

A LITERARY PILGRIMAGE TO ROBBEN ISLAND AS INSPIRED BY NELSON MANDELA'S "LONG WALK TO FREEDOM"?

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'n Literêre pelgrimstog na Robbeneiland soos geïnspireer deur Nelson Mandela se "Long walk to freedom"?

Die fenomeen van pelgrimstogte aanvanklik as religieuse reise maar later as toeriste ervarings word bespreek. Die klem is op literêre toerisme of literêre pelgrimstogte wat mense onderneem deur die voetspore van 'n bepaalde outeur te volg in die skryf van sy/haar boek. In hierdie geval word die outobiografie van Nelson Mandela se "Long walk to freedom" (1994) – te ondersoek. Empiriese veldwerk is in Junie 2004 onder volwasse besoekers aan Robbeneiland gedoen en toon dat 61% hul besoek as 'n pelgrimstog beskou - 'n soeke na iets dieper of anders in die lewe; met 34% wat dit nie so ervaar het nie; en met 5% geen respons.

Sleutel terme: pelgrimstogte; literêre pelgrimstogte; kulturele pelgrimstogte; toerisme; Robbeneiland; Nelson Mandela; "Long walk to freedom"

The phenomenon of pilgrimages, initially as religious journeys but later as touristic experiences, is discussed. The focus is on literary tourism or "literary pilgrimages" that people undertake following the footsteps of a particular author in the writing of his/her book. In this case the autobiography of Nelson Mandela, "Long walk to freedom" (1994) is investigated. Empirical fieldwork done in June 2004 amongst adult visitors to Robben Island indicated that 61% regarded their visit as a pilgrimage, as a search for something deeper and different in life, while 34% did not, with 5% not responding.

Keywords: pilgrimages; literary pilgrimages; cultural pilgrimages; tourism; Robben Island; Nelson Mandela; "Long walk to freedom".

Introduction

In this article the phenomenon of pilgrimages will be discussed within a global context. Initially viewing them as religious journeys within a spiritual context, but also what pilgrimages have become, that is considering the wider sociological practise of groups of people moving, also as tourists, to selected “sacred places” to attain a personal goal of some kind. The focus of the article will be on literary tourism or the pilgrimage within a literary context, also called a “literary” pilgrimage, and how people are influenced, or not, to visit Robben Island after reading Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, “The Long walk to Freedom” (1994). The title in itself implies a pilgrimage, or long walk to reach a goal of “freedom”, a value inherent in humane and democratic societies. The “walk” or pilgrimage that Mandela undertook was primarily politically driven to attain or reach a “position or place” of freedom to be able to live and speak freely in an open society. Whether the title of the article, a literary pilgrimage is accurate, is debatable, as will be manifested by the findings of the fieldwork throughout the article.



Figure 1: Aerial view of Robben Island (Copyright SA Tourism)

A survey was done amongst a hundred adult tourists visiting Robben Island, World Heritage Site, in Cape Town, during the month of June 2004 to ascertain whether they were motivated to visit the Island after reading Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, “Long walk to freedom”¹ in order to follow in the footsteps of

¹ N. Mandela, *Long walk to freedom: the autobiography of Nelson Mandela* (MacdonaldPurnell, Randburg, 1994), 630pp.

Mandela, the living icon of South Africa that has, for some decades represented freedom and equality to the human race worldwide.

Pilgrimages within the tourism context

Pilgrimages are normally viewed from a religious or spiritual perspective. The connections between tourism and religion are however many, and the question that arises is: what do pilgrimages and tourism have in common? Although theologians emphatically state that modern tourism is not a pilgrimage, pilgrimages can be viewed as the ancient forerunners of modern tourism.² Since ancient times pilgrimages have been seen within a religious context, and are usually discussed in the literature in terms of religious tourism.

