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PILGRIMAGE AS A SOCIAL AND COMMUNICATION INSTITUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL PROCESSES (ON EXAMPLES OF UKRAINIAN AND GERMAN CITIES)

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Abstract. The author described authentic sacred objects on the example of pilgrimage routes in Lower Bavaria and Transcarpathia, and offered a virtual pilgrimage to German and Ukrainian sacred sites. The researcher recreated the sacred routes in Lower Bavaria on the example of the city of Passau and the village of Sammarei, Transcarpathia, to attract attention to cataloging pilgrimage sites, preserving authenticity, restoration, and creating virtual sites with recreated tourist routes for people with disabilities and young people who often prefer online travel to physically going there and visiting.

Digital catalogs, interactive maps, development of digital catalogs, virtual booklets with QR codes, online presentations, and online lectures can become a powerful virtual tool for preserving sacred monuments and the memory of them in the public space. The pilgrimage to Lower Bavaria made it possible to borrow the structure and organization of pilgrimage in Ukraine, as the institutionalization of pilgrimage at the regional level is quite relevant, especially with the rapid development of digital technologies in the modern media space.

Key words: pilgrimage, religious tourism, communication links, the socio-communication space, digital pilgrimage catalog, digital pilgrimage guide.

Introduction. Tourism in Germany is quite developed and profitable industry, so it's interesting for studying such places of pilgrimage in Lower Bavaria as: Passau, Regensburg, villages Wies, Sammarei, city Munich. These places are rich in their shrines and sacred places (Zika C., 1988). Tourism in Ukraine is an underdeveloped branch of the economy, religious tourism is in its infancy. New challenges of the time, the Covid-19 pandemic and the war are making adjustments, and religious tourism is now in a difficult situation. Although, as scientists describe, it was religious tourism during the pandemic that proved to be a sustainable form of tourism, surviving due to the stability of faith of believers (Lepovitz H., 1992).

The author analyzed the significance of sacred places to the for pilgrims and to estimate how developed and filled with religious practices is the pilgrimage to the shrines of Western Ukraine, namely Transcarpathia. I conduct my research based on data from the following cities and villages: Khust, Tyachiv, villages of Vyshkovo, Ust' Chorna, Nimets'ka Mokra, Kolochava, and Mukachevo (Berghauer S., Gyuricza L., 2011: 48; Zinko Y. et al., 2019).

In the article the author analyzes booklets, magazines, websites, and media platforms to find out what media tools attract pilgrims to this region in terms of religious practices and pilgrimage. Different churches are concentrated in these cities: Reformed (XI century), Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, Orthodox, Synagogue and Protestant churches. This region is multi-confessional, and filled with various pilgrimage traditions and therefore is interesting from a scientific point of view for studying the contingent of pilgrimage groups, their motivation, and the mediatization of pilgrimage (Hjarvard S., 2008).

Since the holy places of Transcarpathia and modern pilgrimage practices of different faiths have not been studied by the scientific community and there are no data for this research subject, I consider it appropriate to study the history of holy places in my project from the perspective of the sociology of identity, religion, and everyday life (Aulet S., Vidal D., 2018: 240).

In Germany, religious tourism is a well-developed economic sector, so I consider to compare the development of religious tourism in the cities of Lower Bavaria and Transcarpathia for the successful functioning of pilgrimage in Ukraine, to learn from the experience of German cities and villages in promoting pilgrimage in the media (Hjarvard S., 2008: 20-22; Yoo, Jaeho et al., 2022). One example of pilgrimage promotion is the city of Trier, which received a large part of the relics of Saint Matthew the Apostle. The relics of the Saint have remained a place of world Christian pilgrimage for centuries. A special interest of my study concerns psychological aspects of pilgrimage, purpose of the pilgrimage, and description of shrines among different confessional groups (Panchenko S., 2023: 128; 20; Sargent S. D., 1986).

Main part. I propose to consider the pilgrimage sites and the most popular pilgrimage routes of Lower Bavaria and then project these pilgrimage routes to Transcarpathia with a proposal to develop and approve pilgrimage routes in a similar version with their infrastructure, description of the routes, sacred objects along the way, spiritual practices during the pilgrimage, and the duration of the pilgrimage.

Way of St. James (Amaro et al., 2018: 275) from Krumau in the Bohemian Forest via Altötting to Breitenbach in Tyrol. Stages of the way of St. James Bohemia-Bavaria-Tyrol.

