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TRAVELERS AND TRAVELS – HISTORICAL-CULTURAL AND SPIRITUAL FORCES

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Rezumat Călători și călătorii – forțe istorico-culturale și spirituale

De la apariția sa, omul a fost mânat de diverse necesități să se deplaseze dincolo de zona sa de confort, călătoriile însoțindu-i adesea acțiunile și activitățile. Astfel, el devine un călător în căutare de hrană, de spațiu de trai, de cucerire de noi teritorii, de satisfacere a unor curiozități, de pelerinaje, de plăcere, relaxare și divertisment în ultimă instanță. Dacă mărturiile din Antichitate despre călătorii și călători sunt destul de sumare și sporadice, cu timpul acestea s-au înmulțit și au devenit adevărate surse istorice, îndeosebi prin jurnalele de călătorie sau descrierile unor evenimente, cum ar fi de exemplu confruntările armate și deplasarea acestora prin diverse zone ale lumii. Astfel, oamenii au obținut informații despre alte spații decât cele de baștină, despre culturi, tradiții, obiceiuri, rituri și ritualuri, religii, monumente și opere de artă etc. ale Altora, în comparație cu ale lor. Individul este incitat să călătorească, să ia contact direct cu alte popoare și comunități, cu monumentele lor vestite, pe care le asimilează într-un mod subiectiv, le psihologizează și le reinvestește cu noi valori, ajutând și el la procesul de patrimonializare a unor obiecte deosebite, produse de marcă ale creativității umane.

Cuvinte-cheie: călător, călătorie, turism, patrimoniu, monumente.

Резюме Путешественники и путешествия – историко-культурные и духовные силы

С момента своего появления человеком движут различные потребности выйти за пределы своей зоны комфорта, его действия и деятельность часто требуют от него путешествий. Таким образом, в поисках еды, жизненного пространства, завоевания новых территорий, любопытства, паломничества, удовольствия, отдыха и развлечений он становится путешественником. Античные свидетельства о путешествиях и путешественниках довольно кратки и спорадичны, со временем они умножились и стали ценными историческими источниками, особенно благодаря путевым дневникам или описаниям таких событий, как вооруженные столкновения и их перемещение по разным районам мира. Таким образом, люди получили информацию о других странах, отличных от своей родины, о других культурах, традициях, обычаях, обрядах и ритуалах, религиях, памятниках и произведениях искусства и т. д. Человеку нравится путешествовать, вступать в непосредственный контакт с представителями других народов и сообществ, знакомиться с их

известными памятниками, которые он познает субъективным образом, психологизирует их и реинвестирует в них новые ценности, внося тем самым свой собственный вклад в процесс патримониализации ценностей, некоторых особых объектов культуры, выдающихся продуктов человеческого творчества.

Ключевые слова: путешественник, путешествие, туризм, наследие, памятники.

Summary Travelers and travels – historical-cultural and spiritual forces

Ever since his appearance, man has been driven by various needs to move beyond his comfort zone, his actions and activities often requiring him to travel around. Thus, he becomes a traveler in search of food, living space, conquest of new territories, curiosity, pilgrimages, pleasure, relaxation, and entertainment. If the testimonies from Antiquity about journeys and travelers are quite brief and sporadic, over time they have multiplied and become valuable historical sources, especially through travel diaries or descriptions of events, such as armed confrontations and their movement around different areas of the world. Thus, people have obtained information about spaces other than their homelands, about cultures, traditions, customs, rites and rituals, religions, monuments and works of art, etc. of Others, compared to their own. The individual is excited to travel, to make direct contact with other peoples and communities, with their famous monuments, which he assimilates in a subjective way, psychologizes them and reinvests them with new values, thus bringing his own contribution to the process of heritagization of some special objects, outstanding products of human creativity.

Key words: traveler, travel, tourism, heritage, monuments.

Throughout his evolutionary course, man has always been driven by the need or urge to travel, to move across more or less wide territories. If initially man traveled for material reasons, such as the search for food sources or natural resources, later he also did so for the spirit of adventure, as well as for reasons of a spiritual, recreational or entertainment nature.

It is common knowledge that in Antiquity and the Middle Ages man was rather sedentary, as only certain activities required traveling from one place to another, such as military, economic, commercial, administrative/functional, later religious (pilgrimage-

es), related to a status of prestige, or scientific ones. Another type of travel was nomadism, which was also a way of life, and here we mean the migratory waves that moved across vast areas, as well as the journeys undertaken by seafaring peoples driven by the spirit of adventure, or in search of new places to plunder (Oprea 2011). Over time, the development of society, science and technology, means of transport, roads, and especially the great geographical discoveries of the 15th and 16th centuries led not only to the diversification and multiplication of travel for various reasons, but also to its transformation into a soul searching journey, a search for introspection, for the spiritualization of both the outer and the inner world. And this because man is characterized by curiosity, the engine of the greatest discoveries and innovations that have always propelled the world forward. That is why, "throughout history, movement has helped the human being to open up to what was different, to meet new people and morals, to compare the homeland's landscape with the natural and urban architecture of *somewhere else*" (Bogdan, Barutcieff 2016: 9).