A pilgrimage is a phenomenon linked to all religions. It was a feature of primitive religions and was deeply rooted in small tribal communities and connected to the worship of so-called holy places and ancestor cult.³ Sometimes the development of pilgrimage was also linked to trade routes, such as the Silk Route in the Far East or the Incense Road in Arabia. The most regular travellers in ancient times were pilgrims who gathered in great numbers at well-known shrines or oracles on religious holidays. The greatest number of places of pilgrimage was in Greece, with the best-known and visited shrine being Apollo's oracle at Delphi. Places of pilgrimage "to satisfy all tastes" developed, and such destinations such as Rome, Fatima, Lourdes, Santiago de Compostela, Mecca, Jerusalem and other places of pilgrimage still bear witness to their popularity and economic strength. The oldest guidebook for pilgrims was the "Itinerary from Bordeaux to Jerusalem", produced in the year 333.⁴

The great epoch of pilgrimage in all world religions continues to this day. Some authors estimate that in the period between the 12th and 15th centuries, over 30% of the world's population was on a pilgrimage toward one of the 10,000 places of pilgrimage then shown and recognized.⁵ At the heart of religious teaching is humankind's spiritual need to continually search for, and find true values, that is, "the truth".⁶ Christian theology says that such a search in human history is called

² B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 135.

³ D. MacCannel, *Empty meeting grounds* (Routledge, London, 2002), p 269.

⁴ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 20.

⁵ N. Foster, *Die Pilger* (Wolfgang Kruger Verlag, Frankfurt, 1982).

⁶ B. Vukonić, "Medjugorje's religion and tourism connection", *Annals of tourism* B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 20; N. Foster, *Die Pilger* (Wolfgang Kruger Verlag, Frankfurt, 1982),.

pilgrimage – man’s “religiously motivated journey to a sacred place” in search of the sacred.⁷ In Biblical tradition, travel is the symbol of religious discovery. “To travel a new road always means to expose one’s life to the unexpected and the sacred”.⁸ Today cyberspace is also a form of travel through “virtual realities” where people electronically go to sacred sites, and “virtual pilgrimages” is an Internet neologism for destinations on the Net where pilgrims can travel for educational, economic and spiritual purposes.⁹

According to tradition pilgrimages are made to Jerusalem once in a lifetime by Jews of the Diaspora¹⁰, and by Moslems to Mecca, whereas freedom fighters and any exiled South African endeavours to make a pilgrimage to Robben Island to commemorate the lives of those who suffered on Robben Island for the freedom of their country, South Africa. Although only two parts (eight and nine) of Mandela’s autobiography (consisting of 11 parts) describe his years on Robben Island¹¹ – it is these parts that allow visitors to contextualise the experience and memories of the man with the barren prison cell on Robben Island.

Therefore, in a sense, a pilgrimage can be regarded as a journey undertaken to fulfil a deep spiritual or emotional need, and can be regarded as a “religious” journey, even if it does not necessarily mean belonging to a particular religion. In other words, when one speaks of a literary or political or any other pilgrimage other than a religious pilgrimage, it denotes a feeling of deep commitment towards experiencing a certain “place” on a “spiritual” level. The reason why people go on a pilgrimage is to “become one” with a “place” and to “feel” as if you were transported into another dimension of “spirituality” to feel one with, for example, the struggle of the political freedom fighters in the prison on Robben Island.

Following the survey done on Robben Island, 56 of the respondents were foreign and 44 domestic tourists. Of the foreign respondents, the majority were from the UK and the USA, with the remainder from Europe, Africa, Canada, Malta, and Russia.

⁷ L.E. Hudson and R.H. Jackson, “Mormon pilgrimage and tourism”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 1081; A. Jackowski and V.L. Smit, “Polish pilgrim-tourists”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 93.

⁸ R. O’Grady, *Tourism in the Third World – Christian reflections* (Orbis Books, Maryknoll, 1982), pp 74-75.

⁹ <http://it.stlawu.edu/~mmac/virtualpilgrimagepaper.html>, 2004.

¹⁰ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 123.

¹¹ N. Mandela, “Part 8: Robben Island: The Dark Years” and “Part 9: Robben Island: Beginning to Hope” in *Long walk to freedom* (Macdonald Purnell, Randburg, 1994), pp 365-434, 435-498.

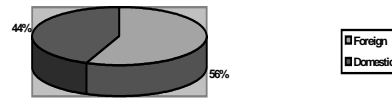


Figure 2: Visitors to Robben Island

Of the respondents, 61% of them regarded their visit to Robben Island as a “pilgrimage”, as a search for something deeper and different in life, while 34% of the respondents did not regard it as a pilgrimage. However, due to the limited number of respondents, these findings cannot be generalised in terms of a larger population.