The **Way of St. James, Bohemia, Bavaria, Tyrol** covers 451 kilometers and invites you to experience the beauty of nature such as the Bohemian Forest, the south-east Bavarian foothills of the Alps and the Tyrolean Inn Valley. The pilgrimage expert available from us divides this route into 19 stages. The path leads from Krumau at the Vltava, starting at the castle, into the Bohemian Forest, along the Vltava reservoir. From Schlägl Abbey in the Austrian Mühlviertel you continue to the cathedral city of Passau on the Danube (Kardash O., 2020).

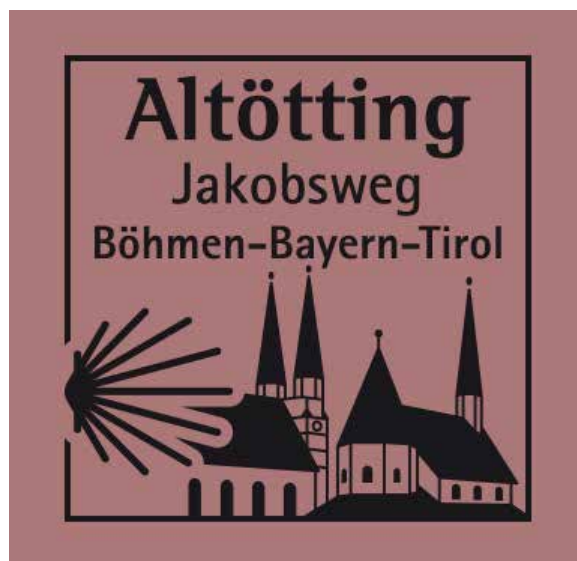
In the Rottal you go through Pfarrkirchen and Eggenfelden to Altötting. Coming from Neuötting it goes through the Gries at the Mörnbach along towards the Basilica St. Anna in Altötting. The well-known Marian pilgrimage site is the destination of up to 1 million pilgrims every year who have been coming here for more than 500 years to bring their concerns to the Black Madonna. From there you make the pilgrimage further south, via Wasserburg am Inn, via Kufstein into the Tyrolean Inn Valley. The destination of this variant of the way of St. James (de Sousa M. T., da Rosa A. P., 2020) is finally Breitenbach in Tyrol (<https://www.altoetting.de/en/tourism-altoetting/pilgrimage-routes/pilgrimage-routes-to-altoetting/way-of-st-james-bohemia-bavaria-tyrol/>)



Photo 1. Pilgrimage to Lower Bavaria

URL: <https://www.altoetting.de/en/tourism-altoetting/pilgrimage-routes/pilgrimage-routes-to-altoetting/way-of-st-james-bohemia-bavaria-tyrol/>

Route description:



19 Stages

- Stage 1:** Krumau – Friedberg, 27 km
- Stage 2:** Friedberg – Wittinghausen, 18 km
- Stage 3:** Wittinghausen – Aigen – Stift Schlägl, 10 km
- Stage 4:** Aigen – Rohrbach, 14 km
- Stage 5:** Rohrbach – Pfarrkirchen i. Mühlkreis, 21 km
- Stage 6:** Pfarrkirchen – Untergriesbach, 19 km
- Stage 7:** Untergriesbach nach Passau, 25 km
- Stage 8:** Passau – Rotthof, 27 km
- Stage 9:** Rotthof – Brombach, 34 km
- Stage 10:** Brombach – Eggenfelden, 26 km
- Stage 11:** Eggenfelden – Altötting, 34 km
- Stage 12:** Altötting – Altenmarkt an der Alz, 33 km
- Stage 13:** Altenmarkt an der Alz – Albertaich, 24 km
- Stage 14:** Albertaich – Wasserburg, 15 km
- Stage 15:** Wasserburg – Tuntenhausen, 32 km
- Stage 16:** Tuntenhausen – Bad Aibling, 28 km
- Stage 17:** Au bei Aibling – Erl in Tirol, 27 km
- Stage 18:** Erl in Tirol – Kufstein, 18 km
- Stage 19:** Kufstein – Mariastein – Breitenbach in Tirol, 34 km



Photo 2. Pilgrimage groups

URL: <https://www.gnadenort-altoetting.de/aktuelles-gottesdienste/aktuelles-wallfahrtsprogramm>

A detailed program with a description of all stations, services, spiritual practices (Olsen D., 2019), and visits to pilgrimage sites can be found and downloaded or read on the website: URL: <https://www.gnadenort-altoetting.de/aktuelles-gottesdienste/aktuelles-wallfahrtsprogramm>

Sammarei pilgrimage church



Photo 3. Sammarei pilgrimage church.

