Tourism as Knowing of Other (Ethnic and Religious Contexts)*

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ABSTRACT

The article takes ethnic tourism under consideration stressing its significance for establishing and facilitating a peaceful dialogue of cultures and religions in the contemporary world. The researcher presents ethnic tourism through the cognition of the other, i.e., of other ethnic cultures and religions, towards a knowing person. The author underlines the idea of the value relevance of ethnic cultures and religions, explicitly revealing the meaningfulness of philosophical and theological points for the organization of ethnic tourism. The paper also suggests some specific tours having ethnic and religious nature and connecting with the historical legacy of Byzantium, Middle Ages Arabic East, and modern days Russian Altay Mountains.

Keywords: philosophy of tourism, ethnic tourism, religious tourism, ethnic culture, Byzantium, the Altai Mountains

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the development of tourism is tightly connected with interethnic and interreligious relations, existing in one or another country. It is necessary to take into account this fact for effective management in the sphere of the tourism industry. The mentioned point is specifically essential for the states with a polyethnic structure, including Russia, as a motherland for more than 170 ethnic groups. It means that 170 ethnic groups and societies co-exist embracing one civil and political nation, with different cultural and religious identities, historical and linguistic traditions, economic and political peculiarities carefully being saved and maintained by them.

At the same time, in the epoch of the globalizing world that has a distinction of being mobile and sophisticated as well as being affected by the steady peoples' streams moving over the countries, tourism per se represents unique learning of the Other. However, knowing of Other, in its turn, signifies a coincident comprehension of a personal Self, the depth of own culture and religion, forms of civic life, etc. Reasonably, to conceive of own identity in the extremely dynamic world, it is necessary to cognize the Other — images of life, ethnic principles of culture,

religious traditions, and spiritual values. In this context, tourism may be considered as a particular cross-cultural conjunction of global ethnic diversity with its promoting to the building of mutual understanding and interaction of the peoples of different identities and civil convictions. Thus, from my point of view, tourism is a vital process of the organization of peoples' epistemological activity to establish a peaceful dialogue between cultures and countries, to break through insularity and alienation. It is ethnic tourism that holds in this sphere the most meaningful role, being able to reflect the dynamics and constant transformations of the contemporaneity.

II. GLOBALIZATION AND ETHNIC TOURISM: UNDERSTANDING MYSELF THROUGH KNOWING OTHER

Globalization is multi-contextual and multidimensional phenomenon. It can be viewed in different ways: as an ideology, as a global complexity, as a network society, and even as a "spectacle" [1]. However, globalization is also associated with such a crucial characteristic as the existence of constant flows of people moving around the world with different purposes, including cognitive and tourist ones. This movement of people is accompanied by the continuous mobility of all those structures and objects that create favorable conditions for travel. The theorist of "mobile sociology" J. Urry, singles out mobility as an essential feature of postmodernity, and writes in this connection:

These [global — auth. O.C.] flows are seen as moving along various global "scapes", including the system of transportation of people by air, sea, rail, motorways and other roads. There is the transportation of objects via postal and other systems… Various potential flows occur along these scapes. Thus people travel along transportation scapes for work, education and holidays… Information, messages and images flow along various cables and between satellites… These scapes and flows create new inequalities of access. What becomes significant is the "relative", as opposed to the "absolute", location of a particular social group or town or society in relationship to these multiple scapes» [2].

The comprehension of the "relativity" of the distance to one or another tourist site, a monument of ethnic culture, a building of religious worship almost eliminates the sense of the vastness of space, "squeezes" the distance and allows people to travel practically freely throughout the world and even beyond its limits. (Space tourism is still in sight of several companies including Virgin and Space X). The purpose of all these journeys is to grasp the Other in a broad, philosophical sense. The Other can be understood as another person, another social group, another nation, another ethnic culture, or another religious community. And this means that the Other is a non-Self, the opposite of my Self, someone who does not belong to my culture but is very interesting for me. Hence, often in literature, the study of self- or someone's identity is carried out through cognition and analysis of the opposite (and by no means internal) culture, religion, identification, etc. Nevertheless, through tourism, through the understanding of the Other culture and religion, one learns more deeply about personal Self, including the ethnic identity of one's people.

