



THE ROLE OF TOURISM IN SOCIO-ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN THE CONTEXT OF GLOBALIZATION

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Abstract

It is well known that the processes of globalization are steadily advancing social, political, and economic cooperation. Tourism is considered an integral part of this process, serving as a medium for dialogue between cultures and playing a crucial role in shaping relationships between nations and peoples. From this perspective, this article aims to explore the origin and historical development (genesis) of tourism by analyzing various definitions of the concept found in literary sources.

Keywords: Ethnos, genesis, Great Silk Road, culture, axiology, peoples, customs, traditions, caravan routes, interpreter.

Introduction

Tourism is recognized as one of the earliest forms of human activity within the history of civilization, having manifested in various forms and contexts throughout different historical periods. In its initial stages, travel was primarily undertaken for religious purposes, trade relations, or official diplomatic missions. Over time, however, tourism gradually evolved into an independent sector, acquiring distinct economic, cultural, and social significance. In particular, the development of industry, advancements in transport and communication technologies, improvements in living standards, and the increase in available leisure time have all contributed to the expansion of the tourism sector. In this process, the strengthening of international cooperation, the attraction of investments, and the development of tourism infrastructure have played a crucial role.

In recent years, tourism has become one of the rapidly developing sectors in Uzbekistan. A growing number of tourists visiting our country express interest in exploring its unique features, cultural values, historical monuments, and natural landscapes characterized by a distinct climate.



Among the Central Asian countries, Uzbekistan possesses relatively vast tourism potential. It is considered a country capable of withstanding strong competition in this field and holds significant opportunities for further tourism development. Additionally, Uzbekistan is a key component of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)'s “Great Silk Road” project. This initiative primarily promotes cultural tourism products. Tourists participating in this project are generally enthusiasts of cultural tourism, showing great interest in the culture, history, and lifestyles of other nations. This clearly indicates that the development of various branches of tourism—particularly ethno-cultural tourism—along with the improvement of its legal and organizational framework, the dynamic advancement of tourism as an independent sector, and the enhancement of the system for training qualified personnel are all pressing demands of the time.

The term “ethno-cultural tourism” is derived from the combination of three words: “ethnos,” “culture,” and “tourism.” Specialists define ethno-cultural tourism as a form of travel that involves studying the culture, archaeology, ethnography, art, and way of life of different peoples and nations.[1]

Currently, interest in ethnic culture and ethnic self-awareness is growing worldwide. Increasing attention is being paid to the preservation of ethno-cultural heritage, uniqueness, and cultural diversity, as well as to the challenges related to the interaction between tourism and culture.[2]

The development of ethno-cultural tourism contributes to bringing different cultures closer together, fostering appreciation and enrichment of their uniqueness. A place inhabited by an ethnic group with its own distinct art, religion, history, and culture becomes a valuable resource for ethno-cultural tourism. Studying folk art and creativity is an integral part of this form of tourism, as monuments of art reflect both the past and present of a people, as well as the unique aspects of their spiritual life.

Folk crafts, traditional arts, and folklore always attract tourists, offering them insight into the unique local culture, traditions, customs, and lifestyle of indigenous ethnic groups. The presence of unique historical sites is a key factor for the successful development of ethno-cultural tourism in a region. Historical resources are closely connected with both cultural and natural heritage. Ethno-cultural tourism is based on the preservation and utilization of a nation’s natural, historical,



and cultural heritage and regional traditions. Every region possesses a unique cultural and natural legacy.

Ethno-cultural tourism aims to utilize this wealth for tourism purposes. It highlights the uniqueness of a region and encourages a rational and respectful attitude toward its natural and cultural heritage. Through ethno-cultural tourism, cultural traditions, innovations, and norms are revealed and shared.

According to historical sources, «beginning from the 6th–5th centuries BCE, various forms of interaction began to take shape between Central Asia, China, Iran, Mesopotamia, and India. Bactria, one of the major cities of the time, where Zoroastrianism was widely practiced, was home to large nomadic groups such as the Sakas, Massagetae, Parthians, Kushans, Scythians, and Yuezhi. These groups inhabited vast steppes and formed unique socio-cultural and political entities.