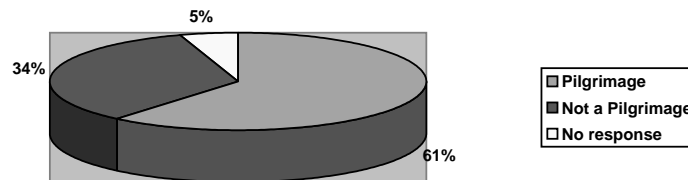


Figure 3: Visit to Robben Island a pilgrimage?

Who is a pilgrim?

Theologians say: that the pilgrim steps gently onto holy soil; whereas the tourist overruns holy places and photographs their remains. The pilgrim travels with humility and patience, whereas the tourist travels arrogantly and in a hurry. The tourist is a semi-pilgrim, if the pilgrim is a semi-tourist. Even when people are burying themselves in the anonymity of a crowded beach they are searching for an almost sacred, frequently symbolic form of companionship, that as a rule, is out of their reach in the daily structure of their lives in the office and home.¹² According to Smith the pilgrim-tourist path should ultimately be redefined as two parallel, interchangeable lanes, one of which is the secular knowledge based route of Western science, the

¹² V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture: anthropological perspectives* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1978), p 20.

other, the sacred road of faith and belief.¹³ Every person worldwide could travel either lane, or switch between them.

Turner & Turner explicitly say “the tourist is half pilgrim, if the pilgrim is half tourist”.¹⁴ They advocated the thesis that pilgrimage entails the movement of people from their everyday world of structured roles and statuses to a sacred centre where they enter a world of *communitas* or anti-structure through the ritual celebration of their common and universal humanity. Therefore, the tourist in an ideal form, with a positive moral understanding of life, with a need for new knowledge, cultures and other values, with a positive attitude toward other environments (tourist-receiving areas) and toward the population in those environments, becomes a pilgrim of sorts.¹⁵

According to Smith the terms pilgrimage and tourism both define cultural constructs, or concepts about specific categories of people who travel for different reasons” or “most travellers seem to share one common theme: a search for betterment of life”.¹⁶

Following an open question in the fieldwork, the main reasons given by the foreign respondents for visiting Robben Island, are, in order of frequency:

- for touristic reasons
- to learn about South Africa’s history
- to learn about Mandela, his imprisonment, and South Africa’s peace process
- to visit Robben Island as a monument for freedom
- for educational reasons

The main reasons for the domestic respondents visiting Robben Island, are:

- for educational reasons
- to learn more about Mandela, his experiences and fight for freedom
- to learn more about the history of the country

Religious versus other pilgrimages

Despite the major religions in the world today, there is an enormous number of beliefs, cults, myths and sects, and it is easy to conclude that there does not exist a religion in the world that would be the same for all people, nor is there a single system of belief for all people. There are also many religions in the history of mankind that sociologists see as proof that religions

¹³ V. Smith, “Introduction: the quest in guest”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 15.

¹⁴ V. Turner and E. Turner, *Image and pilgrimage in Christian culture: anthropological perspectives* (Columbia University Press, New York, 1978), p 20.

¹⁵ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 82.

¹⁶ V. Smith, “Introduction: the quest in guest”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 15.

are not eternal, but that they are transient like all other social phenomena. “Religions disappear when new social needs arise that they no longer meet”. It cannot be denied that religions have left behind impressive traces, in the forms of: temples, shrines, churches, and the great cultural and artistic heritage that has today, due to tourism become the property of a large part of humanity, allowing large sections of the population to add to their knowledge and insights into the history of the human race by visiting the sites of ancient religions, cultures and civilizations.¹⁷



Figure 4: Nelson Mandela revisiting Robben Island in 1993 (Copyright Island Pictures)

Following the survey done on Robben Island, the “pilgrimages” to Robben Island were divided into six categories/types of pilgrimage, i.e. a cultural/historic pilgrimage; a tourism pilgrimage; a political pilgrimage; a humanistic pilgrimage; a spiritual pilgrimage; and literary pilgrimage. The majority, that is, 60% of the respondents described their visit as a “cultural or historic pilgrimage”; with 56% describing it as a humanistic pilgrimage and political pilgrimage; 50% as a spiritual (or religious) pilgrimage; 52% as a tourism pilgrimage; with only 24% describing it as a literary pilgrimage.

¹⁷ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 25.

