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CONTEMPORARY SITUATION

AND DEVELOPMENT DIRECTIONS OF THE CULTURAL TOURISM IN THE MOUNTAINOUS AREAS OF AZERBAIJAN

SITUACIÓN CONTEMPORÁNEA Y DIRECCIONES DE DESARROLLO DEL TURISMO CULTURAL EN LAS ZONAS MONTAÑAS DE AZERBAIYÁN

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this paper is to analyze the contemporary situation and development directions of cultural tourism in the mountainous areas of Azerbaijan. For this, the architectural and archaeological monuments of the world and national importance, economic-geographical regions, and administrative regions where they are located were identified in the article. Festivals, which are taken into consideration to be factors influencing the development of cultural tourism, as well as travel to areas inhabited by different ethnic groups were researched as well. The areas where archaeological excavations were carried out within the framework of highly valued examples of material culture in terms of the development of cultural tourism are also indicated. In the work, recommendations are made on how to make these places more attractive, and the possible impact of the development of this economic activity at both the local and state levels is highlighted.

Keywords: tourism, cultural heritage monuments, tourist routes, archaeological excavations, traditional festivals.

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este documento es analizar la situación contemporánea y las direcciones de desarrollo del turismo cultural en las zonas montañosas de Azerbaiyán. Para ello, en el artículo se identificaron los monumentos arquitectónicos y arqueológicos de importancia mundial y nacional, las regiones económico-geográficas y las regiones administrativas donde se ubican. También se investigaron las fiestas, que se consideran factores que influyen en el desarrollo del turismo cultural, así como los viajes a zonas habitadas por diferentes grupos étnicos. También se señalan las zonas donde se realizaron excavaciones arqueológicas en el marco de ejemplos de cultura material muy valorados en términos de desarrollo del turismo cultural. En el trabajo se hacen recomendaciones sobre cómo hacer más atractivos estos lugares y se destaca el posible impacto del desarrollo de esta actividad económica tanto a nivel local como estatal.

Palabras clave: Turismo, monumentos del patrimonio cultural, rutas turísticas, excavaciones arqueológicas, fiestas tradicionales.

INTRODUCTION

Tourism is considered one of the main and most profitable sectors of the global economy of the 21st century. It is developing dynamically and plays an important role in the socio-economic development of the states. In this regard, tourism is not only an indicator of social welfare in society, but also a source of income, new jobs, modern infrastructure, and protection of historical and cultural monuments (Hasanli, 2021). As pointed out by Imrani et al., (2021) Tourism is one of the fastest-growing industries with an annual average growth rate of about 5%, and international travel numbers might nearly double until 2020 compared to 2006. Having experienced a growth of 25% between 1995 and 2005, tourism today accounts for 10 % of the world's economic activity and is one of the leading employment generators. Tourism can also improve the quality of life in an area by increasing the number of attractions, recreational opportunities, and services.

Within the different forms of tourism, one of the most relevant nowadays, and specifically in the case of Azerbaijan, is cultural tourism where forecasts indicate that it should continue to grow. Cultural tourism is defined by World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) as a movement of people essentially for cultural motivations, such as study tours, performing arts and cultural tours, travel for festivals and other events, visit to sites and monuments, travel to study nature, folklore or art and pilgrimages. McKercher & Du Cros (2002, p. 6) explore a range of motivational, experiential, aspirational and operational definitions and identify that cultural tourism involves four elements, namely, tourism, use of cultural heritage assets, consumption of experiences, products, and tourists. In the opinion of McKercher (2020) our understanding of the cultural tourism market is still evolving and seems to be doing so at a slower pace than the overall maturation of the field. Richards (2018) indicates that we are about to enter cultural tourism 3.0 where the lines of what is culture and tourism become blurred. Whereas once, the focus was on built heritage and perhaps the arts, it has broadened to include intangible heritage, dark tourism, creative cities, landscapes, religious tourism, diaspora tourism and a range of other activities.