URL: <https://www.shutterstock.com/ru/search/sammarei>

Built over a completely preserved wooden chapel from the Middle Ages stands «the oldest wooden church in Germany». Sammarei is often called the Bavarian Assisi or German Loreto. With its monumental carved altar, «unique in the ecclesiastical decoration of southern Germany» (dehio). Built over a completely preserved wooden chapel from the Middle Ages, stands «the oldest wooden church

in Germany, the oldest log church in Central Europe» (Prof. Ahrens). After Altötting, it is the largest place of pilgrimage in the diocese of Passau (Merback M., 2004). Sammarei today The number of pilgrimages has increased considerably in recent years. Today Sammarei is one of the most important places of pilgrimage in southern Germany (Merback M., 2012). It is unique in its kind and of special originality and artistic quality, with many details worth seeing. Above all family and parish pilgrimages choose Sammarei as a rewarding destination. The patrociniun is particularly festive on 15 August with a candlelight procession on the eve and on 1 May. The Chapel of Grace invites all believers to contemplative prayer. The rosary is recited daily at 3.30 p.m. and pilgrimage services are held at 4:00 p.m. There is also an opportunity for confession every day (<https://www.outdooractive.com/en/poi/bayerisches-thermenland/sammarei-pilgrimage-church/28717464/#dmdtab=oax-tab1>).

Pilgrims also leave feedback on the website, where they share their impressions, the purpose of the sacred journey, the history of the church, its liturgies, spiritual practices, schedule and infrastructure. This information can be found on the website «Wallfahrtskirche Sammarei – Bayerisches Assisi»: <https://www.komoot.com/highlight/1401290>. Pilgrims can also buy a postcard with an image of the main painting of the church and send greetings to their family and friends or give them as a souvenir from the place of pilgrimage.

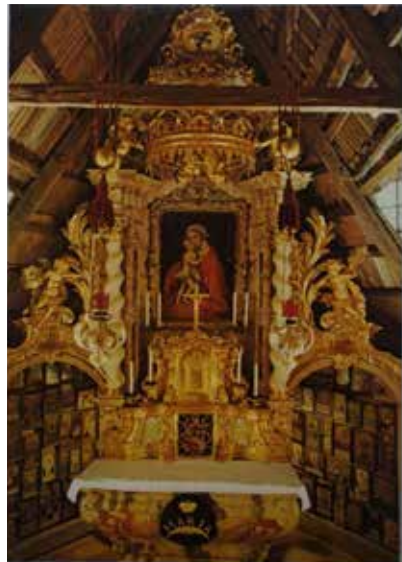


Fig. 1. Schöne alte Ansichtskarte AK – Wallfahrtskirche Sammarei Gnadenkapelle Fiedler.

URL: <https://www.ebay.com/itm/224515359112>

The pilgrimage church Mariahilf in Passau was built in 1624-1627 and houses a painting of the Virgin Mary, made in 1620 by the artist Pius of Passau. When Vienna was besieged by the Turks in 1683, Leopold I fled to Passau. The imperial couple prayed daily for victory over the Turks in front of the painting. After the Turkish defeat in Vienna, the Mariahilf of Passau became an icon of the Habsburg monarchy. Numerous pilgrims pray up the 321 steps to the pilgrimage church every year. Archive director Prof. Hannelore Putz provides an insight into the fascinating history of the Mariahilfstiege (<https://tourism.passau.de/discover-passau/sights/pilgrimage-church-mariahilf/>).

Then as now, the Mariahilfstieg (Stairs of the Holy Help) in Passau fascinates believers alike. Countless pilgrims have climbed the 321 steps up to the pilgrimage church over its nearly 400 -year history, always with one goal: the miraculous image on the high altar. Some walk, others pray, and still others kneel up the steps (according to ancient custom). As the final stage of a pilgrimage, the Mariahilfstiege has something fascinating about it. The atmosphere is unique and special. Archive

Pilgrimage Church «Mariahilf» in Passau



Photo 4. The pilgrimage church Mariahilf.
URL: <https://religiana.com/mariahilf-church-passau>

Director Prof. Hannelore Putz knows the history of the Mariahilfstiege very well and can also tell the pilgrim's personal stories (<https://bavaria.travel/stories/pilgrimage-time-out-the-way-of-st-james/>).



