinguishes religious tourism from pilgrimage? Specify the characteristics of pilgrimage.
- Consider and identify tools for promoting religious tourism for believer and non-believer segments of the tourism services market.
- Having carefully studied Sufi pilgrimage and religious-cognitive pilgrimage destinations' brand (Fig. 16.5), determine the brand's attracting traits.
- Explore ways in which religious tourism might develop relationships with other areas of visitor activity such as rural tourism, cultural tourism, heritage tourism, medical tourism, gastronomic tourism and food tourism.

Chapter 17

- Discuss the significance and relevance of the ancient Indian philosophy Vasudaiva Kudumbakam in the present globalized world.
- How, and in what way, can one identify the presence of nature worshipping practices in Indian temples?
- Pilgrimage and religious and spiritual tourism are considered by many to be the biggest multinational business activity around the world. Do you agree?
- Identify the pattern of religious pilgrimage and spiritual tourism that has occurred around the world during the last decade. What trend is seen in this tourism segment? Is there any clustering pattern apparent?

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Religious Tourism in Asia

Tradition and Change through Case Studies and Narratives

Edited by **Shin Yasuda, Razaq Raj** and **Kevin Griffin**

The Asia-Pacific region is considered the world's religious core, with the greatest number of pilgrims and travellers to religious events for both international and domestic tourism. It is estimated that there are approximately 600 million national and international religious and spiritual journeys in the world, of which over half take place in Asia.

This book focuses on tourism and sacred sites in Asia. Contemporary case studies of religious and pilgrimage activities provide key learning points and present practical examples from this 'hub' of pilgrimage destinations. They explore ancient, sacred and emerging tourist destinations and new forms of pilgrimage, faith systems and quasi-religious activities.

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