Thus, at present, the study of tourism in the Republic of Azerbaijan by regions is encouraging attention due to its relevance, however, research work on the identification of tourism zones in the country and the zoning of these areas is still weak (Tahir & Vahid, 2021). Since the tourism industry may turn to be one of key areas of economic development in Azerbaijan (Bayramli, 2019), it is necessary to conduct scientific assessment of the country's recreational and tourist resources and improve the living standards

of the population, and also create a highly developed tourism industry in its regions that meet modern economic, social and environmental requirements. The following tasks must be implemented in achieving this goal: 1) the study of recreation and tourism resources that impact the development of regions; 2) the assessment of cultural and historical monuments in terms of tourism; 3) the compliance of tourism services quality in accordance with international standards; and 4) the study of inconsistencies of the use of recreational and tourist resources regarding the relevant substantiated recommendations offered (Tahir & Rafiq, 2021).

According to the State Statistics Committee (2021) in the year 2020, the number of Azerbaijani employees working in areas which are typical for tourism was 49,0 thousand people, the amount of added value was 1370,1 million manats, the share of added value in the country's GDP is 1,9%, the volume of investments is 79,3 million manats. The natural features of the regions, and cultural heritage monuments had an important role in choosing the area to visit and in some cases, specific cultural objects, and unique cultural heritage monuments were considered a key factor in the selection of the area by tourists. Because of that, it is important to identify the potential places, attributes and activities that can promote this activity in the region. Taking this into account, the objective of this work was to analyze the current state of cultural tourism in the mountainous areas of Azerbaijan and for this the development prospects of the directions included in this type of tourism were substantiated.

DEVELOPMENT

Current situation and development trends

Several researchers have different approaches to cultural tourism as a type of tourism and have made a unique assessment in the classification of tourism. Among Azerbaijani researchers H.B. Soltanova, and among foreign scholars L.P. Shmatko, A.P. Durovich, G.P. Dolzhenko, N.I. Kabushkin, A.A. Glushko, A.M. Sazykin, E.V. Vavilova, T.M. Sergeeva, V.L. Pogodina and I.G. Philippova have studied cultural tourism. L.P. Shmatko compartmentalised tourism according to a number of criteria: tourism by the purpose of travel, tourism by type of movement, tourism by vehicle use, tourism by the duration of travel, tourism by season, tourism by the level of organisation, tourism by the demographic and social composition of travel participants, tourism according to the direction of tourist flows, tourism according to the principle of payment (Shmatko, 2005).

The classification of tourism according to the purpose of the trip has crucial importance. Thus, the purpose of the trip has a great impact on the formation of the tour and the organization of tourist services. Perception or cultural tourism is allocated for the purpose of the trip - a trip to get acquainted with natural, historical-cultural monuments, museums, theatres, public buildings, life and traditions of people. By defining the functional classification of tourism types according to the purpose of travel, A.P. Durovich distinguishes different types of tourism: recreational tourism, medical tourism, cognitive tourism, business tourism, religious tourism, ethnic tourism, and transit tourism (Durovich et al., 2005). Thus, a wealthy excursion program constitutes the basis of perceptual tourism. It can be noted that cognitive goals can comply with recreational goals.

On the other hand, G.P. Dolzhenko divides tourism into types and subspecies classifying tourism according to the purpose of travel: beach tourism, medical and health tourism, cultural tourism, cruise tourism (subspecies: sea and river cruise), religious tourism, sports and health tourism (subspecies: pedestrian, mountain, water, cycling, auto-motor tourism, speleotourism, skiing, horseriding, boating), hunting tourism, fishing tourism, rural tourism, shopping tourism (Dolzhenko, 2009). N.I. Kabushkin has identified 7 types of tourism in the tourism management system, one of which is tourism for the study of culture. For the purpose of studying culture, tourism is divided into perception and pilgrimage tourism, based on the perception of a foreign culture. Perceptual tourism involves travelling to historical, cultural, or geographical sites. The purpose of pilgrimage tourism is to travel to places of special religious significance (Kabushkin, 2007).