For example, in 139 BCE, a special envoy of the Chinese emperor visited Central Asia and collected valuable information about its peoples, geography, and the customs of different ethnic groups. Sogdian merchants traveled to Chinese principalities, India, and even as far as Alexandria. Kushan envoys were received at the court of Roman Emperor Augustus». [3]

Herodotus, known as the father of history, provides ethnographic information about the peoples of Central Asia. He mentions a person named Aristeeas, who is said to have delivered ethnographic accounts concerning the peoples of Central Asia, describing their daily life and customs. Additionally, Arrian and Quintus Curtius Rufus also write about Samarkand with admiration and pride. [4].

These historians and chroniclers participated alongside the Greek Macedonians, and their accounts are considered quite reliable and well-founded. Thus, some individuals who took part in military campaigns—whether as chroniclers or scholars—recorded what they witnessed or heard, documenting events and occurrences that were significant for their time. At that period, traveling was not a profession or occupation, and the writing of chronicles and travelogues was conducted rather sporadically and incidentally.

Among the peoples of the East, there are numerous accounts left by envoys, travelers, merchants, and scholars. Notable examples include Nasir Khisraw (1003–1088), who traveled to Arab countries; Abdurazzoq Samarqandi (1413–1482), who journeyed to India; Ibn Khordadbeh (820–913); Ibn Hawqal (who died in 976); Al-Idrisi (1110–1161); Abu al-Fida (1273–1331); Al-Khwarizmi (783–



850); and Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048). Their works contain valuable information about various lands and peoples. From each of them, one can find ethnographic, geographic, and social life data.

In the works of Central Asian scholars, there is information about the geographic location, nature, economy, cities, peoples, customs, trade routes, and other aspects of China and East Turkestan. For example, in Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi's book "*Kitab Surat al-Ard*" ("The Image of the Earth"), two routes from Central Asia to China are described based on the locations of cities: a northern route through Jetysu and a southern route through the Fergana Valley. In Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's work "*Qanun al-Mas'udi*", there is a list of major cities in East Turkestan and China, including their geographic latitudes and longitudes. Mahmud al-Kashgari's "*Divan lughat al-Turk*" describes the mountains, stones, and mineral resources of these regions. [5].

Al-Biruni's work "*India*" is one of the greatest and most valuable travelogues ever written. It reveals how the scholar gathered materials while traveling through India and collected all the wonders that correspond to human intellect and understanding as a devoted scientist. Al-Biruni describes and analyzes the customs, geographical characteristics, and scientific findings of each city, region, and locality he visited. [6].

In general, many people from Central Asia traveled to China, India, Iran, Babylon, and Arabia, collecting and recording important information about these countries. Some traveled for trade, others visited as travelers spreading Islam, and some went as envoys or simply as ordinary tourists.

Today, every region, district, and city in our republic has its own local ethnoculture and ethnic traditions. The historical and cultural treasures, artifacts found in these places never repeat each other and differ from one another. Even though there is a common state language, the people of each region speak in their own dialects and have developed unique cultural and economic patterns. Especially in the Khorezm, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, and Fergana regions, there is great potential for the development of ethnic tourism. The International Festival of Bakhshi Art held in the city of Termez is a vivid example that supports this idea.

As emphasized by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, "It is well known that the tourism sector is one of the fastest-growing and most promising branches of the global economy. The processes of globalization



have opened wide opportunities for people to move freely around the world. According to data from the World Tourism Organization, before the coronavirus pandemic, approximately 10 percent of the world's gross product and 7 percent of exports were accounted for by the tourism sector." "In this sense, it is no exaggeration to say that tourism is an important factor in ensuring the overall prosperity and sustainable development of our countries. At the same time, it is a powerful means of strengthening cultural exchanges among the peoples of the world and promoting the principles of tolerance and mutual understanding." [7]. In conclusion, during the era of globalization, tourism plays an important role in social, political, and economic integration processes. It facilitates cultural dialogue among peoples and nations, helping to bring them closer together. At the same time, tourism is one of the main drivers of economic development, contributing to the creation of new jobs, attracting investments, and strengthening trade relations between countries.

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