Today, the modern individual has transformed travel into entertainment and relaxation, but also into a refuge from the tumult of everyday life, so that "The irrepensible urge to roam through unknown places, the urge to travel across thousands of kilometers in order to know and understand other territories and their inhabitants is encouraged by the tourist industry, but also by the world literature with its nomadic figures and the promise of invisible cities, with their full panoply of marvelous histories" (Bogdan, Barutcieff 2016: 9). For history is not only learned from documents, books or chronicles, but is learned especially by traveling step by step (Almaş, Scurtu 1973: 5), because the journey always means knowledge too (Petrescu 2013: 7).

Throughout time, man has undertaken individual or group trips with the aim of visiting special, sometimes exceptional objects, famous not only locally, but also nationally or internationally. It is worth noting the role of the traveller/tourist/visitor in building the heritage that has become the object of his contemplation. If the heritagization of an object, monument, work of art, etc. included the obligatory fulfillment of certain criteria established by certain specialists, its valorization was also completed by the visitor, by his way of perceiving the heritage object, by his way of connecting with it, by the internalization and birth of certain emotions, i.e. by the internal spiritual assimilation, which gave it additional value. All these brought added value or the recognition of the heritage value with which the objects had orig-

inally been endowed. Even if the heritage is not the native one, the tourist, by coming into contact with other types of heritage, is enriched informatively, culturally, aesthetically, artistically, historically, but also spiritually, so that "The Other becomes Us" (Noppen, Morisset 2003). The emotions experienced in front of human works that have endured the test of time, the possibility of immersion in a past that you were not a part of but which, through its vestiges, teleports you into an imaginary world that is revealed to you in all its splendor and plenitude, are a huge gain that opens your appetite for new journeys, for adventures that take you out of the everyday life, because "Meeting the Other and his spaces, going outside of yourself and the familiar universe are never predictable actions, they involve a dose of the unknown, danger, adventure. But let us not forget the etymological meaning of the word adventure; it refers to what will come – *advenire* (Latin) – both in a concrete sense and a spiritual one. The adventure involves simultaneously traveling across a time and a territory, both marked by rites of passage, but also reaching a destination (*adventus*) and being included in a new ontological state" (Bogdan, Barutcieff 2016: 10).

We should not overlook the array of emotions and mental experiences born from direct contact with the heritage. David Lowenthal stated that the emotion aroused by this contact is closely related to the feeling of belonging to a common past that the antiquity of things and places has the potential to awaken in the individual because their age "favors a feeling of closeness to an (imagined?) community marked by a balanced coexistence of technology, art, culture, and nature, a feeling that is both soothing and exhilarating in comparison to our messy present" (Lowenthal 1975: 52-67). Thus, one feels a sense of grandeur in the presence of something that has defied time and space and has been handed down to us in all its splendor, even if some of its attributes have been erased or blurred by the passage of time. In this way, there is a psychological stimulation that triggers special emotions that lead to the birth of unique individual experiences, either through "absorption" of the heritage object, or through "absorption" of the subject by the object (Benjamin 1969: 1-26).

The knowledge of the external world has been decisive for the progress of mankind, the interrelationship with the environment, with nature, often imitated and reproduced in human products, being the basis of inner development.

The urge to discover the world and the others through travel goes back to ancient times. For economic and mercantile reasons, numerous expeditions were undertaken, which led not only to the

discovery of new territories and a more in-depth knowledge of those already known, but, thanks the notes written down by some explorers, also to learning about new populations, customs and traditions, religions, their physical and mental characteristics, behavior, way of life, wealth etc. In this way, the knowledge of the outside world and of the relations with *the others* was expanded. For example, the notes of explorers or travelers were excellent sources of fiction for medieval Europeans, who, because of the lack of direct contact with the subject of the account, fantasized on the rather subjective information given by the explorers and travelers, who also relied heavily on imagination in their descriptions. However, “the explorers and traders ventured much further across the globe than our stereotype suggests, and through their journeys, real and imagined ones, they brought back cultural influences” (Livingstone s.a.¹).

The traces of the journeys made for commercial, military and state administration purposes have been lost in the mists of time. However, some were recorded, one example being that of a papyrus from around 1130 BC, which refers to the earliest account of a business journey made by an Egyptian by ship on the Nile and then at sea, from Thebes to Byblos in Lebanon, an account that also included the less pleasant aspects of the journey, such as bandit attacks, storms, contacts with locals, etc. (Lascau 1986: 6), inherent in the journeys in which the safety of the individual was not the strong point of those times.