Perceptual tourism is aimed at acquainting tourists with cultural values - archaeological and cultural heritage monuments, architectural ensembles, ethnography (household, culture, folk traditions, folklore) and the economy. Perceptual tourism is rarely chosen as an independent destination, and this type of tourism is accompanied by travel for leisure and entertainment purposes (Glushko & Sazykin, 2012).

This way, cultural tourism selected as a developed type in the classification of tourism includes (although it is not restricted to) the following:

- Acquaintance with a various historical, architectural, or cultural period, participation in historical routes with the help of excursions to architectural monuments and museums.
- Travel to cultural events: music, film and theatre festivals, concert and opera seasons, religious holidays, exhibitions of sculptures and works of art.

- Participation in festivals of national cuisine and folklore ensembles, demonstration of applied art and exhibitions of folk art.

Cultural heritage objects are divided into two parts, tangible (material) and intangible (spiritual). Tangible (material) resources cover a set of means of production and other material values of society in the development of different stages of history. Intangible (spiritual) resources are the sum of society's achievements in education, science, culture, organization of state and public life, labor and life. At the same time, cultural heritage objects are of spiritual and cultural significance due to their characteristics. Turning to the spiritual significance, it means that cultural heritage sites serve the spiritual needs of tourists or excursionists. Cultural significance is determined by the role of these monuments in the history and culture of the people (Soltanova, 2015).

In addition, factors affecting the development of tourism are divided into 2 groups: static and dynamic. The group of static factors, including natural-climatic, geographical, and historical-cultural factors, determine the attractiveness of the place of rest. Cultural heritage resources are becoming more important as people's level of education and understanding needs increase. Highly attractive natural and historical-cultural conditions provide a resource base for the organization of territorial-recreational systems at the international level (Vavilova, 2005). Historical and cultural factors include colourful historical and architectural monuments, high level of spiritual and material culture, diversity of ethnic and religious composition of the population, high level of education, ancient traditions of cultural and other relations both within the region and with other regions of the world (Durovich et al., 2005).

In Azerbaijan, the cultural tourism resources include archaeological monuments, preserved ethnic features, temples, monasteries, sights reflecting historical periods, historical and cultural monuments, places of life and creativity of celebrities, memorials, and museums with various profiles (Pogodina & Filippova, 2012). This is the result that the territory of the Republic of Azerbaijan is one of the most ancient regions of the world settled by people. For example, ancient human traces of the Stone Age were found in Azykh cave near Fuzuli city. According to experts, the current territory of the republic was inhabited in the Paleolithic period. Azerbaijan and the people living there have gone through all stages of human development throughout history, from primitive society to modern capitalism (Mammadov et al., 2002).

In Table 1 it is shown a list of architectural and archaeological monuments worldwide and nationwide known, approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the

Republic of Azerbaijan №132 dated August 2, 2001. However, it is important to highlight that the Karabakh economic-geographical region differs both in world architectural and archaeological monuments, and in architectural monuments of national importance as well as the Shaki-Zagatala economic-geographical region.

Table 1. List of historical and cultural monuments in the mountainous areas of Azerbaijan

