

Introduction

In the history of Mankind, civilization and culture one thing can be placed on the very first position – the religion. It has always played an important role – sometimes the most important – in the life of various individual communities, nations or lands. Already in pagan times a well developed network of sacred places existed and members of different tribes used to visit those places. The pagan times are hidden in the twilight of ages yet we do know quite a lot about the religions of antiquity and the historical eras that followed as well as about the role of religion in the history of the world and societies. Man has always wandered to sacred places. They have always been – and still are – present on all continents, irrespective of the character or degree of development of the given religion. In the course of years pilgrimage routes were created that are continuously used by people both going to a sacred place and returning from it. This network of sacredness consists not only of routes or big and small centres of religious cult sometimes known only to the local people but also of tribal communities, families, individual believers. Many times John Paul II emphasized this phenomenon talking about *‘the geography of faith’*. In his book *‘To Cross the Threshold of Hope’* the Holy Father writes: *‘Concern about all the Churches makes him [the Pope] pilgrimize every day in his prayers all over the world with his thought and heart. Thus a specific geography of the papal prayer is born. It is a geography of communities, Churches, societies as well as problems that trouble the contemporary world’*. This statement of the Pope confirms, although perhaps indirectly, the fact that all those elements co-create **one great sacred space of the world**, that is inseparably connected to the history of Mankind. It is a sub-space of the geographical space and is one of the most basic and crucial study issues of geography of religion. With respect for the problematics some specialists call this section of the geographical science the *‘sacred geography’*.

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