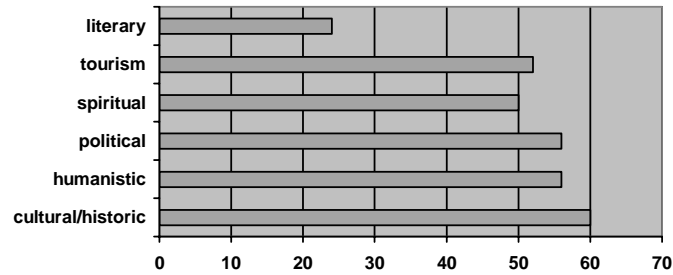


Figure 5: Types of Pilgrimages undertaken to Robben Island

Pilgrimages and tourism

When we speak of pilgrimages and tourism simultaneously, we are referring to the interrelationship and interaction between tourism and religion, the broad relationship between religion and social phenomena. Religion and tourism, as phenomena undergo constant change. Cohen however theorises from a sociological perspective that the phenomenon of pilgrimage and the phenomenon of tourism have similarities.¹⁸ That tourism can be regarded as a kind of pilgrimage of modern civilization based on the motives of tourist movements on the one hand and the motives of pilgrimages on the other. Especially with regard to more serious forms of tourism where the motives of the tourist journey are more substantial than pure recreation and entertainment – these are analogous to the ecstatic forms of pilgrimage in their spiritual meaning for the traveller-tourist, but the symbolic language in which tourists are obliged to express their pilgrimage is different. For a radical phenomenological distinction – on his/her journey the tourist always moves towards a tourist destination as a kind of symbol of his/her wishes. This is a symbol of the civilization and social system to which he/she belongs, towards a this-worldly centre, as Cohen expressed it, just as the pilgrim does when he/she heads towards just such a centre personified in the shrine to which pilgrimages are made, seeking in it the fulfilment of his/her spiritual and religious needs and aspirations.

Religious tourism is connected, more than one would expect, to other types of tourism, especially to holiday and cultural tourism, and social and group tourism. In history, religious journeys always were multifunctional journeys, even when the religious factors seemed to dominate. However, in modern societies, the religious

¹⁸ E. Cohen, "Pilgrimage centers: concentric and excentric", *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 35.

motivation seems to be less important than in ancient societies. Therefore, those pilgrimage sites that are located in the immediate area of large tourist attractions will flourish most.¹⁹



**Figure 6 : Mandela in the cell he lived in for 18 of his 27 years in prison
(Copyright Island Pictures)**

Tourist journeys have always been motivated not only by objective, but by numerous subjective factors. Most often their source lies in the domain of the irrational, ineffable and immeasurable. According to Hitrec “There is no need to stress the fact that the person does not become a traveller, or a tourist, exclusively for the sake of changing their place of residence because of a desire for physical rest, recreation and entertainment or because of mere escapism”.²⁰ Hitrec states that journeys and tourism are caused by gregarious instinct, the search for relationships and contacts, friendship, love, art and culture, the desire to communicate, the wish to play, prestige and snobbishness, fashion and imitation, as well as belonging to a certain social – and thus a religious – group. It is important to see that these are all factors rooted primarily in the psychological domain.²¹

¹⁹ G. Rinschede, “Forms of religious tourism”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 65.

²⁰ T. Hitrec, “Religious tourism: development-characteristics-perspectives”, *Acta turistica*, 2, 1, 1990, pp 9-49.

²¹ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 81.

Tourism and religion

Tourism is predominantly a phenomenon marked by movement, so it is understandable that the greatest amount of space is devoted to pilgrimages as a form of movement of tourists motivated by religious needs.²²

In demographic terms, tourism might be classified as a voluntary, temporary and seasonal migration. Voluntary, because people decide freely whether or not they will join in tourist movements. They decide freely whether or not they will seek a place to spend their holidays, a place for physical and psychological recreation, outside their place of residence.

Tourism can be called temporary migration because movement motivated by tourists takes place in only one part of the year, that is, temporarily, and the tourist is obliged to return to his or her place of permanent residence. Tourism is also seasonal migration because touristic journeys are as a rule linked to a certain season in the year, and not just any season. – this will depend on climatic conditions that are optimal for tourist movements and sojourns in a relatively short period of the year. According to Vukonić tourism may be classified under the general heading of migrations, with pilgrimages regarded as temporary migrations where believers undertake shorter or longer journeys to holy places.²³

In their constant movement from one area to another, humanity has changed and people have developed their personalities just as they have changed and built up the areas through which they passed and in which they lived. Tourism as a migration phenomenon par excellence is no exception. The Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, said that the universe is subject to constant change. The history of humanity in its own way also shows how human beings have evolved over the centuries, how they have affected their environment and how they themselves have been moulded by the influence of their natural and social environment.