Economic-geographical regions	Worldwide known		Nationwide known	
	Architectural monuments	Archaeological monuments	Architectural monuments	Archaeological monuments
Shaki-Zagatala	Temple (Gakh), "Yukhari bash" Historical-Architectural Reserve and Shaki Khan Palace (Shaki)	Kish settlement, Kish temple (Shaki), Ancient city of Gabala (Gabala)	Peri Fortress (Balakan), Sumug Fortress, Albanian Church (Gakh), Albanian Temple (Gabala), Surkhay Khan Fortress (Oguz), "Gelesen-Goresen" Fortress, Temple (Shaki)	Nokho Cave, Groundwater Reservoir (Balakan), Ovdan-Kahriz, Remains of the Church (Gakh), Chukhur Gabala settlement, Gavur Fortress (Gabala)
Guba-Khachmaz	Beshmarmagh wall, Chiraggala (Shabran), Khinalig village (Guba)	Sarkartepe (Khachmaz), Shabran, Gilgilchay fortifications complex (Shabran)	Sakina khanum mosque, Tower (Guba), tomb of Sheikh Junayd (Gusar)	Almastepe settlement (Shabran), Gizlartepe settlement (Khachmaz), Ibrahimkhailtepe settlement (Guba), Shamiltepe settlement (Gusar)
Karabakh	Shusha Historical-Architectural Reserve (Shusha), Tomb of son of Gulu Musa (Aghdam)	Azykh cave camp, Taglar cave camp (Fuzuli), Chalagantepe settlement (Aghdam)	Tomb, Caravanserai (Fuzuli), Albanian temple, Church (Khojavend)	Kurgan, Gultepe settlement (Aghdam)
Daghlig (Mountainous) Shirvan	Lahij State Historical and Cultural Reserve (Ismayilli)	Ancient Shamakhi city (Shamakhi), Ancient cemetery, temple and place of residence (Agsu)	Tomb of Sheikh Dursun (Agsu), Maiden Tower (Ismayilli), Tomb of Diri Baba (Gobustan), Juma Mosque, Shakhandan Dome, Gulustan Fortress (Shamakhi)	Remains of Yeni Shamakhi, Khanyurdu kurgan (Agsu), Jayirli settlement, Galajik fortification (Gobustan)
Eastern Zangazur	Khudafar Bridge with 11 arches, Khudafar Bridge with 15 arches (Jabrayil), Ganjasar Monastery, Khudavang Monastery (Kalbajar)	-	Lex Fortress, Albanian Temple, Fortress (Kalbajar), Malikazhdar Tomb (Lachin)	Imangazan hills, Shikhlar cave (Jabrayil), Zar cave camp (Kalbajar), Hirman place of residence (Gubadli), Cave temple (Lachin)

Source: List of architectural and archaeological monuments worldwide known and nationwide known approved by the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Azerbaijan №132 dated August 2, 2001

Various festivals and holidays are also considered to be factors influencing the development of cultural tourism. International Music, Jam festivals in Gabala, Grape and Wine festivals in Shamakhi, Apple festival in Guba, and Kharibulbul festival in Shusha are very important in terms of cultural tourism. The Gabala International Music Festival has been held annually since 2009 with the support of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation. Classical music, mugam and jazz concerts with the participation of local and foreign musicians have been organized at the festival. The Gabala International Jam Festival has been held since 2013 and attracts confectioners from about 22 countries. At the 1st Grape and Wine Festival held in Shamakhi on August 30-31, 2019, aimed at the development of tourism, local and national wine producers demonstrated their products and wine tasting took place. Distinguished by its ancient history, traditions, and multicultural values, the Apple Festival, held in Guba since 2012, showcases a variety of apples and other vegetables.

For the first time, the Kharibulbul music festival was organised in Karabakh in 1989 (until 1991) in connection with the 100th anniversary of the famous singer Seyid Shushinsky. From then on, this festival organizes every year with the participation of Japan, the USA, Turkey, Germany, Israel, Italy, Spain, Austria, Afghanistan, and the countries of the old

USSR and is considered one of the most important cultural events in the world. After the liberation of Azerbaijani lands from the Armenian occupation, the Kharibulbul Festival was organized in the Jidir plain of the Shusha city, which is the cultural capital of the country, on May 12th-13th, 2021 with the organization of the Heydar Aliyev Foundation, and the performances of music groups of different nations. A program of folk and classical music was presented. In addition, musicians, dance groups from 10 foreign countries, and folklore groups from different regions of the country took part in the 5th Kharibulbul International Folklore Festival, held in Shusha on May 12th-14th, 2022.

Since travel to get acquainted with the life and economic activities of peoples is also included in cultural tourism, the territories of the country inhabited by different ethnic groups are highly valued in terms of the development of this tourism. In this sense Azerbaijan is quite rich (Table 2). The language, traditions, religious beliefs, cuisine, craftsmanship, and folklore of the people populating the mountainous areas of Azerbaijan, namely Guba, Gusar, Khachmaz, Zagatala, Balakan, Gakh, Gabala, Ismayilli are noticed as one of the primary factors of cultural tourism. The sale of handicrafts in the form of souvenirs and the development of folk crafts are of great importance in attracting tourists, as well as in raising large sums of money in the area, therefore, the trip to get acquainted with the life and economic activities of ethnic groups in mountainous regions is promising.