Photo 5. St. Mary's Steps in Passau. Photo from my own archive

The «long staircase», as it is rightly called, was and remains a place of refuge under the protective cloak of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Above all, however, the Mariahilfstiege is a place of faith. Here, the prayers of centuries-old pilgrimage traditions converge. Countless believers have brought their worries, needs, fears, and heartfelt concerns with them to present them to Mary. Often, they have hung their votive pictures on the walls of the staircase as a gift and offering to the Blessed Virgin Mary (Zhou Meng, 2023).

What distinguishes the Mariahilfstiege from other pilgrimage routes is that, from the very beginning, it demonstrates what pilgrimage really means. Pilgrimage is not simply getting from A to B, but rather a journey. And the staircase is part of that journey. This final stage, with its 321 steep steps, is arduous and a great challenge for many pilgrims. Yet here, within the walls of the Mariahilfstiege, there is also a very special atmosphere that gives strength. It is considered a place of personal reflection, concentration, and prayer, always with one goal: the miraculous image on the high altar (<https://www.bistum-passau.de/artikel/pilgerweg-mariahilfstiege>).



Photo 6. The miraculous image of Saint Mary on the high altar.
URL: <https://www.bistum-passau.de/artikel/pilgerweg-mariahilfstiege>



Photo 7. A pilgrimage brochure from my own archive

Methods of research. The article uses cultural, religious, and communication methods to analyse the concepts of pilgrimage and religious tourism in the socio-communication space. These methods have been used to examine pilgrimage in the socio-communication space in Lower Bavaria and Transcarpathia (Durán-Sánchez et al., 2018: 212).

The author used socio-communication, historical, systemic, comparative, informational, and multi-disciplinary approaches to make the scientific research more informative for a wide audience from different spheres of knowledge and to generate interest and discussion among different social groups (Panchenko S., Rizun V., 2024: 133).

Results and Discussions. Transcarpathia has a rich cultural and historical heritage. The most important part of it is wooden churches – unique buildings created by skilled masters. To these days, it is still a great inspiration that these wooden churches of Transcarpathia were built without a single nail using a special technology. At the same time, they keep a particular style, which is a characteristic feature of only a certain district.

These architectural sacred objects are striking in their authenticity and original forms, which have been surprisingly «blended» into the natural landscape of the region. It is believed that the craftsmen who created these sacred masterpieces calculated their location in such a way that they naturally complemented the natural landscape. The variety of architectural styles and uniqueness of wooden sacred objects in Transcarpathia also impresses and inspires scientific research (URL: <https://prokarpaty-tour.info/uk/dereviani-tserkvy-zakarpattia/>).

Here is a map of the wooden churches of Transcarpathia, and I propose to make a virtual pilgrimage along the routes of the sacred heritage of Transcarpathia and partially consider the importance of these objects for attracting tourists and pilgrims in the social and communication sphere and for recording these sacred objects for the preservation of cultural heritage. Transcarpathia is a significant tourist magnet, so the preservation of sacred heritage is of national and international importance (Shandor F., 2017; Vidal-Casellas D. et al, 2019; Paschinger E., 2019).



Fig. 2. Top 10 wooden churches of Transcarpathia

[<https://www.ukrinform.ua/rubric-tourism/2406546-top10-derevanih-cerkov-zakarpattia-najstarisa-najvisa-i-avtenticna-lemkivska.html>]

The author has visited and described the sacred sites of Transcarpathia in previous scientific studies in the following historical order: Greek Catholic Church of St Michael the Archangel, Kraynikovo village, 1666-1668; St Nicholas Church, Sokyrnytsia village, 1704; Wooden Church of St Michael the Archangel, Uzhok village, 1745; Shelestivska St Michael's Church, Uzhhorod, 1777; Church of the Holy Spirit, Kolochava village, 1795; St Michael's Church, Negrovets village, 1818; Church of the Ascension (Strukivska), Yasinia village, 1824 (<https://uzhgorod.net.ua/news/92815>).