In addition to this type of travel, over time journeys for cultural purposes also became more frequent, as evidenced by the Nile Valley, which since the first half of the 2nd millennium BC had become a real open-air museum, the very large number of monuments attracting the attention of the many travelers who were interested in them, which leads to the idea that ever since then trips have been undertaken for pleasure or curiosity, i.e. “tourist trips” (Lascau 1986: 7). Not only Egypt took advantage of its monuments, but later on also Ancient Greece and Rome, which learned to promote and make known their monuments, works of great aesthetic and architectural value, as well as other objects and works of art that attracted the attention of travelers.

The awareness of the value of some works of architectural or artistic art and the profits gained from them undoubtedly led to the creation of conditions that not only facilitated access to them, but also offered a certain degree of comfort to “tourists”, with the aim of attracting as large a number as possible. Thus, new roads were improved and built, bridges were built across waterways, new land and sea routes were opened, etc., some buildings for travelers

were erected to offer room and board, such as those around the pyramids, but also in other areas, such as Crete, where the oldest vestiges of such a place were discovered (mid-2nd millennium BC), located near the palace of Knossos, which was equipped with a bathroom, hence the conclusion that it was intended for travelers coming from faraway (Lascau 1986: 7-8).

Information about some behavior of the “tourists” reaches us through the inscriptions they left on the monuments, a behavior that has been perpetuated to this day. In Egypt, for example, from the graffiti and inscriptions on certain monuments, we also find information about the names of the owners of some pyramids of the Old Empire, made by the visitors of the New Empire (Boda 2008) or about the visit of a school of scribes to the pyramid of pharaoh Zoser (13th century BC), the oldest known school trip (Lascau 1986: 7).

We do not know for sure what was the motivation for these “tourist trips” taken for cultural purposes. Besides the curiosity to see special things from an artistic, monumental and architectural point of view, clear evidence of exceptional human creativity, of craftsmanship transformed into art, people may have satisfied their pleasure to travel, to see new territories, different from their homelands, to interact with new, unknown populations, to enrich their knowledge, maybe even to learn new things. It is certain that over time, this urge to travel has become, under the influence of internal motivations, a habit, and later on quite a profitable business, a real industry nowadays.

Perhaps man felt the seduction of the ancient places where he met the monument “which teaches us more about a certain era than a history treatise” (Dumont 1874: 243), leaving him to interrogate the ruins themselves, asking the vestiges for the information that arouses strong emotions, so that “Seeing, researching, caressing the vestiges of the past, we are penetrated by that thrill which is called respect for everything that was useful, good and beautiful, the ancestors” (Almaş, Scurtu 1973: 5). Because “This sacralization of the ‘monuments’ – those from Antiquity first and foremost, then those from the Middle Ages – assumed the presence of a witness, of the ‘Other’, whose gaze, then interest, would guarantee their preciousness. As anthropology emphasized at the time, the local gaze, devoid of distance and, above all, of reference, had no competence in assessing specificity or originality: then the well-known Tourist *intervened*, who, through his comparison and (therefore) knowledge, thus generated the first heritage consecrations” (Noppen, Morisset 2003). It is the tourist who absorbs the particular power of the ruins that causes him a state of temporal and spatial weightless-

ness, launching him into a kind of reverie determined by the attributes of the historical and monumental heritage (antiquity, rarity, continuity, succession, finality, authenticity and beauty), propelled into a state of melancholy typical of the romantic vision of artists, writers and poets (Woodward 2002).

If the monuments were originally erected for certain purposes and functions, the passage of time and the change of functional objectives led to their abandonment and replacement by others that were complying with the new social requirements and needs. This is the case with many works of architectural art of Egyptian, Greek, Roman, etc. antiquity. However, the engineering and technical genius of our forefathers did not go into oblivion, as such monuments are admired to this day as perpetual recognition and removal from oblivion; they are used as evidence to support the age of nationalities, especially starting from the 19th century, to legitimize peoples in past and present history. Also, “a beneficial trend that manifests itself under the impact of spiritual considerations is the protection, preservation and perpetuation of the values of past eras as a factor of cultural identification and attestation. It meets the need for continuity, for the permanence of some valuable elements of the cultural landscape permanently confronted with metamorphosis and change” (Cocean, David 2014: 32), which particularly contributes to the heritagization, permanence or sacralization of some values considered not only national, but unanimously recognized as universal.

In time, the journeys became more refined, in the sense that facilities emerged to stimulate them and encourage repetition. Special establishments were built for travelers that satisfied the need for accommodation and food, later on even for entertainment. Thus, the flourishing period of a new occupation begins, that of an innkeeper, then that of a hotelier, finally everything turning into a real tourism industry.