Table 2. Ethnic composition of the population settling in the mountainous areas of Azerbaijan (according to the census materials for the year 2009)

Administrative district	Name of ethnos	Number of ethnos (person)	Administrative district	Name of ethnos	Number of ethnos (person)
Khachmaz	Lezgins	24688	Balakan	Avars	23874
	Tats	9108		Russians	128
	Turkish people	4165		Lezgins	91
	Gryz	3540		Georgians	38
	Russians	643		Tsakhurs	34
	Kurds	603	Gakh	Georgians	7447
	Tatars	131		Tsakhurs	1008
	Jews	90		Lezgins	253
	Khinalug people	36		Russians	67
	Ukrainians	28		Turkish people	64
Guba	Tats	13880	Gabala	Lezgins	16020
	Lezgins	8952		Udi people	3697
	Jews	2705		Turkish people	139
	Khinalug people	2177		Russians	89
	Turkish people	2159	Oghuz	Lezgins	4831
	Gryz	778		Turkish people	805
	Russians	135		Russians	142
	Tatars	63		Jews	85
Gusar	Lezgins	79629	Zagatala	Udi people	74
	Turkish people	102		Avars	25578
	Russians	87		Tsakhurs	11203

Siyazan	Lezgins	150		Turkish people	303
	Russians	71		Russians	233
	Turkish people	65		Georgians	59
Shabran	Tats	1766		Lezgins	50
	Turkish people	1390		Lezgins	7152
	Lezgins	65		Russians	121
Ismayilli	Lezgins	8076	Shaki	Turkish people	26
	Russians	2024		Kurds	26
	Kurds	498		Kurds	1914
Shamakhi	Turkish people	879	Lachin	Turkish people	464
	Russians	235		Russians	28
	Lezgins	87		Kalbajar	Kurds
Aghdam	Russians	63	Zangilan	Turkish people	34
Fuzuli	Russians	31	Shusha	Turkish people	41

Source: (State Statistics Committee, 2021)

Samples of material culture found in some areas of Azerbaijan are highly valued in terms of the development of cultural tourism. It is important that these areas, where archaeological excavations are carried out, be included in tourist routes. Archaeological excavations in Azerbaijan primarily cover the territory of Gabala, Shabran, Shamkir, Tovuz, Agsu, Guba and Lerik districts.

The ruins of the ancient city of Gabala, located 20 km south-west of the district centre, in the north-eastern part of the present-day village of Chukhur Gabala, at the watershed of the Corlu and Gara rivers, are of great tourist importance. During archaeological excavations, grain warehouses belonging to Caucasian Albania, materials and mounds of the Early Iron Age, pottery and glass vessels reflecting the life of ancient people, copper coins, arrowheads, bone and glass ornaments were found in this area. After being restored in the laboratories, the exhibits were placed in the exhibition hall for the tourists. Also, the remains of the ancient city of Shabran, located near the village of Shahnazarli, are also of great tourist importance. During archaeological excavations, the first sewer system of the IX century, the remains of water pipes, and the first streets in medieval Azerbaijani cities were discovered. The Shabran Museum of History and Ethnography, which opened after a major overhaul on August 15th, 2011, exhibits the history of ancient Shabran and of great interest to tourists.

The medieval Shamkir fortress is also an interesting archaeological monument. The city of Shamkir was built on the bank of the Shamkir River, 120 m from the river, and the area of the city fortress was 28 hectares. The city-fortress is connected by 2 bridges on the right bank of the river. The foundation of the walls of the Shamkir fortress was laid with river stone and clay mortar, and the walls of the fortress were built of raw bricks. The eastern, southern and northern walls of the fortress were built in accordance with the castle. Material cultural monuments found in the area prove the formation of urban culture in Shamkir in the Middle Ages.