It is important to emphasize that the mobility noted above, at the same time, means movement, interaction, and dialogue of diverse cultures and religions, since each person traveling represents his or her unique ethnic culture with a historically established religious identity. Therefore, ethnic tourism, which initially aims at understanding the unique culture of other people, not only provides an opportunity to get acquainted with its origins and essence but also contributes to the establishment of peaceful inter-ethnic and interreligious relations between people of different cultural identities. Russian authors Polyakova N.V. and Maximov D.V. rightly note that "...tourism should be considered as one of the structural elements of the global phenomenon of ethnicity and ethnic stratification, and not as something that stands outside of it. Participation in tourism often changes relationships within ethnic groups, attitudes to the state, and other ethnic groups [3].

In our view, tourism, as a social institution with its infrastructure and stratification, not only facilitates the intersection of intercultural and interreligious communications on a global scale but also determines the value of mutual enrichment of different peoples. The contemporary world presupposes the openness of one nation to the Other and of each individual to the Other. In turn, transparency simply determines the mutual enrichment of people with different knowledge, culture, religious and secular ideas, scientific experience, and technological advances. Therefore, nowadays, the spiritual world of each person is filled with values and knowledge of people of other cultures and societies. However, even though globalization, to some extent, integrates peoples and allows exchanging of cultural values, there will always be connotations, unique differences of one nation from another, one person from another in world communications, and intercultural interaction.

Philosophically, otherness has always been and will continue to be the essence of a nation's ethnic culture. Here arises the possibility of both mutual rejection of cultures and the emergence of dialogue among them. In our opinion, tourism, especially ethnic one, due to its specific communicative function, can help people to overcome the estrangement of one person from another, one ethnic group from another. It is tourism with its focus on comprehending the Other that is capable of establishing a dialogue between peoples as bearers of specific ethnic cultures, thus contributing to the mutual spiritual enrichment of people on a global scale [4]. After all, to conduct tourist trips and be able to establish communications with communities from other countries, people should produce intercultural universes and interreligious values mutually acceptable to representatives of different (often alien) cultures and religions. Each person should be open to the Other and take a step towards the Other. By traveling to understand the ethnic culture of another country or region, a person carries his or her initial intentions in line with the ideas mentioned earlier. Otherwise, communication is impossible, all the more so in global terms.

III. ETHNIC TOURISM: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

The specifics of ethnic tourism activities are based on the theoretical provision that tourist destinations, which purposefully emphasize the unique ethnic or religious and sacral features of culture, should be relevant, engaging, and attractive places for many travelers. As already mentioned, the perception of a previously unknown culture with religious, cultural, social, and everyday features opens up new opportunities for the traveler and his or her own cultural and religious identity. Therefore, the importance of

ethnic tourism is increasing quite naturally. After all, this type of tourism allows not only to see the original, exotic culture for travelers but also to penetrate the depths of their worldview and their personal history.

Ethnic tourism is defined by its thematic conditionality and widespread demand in the context of globalization processes and the intersection of cultures. At the beginning of the XXI century, when the world consists mainly of multiethnic societies, interest in the ancestral origins of their culture, spiritual roots of their people, their historical traditions and lost values is becoming increasingly relevant. Along with the increasing interaction between peoples and countries, the ethnic consciousness and desire of people to know the history of their ethnic culture and to "touch" its origins is developing and deepening.

The researchers legitimately raise the question of the meaning of ethnic tourism. Philosopher N. Berkovich reveals the essence of ethnic tourism through the awareness of the role of ethnicity and ethnic cultures in modern societies. He singles out three modifications of ethnic tourism. The first type is connected with educational routes to national villages, museums, parks, etc. and is superficially familiar. "The second modification is ethnic tourism itself, with a determining attitude towards introversion, ethnosocialization <...> Ethnic tourism of this modification is directed to the relict, anachronistic past, intergenerational, diachronic sources of archetypes, mentality, and behavioral stereotypes. Ethnic tourism allows us to reveal half-forgotten and lost semiotic, sign codes of meanings of ethnicity, to learn and comprehend original cultural and genetic roots, genealogies, to reconstruct historical memory and thus to form own ethnonational identity" [5]. N. Berkovich refers to the third type of ethnic tourism to long journeys to create "an integral ethnogeographical image of separate regions and other countries" [6].

The most significant is the second semantic type of ethnic tourism, as it is especially relevant for the reconstruction and restoration of historical memory of each nation, and the course of general history as a whole. Ethnic tourism, as such, is aimed at the recovery of unsaved (or simply forgotten) cultural meanings of peoples, their traditions, beliefs, stories and myths, folklore, and behavioral norms. In this context, ethnic tourism could play a decisive initiating role in the restoration of the history of peoples that have left the historical scene and those that are on the verge of extinction.