In the past, travel involved many dangers due not only to the precarious conditions offered by land routes, but also to robbers, the vagaries of the weather, wild animal attacks (Oprea 2011), means of transport, etc., which, however, did not prevent man from traveling, but rather drove him to overcome them, which he did over the centuries. Even today, travel is not perfectly safe, as the unexpected can occur at any time, which does not diminish at all the urge to travel.

The attraction for travelling was motivated not only by the special, even exceptional products of human creativity, but also by their environment or their display, both the natural and the cultural environment. Unlike the natural landscape, the cultural

one is considered as “an elaborated, decanted and distilled, sometimes millennial product of the inter-relationship of man with his living environment, with the nature of his mental space, which also stores in its intimate structure needs, solutions, visions and destinies” (Cocean, David 2014: 17). Perhaps that is why the cultural landscape has created its own importance, contributing to the staging of the product of culturalization, to the creation of favorable conditions for highlighting it. But the reverse is also valid, namely the integration of the natural element in man’s own creation, in this way “valuing certain features to which he gives meanings”, a good example being that of castles and fortifications that “exploit the inaccessibility of rocky cliffs” (Cocean, David 2014: 35).

Unlike the traveler and journeys of past ages, the postmodern tourism and tourist involve significant changes. And this because the journey has become a practical illustration of the idea that the grass is always greener somewhere else than at home, a search for what was lost in other places, times and cultures that can no longer be found in the modern society from which many feel exiled, an endless search for the authentic or another reality (Richards 2002). Today, when globalization has an increasing impact, culture remains one of the most distinctive features, the “postmodern” society being characterized by an increasingly pronounced tendency to culturalize everything. This is what has led to an increasing convergence between culture and tourism, so that “tourism is cultural, and culture is increasingly consumed through tourism” (Richards 2002). Contemporary man consumes more and more culture, but he is also more demanding, more selective because the cultural offer is more and more diverse, and the tourist is more and more “qualified”. He is now looking not only for a holiday destination, comfort and a good price, but also for personal growth, in a society where values have largely changed and the recognition of individual valences no longer works normally and correctly.

However, traditional tourism, especially heritage tourism, based on “the living and built elements of culture”, remains the main attraction in the preferences of the consumer of culture. Along with the material and intangible past, it also includes “the cultures and popular traditions existing today, because they are also legacies from the past; other intangible heritage elements such as music, dance, language, religion, food and cuisine, artistic traditions and festivals; and the material vestiges of the built cultural environment, including monuments, public buildings and historic houses, farms, castles and cathedrals, museums and archaeological ruins and relics. Although the heritage industry in the past overwhelm-

ingly focused on the heritage of the privileged (e.g. castles, cathedrals), there is now widespread recognition and acceptance of everyday landscapes that depict the lives of ordinary people: families, farmers, factories, workers, miners, fishermen, women and children” (Timothy, Nyaupane 2009). All this induces the impression of participation both in a glorious, elitist past, and in a “popular” past, of ordinary people. And here it is worth mentioning the heritagization process, which can invest and re-invest objects with cultural, material and symbolic value and with historical meaning, so that “The objects, places and sociocultural practices with heritage status are invested with historical and cultural meanings that highlight features and mnemonic, aesthetic or technical-scientific values that transcend the original meaning and value directly associated with their past practical utility” (Fortuna s.a.).

In conclusion, we can say that the subject of travelers and travels is inexhaustible, being open to constant interpretation and reinterpretation. What should be remembered, however, is the acting position of the traveler/tourist and the actuality of the journey, which takes place both in time and in space, both geographically and spiritually. However, the subjective side of the journey remains dominant, this being impregnated by the traveler’s knowledge, personality and experiences in front of historical vestiges and artifacts, of the cultural and natural landscape, of all the works of art, of the entire material and immaterial heritage.

However, traveling also means the memory of places, not only of well-known areas that have become tourist destinations, but also of marginal areas, less known, but which offer the authenticity increasingly sought by the traveler/tourist. For history is constantly being written and rewritten. Hence, the psychologization of travel and the sacralization of monuments. Traveling also means removal from oblivion and including the visited sights in one’s memory and spirit. Moreover, by returning to traditions and customs, the journey presents itself as a return to ancestrality, at the same time emphasizing its ethnographic and anthropological-cultural dimension, its penetration into the mentality of the place and people, the understanding of the subtleties of the past and their spiritual appropriation. So that any journey is a subjective means of escaping from the immediate, sometimes pressing reality of the present and of immersing in an often idealized past precisely to offer a motivation to travel across sometimes very long distances in order to see some vestiges dusted by time but kept permanently on the surface by man’s urge to travel and be enraptured by them.

Note

¹ Without year or date.

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