Tourism is also a form of seasonal migration. It is compared to other kinds of migration with regard to tourist behaviour, its economic functions, its voluntary character and its temporary character. Tourism is seen as a phenomenon that stimulates the development of many countries in the world, and as a typical phenomenon of the industrial period in the development of humankind and an equally significant phenomenon of post-industrial society, a phenomenon that has remained controversial.²⁴ The concept of free time is also a phenomenon born of the industrial

²² B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), pp 82-83.

²³ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), pp 27-28.

²⁴ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p xi.

civilization, and is an integral and inseparable part of it. In this instance we are interested in those characteristics of free time and leisure time that determine or promote people's relationship toward their spiritual needs. In essence, one would need free time to "go on a pilgrimage" and a new kind of consciousness seems to have arisen: free time is increasingly seen as the content of life, and work, on the contrary as a necessity. Free time has become an independent area of life that greatly affects many things in people's lives: lifestyle, the way the natural environment is disposed of, the shaping of living conditions, the commercial supply on the leisure market. In summary, free times tend to enrich human life.

Free time and tourism are seen, not just in theology, but also in tourism theory, from the aspect of their spiritual, moral and ethical components. The WTO has published its views on this in a special study. Discussing the impacts of tourism on socio-cultural values, UNESCO stresses that "tourism as an activity includes, to a greater or lesser extent, [hu]man's spirituality and religion".²⁵

One of the less known manifests expressing modern views on global tourism, the Manila Declaration of 1980, states that "in tourism, spiritual elements must be given precedence over technical and material ones". The same document says what these spiritual elements defines: "complete satisfaction of the human being, an ever increasing contribution to education, national equality, the liberation of man [or woman] in the spirit of respect for his [or her] identity and dignity, the affirmation of the originality of cultures and respect for the moral heritage of a people".²⁶

MacCannel introduced an interesting sociological thesis into tourism theory that relies on the so-called religious metaphor and sees tourism as a modern equivalent of, and substitute for religion.²⁷

Research shows that there has been a significant increase in the mass of religious tourists or pilgrims, resulting in an unexpected flourishing of certain places of pilgrimage, both traditional and recent. This is most probably due to the constant growth in the world population, and thus the growth of the world tourist demand. More and more believers undertake journeys in groups, some under the patronage and with the participation of the church. What is of importance here is the companionship and social life of believers, while the destination need not have a religious character. Such journeys are mostly of a tourist nature, although the itinerary often includes

²⁵ Unesco, *The effects of tourism on socio-cultural values* (UNESCO, Aix-en-Provence, 1975), p 12.

²⁶ World Tourism Organisation, *Declaration on World Tourism* (WTO, Madrid, 1980).

²⁷ D. MacCannel, *The tourist: a new theory of the leisure class* (Macmillan, London, 1976).

visits to sacral buildings of the traveller's own creed, but also other creeds, as well as various other holy places and sites.²⁸

Within the context of discussions about tourism, pilgrimage is mentioned in the earliest work on tourism theory. All these studies, however, remain limited to a discussion about the phenomenon itself or about the mutual interconnection about pilgrimage and tourism. The first forms of tourism, without exception, mention the crusades and thousands of pilgrims as an almost incredible example of human persistence based on religious needs and motives. The crusades also encouraged the development of travel in general, which meant a great deal in Medieval conditions, and was equally significant in the global history of travel.

Pilgrimage, as mentioned before, is a phenomenon that, due to its size, provides the most striking example of the interrelationship between tourism and religion as debated by sociologists. This debate can be reduced to the question of whether tourism has certain ritual qualities relating to free time that set it apart from everyday life, and whether these qualities turn tourism into a kind of a pilgrimage.²⁹

Literature on tourism in the 1970s contains many studies in which tourism is seen as a paradigm of life in modern societies, in which the search for authentic ways of life has become almost the central motive of travel. In his groundbreaking book "The tourist: a new theory of the leisure class" (1976) MacCannell regards tourism as a kind of individual or social ritual expression of deeply rooted values and traditions in human life.³⁰ Tourism seen in this way, with a ritual meaning and content, corresponds to, and is parallel with, pilgrimage and some other rituals in religious societies.³¹

A major mega-feature of tourism is that it brings people of different races, nationalities, cultures, religions, etc., closer together, and is highly appropriate as a theological thesis, regardless of what religion we are dealing with; for there is now religious teaching that does not stress the need for people to meet and associate, respect one another and learn from one another. That is why we always find, in all religious statements, that the connection between tourism and religion is stressed. The ideological standpoints of tourism and religion are almost identical in this respect. No Pope has spoken about tourism without mentioning international understanding, implying understanding amongst peoples of different religions, as one of the fundamental values introduced into the modern world by tourism. The first official

²⁸ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), pp 54-57.