These sacred journeys demonstrate the need for preservation and skilled management of sacred heritage on the example of Transcarpathia. It is necessary to develop pilgrimage routes, print booklets, brochures with artefacts, authentic monuments of sacred architecture, and develop «pilgrimage road maps» taking into account the multi-confessional and traditional features of this particular region (Aulet S., Vidal D., 2018: 258-259). I consider it appropriate to popularize pilgrimage and religious tourism as an important tool for managing and preserving the sacred heritage during the war at the state level, since it is thanks to pilgrims, their travels, photos, videos, recordings, notes, video blogs and content in the media that information is instantly distributed, and accordingly its promotion and advertising in such a competitive tourist market (Berghauer S. et al., 2011: 55; Stefko R. et al., 2015).

Transcarpathia is a powerful «sacral magnet» for pilgrims, tourists, historians, local historians, scientists, teachers, cultural scientists, directors, artists and other representatives of different social groups (Rizun V.). Therefore, it is necessary to develop interactive cards with QR codes, which will describe in detail the sacral monument, logistics, infrastructure, contacts of guides, guides and all the necessary information for pilgrims and tourists (Paschinger E., 2019).

According to O. Krushinskaya, the pages of the «Left Bank» online edition: «Ukraine ranks first in the world in the number of wooden churches about 2500, then Poland (about 1.5 thousand) and Romania (up to 1.2 thousand). And in any country there is no such variety of styles of wooden architecture. Ukrainian wooden temples have no analogues. The state should constantly take care of their preservation, and communities to understand their value and build a «legend» of their locality around them. Actually it turns out differently: wooden churches continue to disappear, and with each of them we are irreversibly losing some of our identity» (Krushynska O.). There are several problems with preserving authenticity and attracting pilgrims to «places of power»: the need to renew the roofs; lack of funding; lack of control and protection from the state (Zinko Y. et al., 2019; URL: <https://uzhgorod.net.ua/news/92815>).

According to the author, the pilgrimage should become closer to young people and such «places of power», «places of memory» (Wünsch T., 2018: 3-5), which are unique in the territory of Transcarpathia, should speak in a clear language for young people and people with inclusion, because through virtual excursions, digitality, these sacred objects will become more understandable and closer. And scientists should describe, show, scientifically substantiate and also convey information to a wide audience in order to preserve these monuments and transfer the memory of the sacred unique masterpieces of Ukraine, using modern tools: websites, digital technologies, media opportunities, digital catalogs, digital booklets, interactive maps, digital magnets, digitization of these monuments and creation of virtual excursions to these sacred places (Xiarhos, Michael G., 2016).

Conclusions. Considering the sacred heritage of the Lower Bavaria, on the example of specific cities, villages in social communication space, the author is proposed to continue the virtual excursion to the places of pilgrimage, «sacral force», «memory places» and consider the wooden churches of Transcarpathia with the possibility of their attraction using modern digital technologies and involving online media in future author's research.

The author proposes to develop «digital pilgrimage catalog» or «digital pilgrimage guide». The pilgrimage catalog should contain photographs of the object, a description of the place, the route, photographs of the landscape, infrastructure, as well as a description of the pilgrims' experience. Such an opportunity to create a pilgrimage catalog will allow the general public, not only scientists, to

familiarize themselves with the information and, perhaps, plan such a trip for themselves, will be able to enrich people spiritually, prepare them for a sacred journey, and also virtually guide people with disabilities to these places.

The cataloging of pilgrimage routes makes it possible to structure pilgrimage objects, to promote the preservation of the sacred heritage of Ukraine on the example of Transcarpathia, as well as to be a motivator for making such journeys, both physically and virtually through modern media instruments, which will allow people with disabilities (Couldry N., 2007: 65). On the example of the pilgrimage centers of Lower Bavaria, we have the opportunity to adopt the experience of institutionalization (Lo Presti, O., 2011), following the organization of pilgrimages, studying the experience of pilgrims using websites, reviewing pilgrimage brochures, adopting certain experience in the socio-communication field, and having the opportunity to implement this at the regional level, borrowing international experience.

Pilgrimage as a socio-communication institution requires the digitization of pilgrimage routes, passporting according to the principle of the Way of St. James (Paschinger E., 2019), as well as the approval of official pilgrimage routes at the state level. This will allow for the reproduction of pilgrimage routes in Ukraine, in particular in Transcarpathia, with the introduction of the experience of international routes and organization of international pilgrimage (https://zaxid.net/shlyah_svyatogo_yakova_v_ukrayini_palomnitskiy_i_turistichniy_marshrut_n1584642).

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