The ancient settlement of Goytapa, located 10 km east of Tovuz and a Neolithic monument, is of great tourist relevance. Archaeological excavations have revealed interconnected houses, farm buildings and a large number of Neolithic artefacts - bones, soil and plant remain, metal. The ancient settlement of Goytapa is a monument of ancient agricultural culture, reflecting a sedentary lifestyle.

Another important place is the tourist complex of the medieval city of Agsu is located in the territory of Ulguj village of Agsu district. Large-scale excavations in the archaeological site of the medieval city of Agsu have been carried out since 2010. Archaeological research was carried out and interesting information was obtained within the framework of the "Medieval Agsu City" archaeological tourism project. Located 3-4 km south of Agsu, the "Ruined City" covers an area of 34 hectares. The "Artists' Quarter" and the bath area, where the city garrison was kept near the bathhouse, were discovered here. About 1000 artefacts found during archaeological excavations are displayed in the corners arranged under glass pyramids.

Besides, the ancient cemetery, called “Kima Liqebirish” in the Khinalig language, is of great tourist importance and is located 2 km south-east of Khinalig, at an altitude of 1968 m above sea level. One of the purposes of archaeological research at this monument is to develop cultural tourism in the area. Samples of material culture discovered during archaeological excavations, are of great importance for the study of the history of the ethnic Khinalig people. An interesting feature is that speakers of the Khinalig language, are kept in the scientific fund of the reserve and interact to tourists.

Monidigah village of Lerik district is also of great value for the development of cultural tourism. Archaeological excavations in the area have uncovered ancient settlements, fire traces, the wall remains, ornaments, human and animal bones, Late Bronze and Early Iron Age arrowheads, and various weapons as part of more than 200 artefacts. It is planned to create a tourist route in the area of Monidigah village and preserve the excavation site as a historical monument.

This way it can be seen how the religious monuments in Azerbaijan are important for the development of cultural tourism. Generally speaking, along with the values of religious monuments in Azerbaijan, a number of measures should be taken to expand their use in terms of tourism and the development of cultural tourism. The value of religious monuments should be determined by inspection by the relevant authorities and specialists, and the importance of cultural tourism should always be highlighted. It is important that tourist accommodation centers should be close to religious monuments or places to set up hotels and tents as well as to create transport facilities of the place where religious monuments are located in order to be convenient for tourists.

Finally, one of the relevant goals of the Strategic Roadmap for the development of the specialized tourism industry in the Republic of Azerbaijan is the development of regional types of tourism for local and foreign tourists. To achieve the strategic goal, there are 5 priorities, one of which is the creation of cultural tourism routes. The measures to be taken to create routes include (Aliyev, 2016):

- Development of daily-weekly car and pedestrian routes to all cultural heritage sites along the northern, north-western and western corridors of Azerbaijan.
- Development of a certification program to guide the Great Silk Road and other cultural tourism routes.
- Stimulate the development of tourism infrastructure along the route, including the allocation of funds for the development of affordable hotels and

attractive tourist destinations and the provision of advice to entrepreneurs.

- Introduction of new cultural tourism routes.

CONCLUSIONS

As the cultural heritage potential of mountainous areas of Azerbaijan plays a basic role in the development of various types of tourism, their use is necessary in attracting tourists. For this it is important to organize tourism and scientific-practical activities for the purpose of promote the travel to these mountainous areas where cultural heritage monuments are concentrated.

Since the samples of material culture shown during the research are relevant in the development of cultural tourism, it is necessary to include the areas of archaeological excavations in tourist routes. The value of religious monuments should be always shown as measures aimed at the development of cultural tourism. In this sense tourist accommodation centers should be close to them, and the area should be distinguished by the availability of transport opportunities.

It is also important, in order to increase the attractiveness of these destinations, the divulgation of the various handicrafts made by ethnic groups in mountainous regions as well as all types of folk art. These pieces can be sold in the form of souvenirs representing a good income for the craftsman but promoting at the same time the local development.

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