²⁹ D. MacCannell, *Empty meeting grounds: the tourist papers* (Routledge, London, 2002), p 269; B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 83

³⁰ D. MacCannell, *The tourist: a new theory of the leisure class* (Macmillan, London, 1976).

³¹ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 84.

standpoint of the Catholic Church on tourism, pronounced by Pope Pius XII, was within the context of the understanding of tourism primarily as a migration phenomenon. In 1952, addressing representatives of Italian tourism organisations, the Pope spoke first of the “true, broad and complete concept of tourism” subsuming under this concept refugees and various migrations. It is true that the sequence of events and the content of the tourism phenomenon are confused here, but what is important is the fundamental starting point in the study of tourism as seen by theologians – the starting point of migration.³²

In the first explicit mention by the highest church authority of tourism, recorded in 1952, tourism is seen as a global phenomenon that can help promote better understanding among people in all respects. It states “tourism refines the human spirit, and moreover, enriches people by mutual encounters ...”. Tourism is also seen as playing a role in “establishing relations of brotherhood among people of all classes, nationalities and races”, and not just among people of the same faith. The statement that tourism promotes international understanding can be extended to the well-known thesis in tourism theory, that the closeness among people achieved by tourist travel has a positive effect on peace in the world. Modern religious teachings have an inbuilt thesis about “peace on Earth” which all of humanity should strive to achieve.³³

Religion is an important factor in creating the tradition to travel, and the desire of the pilgrim to travel does not arise “only in those who are firm in their faith, but in a much broader circle of people who are interested”.³⁴

The general theological thesis is that pilgrimage is not a tourism phenomenon but a religious one; but some theological discussions hold that this phenomenon, although religious in principle, has certain tourism features and implications. Religion thus participates in the development of the culture of all peoples, thereby establishing a link between religion and tourism through culture.³⁵

The principles of tourism can be summed up in several requirements, namely: a peaceful encounter among people from different countries, cultures and professions; promoting cultural contacts, understanding, cooperation and friendship, as well as mutual respect; renewing and encouraging the development of personality; learning and satisfying intellectual curiosity; getting to know others through their customs and lifestyles. A similar code of behaviour for tourists was passed by the WTO in 1985.

³² B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), p 32.

³³ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), pp 104-105.

³⁴ L.J. Lickorish and A.G. Kershaw, *The travel trade* (Practical Press, London, 1958), p 18.

³⁵ B. Vukonić, *Tourism and religion* (Pergamon, Oxford, 1996), pp 81 & 114.

The literary pilgrimage

This paper's focus should be on the literary pilgrimage, as the title denotes, and how people are influenced to visit Robben Island based on Nelson Mandela's autobiography, "The Long walk to Freedom". As stated previously the title in itself implies a pilgrimage, or long walk to reach a goal of higher living, a value cherished by humane and democratic societies. However, the pilgrimage that Mandela undertook was primarily a political pilgrimage to reach a "place" of freedom to live and speak in an open society, as is also evident in the sub-title of the final part of his book, "Freedom".³⁶

The title, a literary pilgrimage, is clearly not accurate as manifested in the fieldwork, as the research clearly leaned more to this being a cultural or historic pilgrimage (60%), a political pilgrimage (56%), and a humanistic pilgrimage (54%), with literary pilgrimage only receiving 25% of the responses. However, as previously stated, that due to the limited number of respondents, findings cannot be generalised to a larger population.

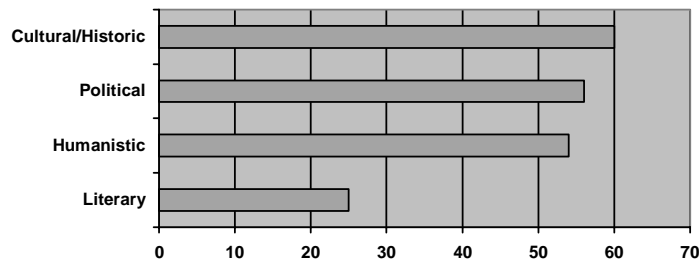


Figure 7: Types of pilgrimages

Nelson Mandela's "Long walk to freedom"

Following the fieldwork, the respondents were asked to state what first came to mind when thinking of Robben Island:

- 94% of the respondents thought of Nelson Mandela, the man
- 83% of the respondents thought of oppression and hatred
- 83% of the respondents thought of general tourism and Robben Island as a World Heritage Site
- 81% of the respondents thought of freedom and forgiveness

³⁶ N. Mandela, "Part 11: Freedom" in *Long walk to freedom* (Macdonald Purnell, Randburg, 1994), pp 549-617.

- 76% of the respondents thought of Robben Island as a “sacred” site/shrine of humanity.

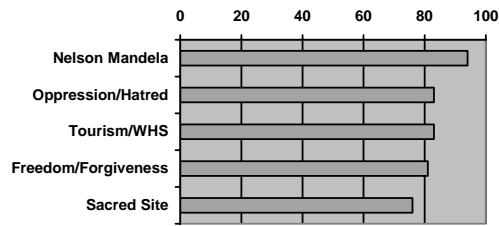


Figure 8: First image of the respondents when thinking of Robben Island

On analysing the fieldwork, only 28% of the respondents had read Nelson Mandela’s autobiography, “Long walk to freedom”, with 71% not having read it. However, 62% indicated that they would like to read it after visiting Robben Island, with 14% not interested. Questioned as to whether any other books on Mandela had been read, only 18% had read another book, whereas 80% had not read anything on Mandela. However, 15% had read books on other political prisoners on Robben Island with 83% not having read anything on the topic.

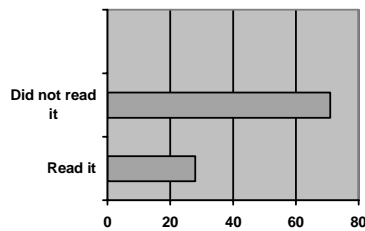


Figure 9: Respondents who had read “Long walk to Freedom”

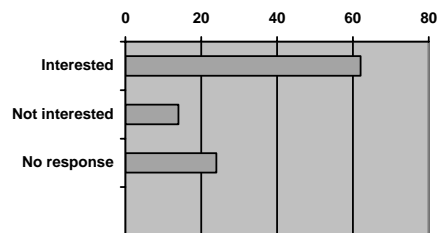


Figure 10: Respondents interested in reading in reading “Long walk to Freedom” now:

Irrespective of the above “pilgrimage experience” 91% of the respondents regarded their experience of Robben Island as a “unique tourism experience”, with 78% indicating that they would like to visit Robben Island again.

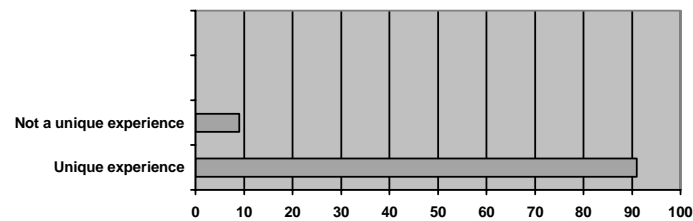


Figure 12: Experience of Robben Island as “a unique tourism experience”:

Conclusion

Although the impact of mass tourism may effect dramatic changes on small festive pilgrimages, there is no evidence to suggest that tourism and pilgrimages are intrinsically compatible. For example, there is a growing interest in a form of religiously oriented tourism that is emotionally satisfying, whether it involves visiting architecturally significant shrines, participating in retreats, or hiking along Europe’s medieval pilgrimage routes. In some cases, shrine managers view tourists as potential pilgrims; thus, the integration of the traditional religious focus with secular interests becomes a missionary challenge.³⁷

We can conclude that the pilgrimage is the ‘journey’ of today’s tourist in search of a deeper meaning for life, and following the fieldwork, although the assumption/ expectation that people visit Robben Island on a literary journey was not proven, visits to Robben Island can be described as a pilgrimage by people, worldwide, to pay homage to a great man, Nelson Mandela.

³⁷ M.L. Nolan and S. Nolan, “Religious sites as tourism attractions in Europe”, *Annals of tourism research*, 19, 1, 1992, p 77.