However, the ethnic culture of another nation, which is very attractive for tourists, may also turn out to be an artificially designed image object, a simulated tourist destination, in fact, a simulacrum that has no authentic roots. In this case, valid ethno-cultural objects can be disguised as ethnical to create an attractive

tourist destination for large-scale sale. In other words, ethnic culture can be commoditized for profit. In this case, ethnic tourism has nothing to do with the goals of comprehending the history and culture of an ethnos, which we mentioned above. The Russian researcher of tourism problems N.V. Mikhailova asserts that in this case, an unreal "world order" is purposefully created for realization of the primary goal of tourists — "to get out of the circle of everyday life" [7]. If tourism becomes a part of "commercialized mass culture." [8], then the constructed world order becomes "imaginary," and let us add "illusory", character. "This order is created for you as a tourist, it is your usual world again, but under the mask of another" [9].

Contemporary mass media play a significant role in creating images of attractive or, conversely, unattractive tourist destinations. Media in the modern era are well stratified, have the latest technological means of producing and broadcasting information, based on scientific methods and ways of influencing the perceptive audience, have in their arsenal well selected and qualified editors, operators, etc. As a rule, mass media "work" under the pictures of the world already available in human consciousness. Thus, media products perfectly meet the expectations of the future customer of the produced product. All this naturally correlates with the network, i.e., instantaneous, transmission, and distribution of information. Therefore, it is not difficult for new digital media to create image tourism sites, attracting the attention of many thousands of people. At the same time, perhaps the opposite is also true — media for various reasons (e.g., competitiveness) can produce a negative picture of any destination, artificially constructing a negative social perception of the place. "The environment is constructed for the images available in the consciousness of the customer-tourist" [10].

In general, by creating images (often mythologized, simulated, and constructed) of an attractive tourist destination, mass media contribute to the commercialization of tourism, including its ethnic and religious types. D. Chistyakov notes in this context: "The elaboration of unreal images by the means of media ultimately brings us to the point of the construction of social reality, expressed in untrue and mythological constructs. This construction arises in the depth of the processes of virtualization of social interactions and the replacement of the reality of the objective world with their simulative forms... Social phenomena appear as virtual ones if images of real objects (processes) replace institutionally defined actions. Symbolic reality acts as an independent world that doesn't represent and doesn't reflect the objective reality" [11].

IV. ETHNIC TOURISM: EMPIRICAL IMPLEMENTATIONS

For certain, while working out the ethnic tours, which are aimed at the revival of history and peoples' historical memory, it is necessary to take into consideration the genesis and becoming of philosophical ideas and religious doctrines referring to an ethnos' existing in history and over the modern time. Going back to the Middle Ages, we can reveal that Christianity and Islam share some of the theological, philosophical, and anthropological ideas, which could be used for the development of the industry of tourism in every single country. These ideas were forming historically, from the very beginning of the respected religions. In the Middle Ages, some conceptions of Christianity and Islam were being elaborated simultaneously, implementing in works of art and architecture, in Christian iconography, church paintings, and mosque mosaics.

Christian theology of Byzantium affected quite strongly as the sphere of art and architecture, as the formation of religious tourism and pilgrimage in further centuries. The objects of religious tourism appeared gradually in history and always following the theological substantiation of Christian doctrine. Sacral sites of Muslim pilgrimage are also directly connected with the history of Islam and its substantiation in the Divine Islamic heritage. Thus, contemporary destinations of religious tourism, including pilgrimage, have been emerging for centuries, being connected with the polyethnic population of Byzantium and Arabic East of the Middle Ages and with certain canons of Christianity and Islam.

The ethnical content must be considered in all forms of tourism, particularly in a religious one, because an intercultural relationship merely over the time of globalization predestinates the reciprocal relations between peoples and ethnic groups with social, cultural, and religious norms and traditions inherited in their ethnicity. Therefore, destinations of ethnic tourism often may simultaneously bear the characteristics of the religious or pilgrimage sorts of tourism.

Speaking about modern ethnic places connected with deep history we should mention the history of the peoples of the Altai Mountains, who represent the Old Believers' tradition of Russian culture.

From the second half of the 18th century, the Uymon Valley in Altai was inhabited by the Kerzhaks, who fled from the reforms of Patriarch Nikon and formed the Old Believers' community of this area. Since then and up to the present time, ancient Russian culture has been preserved in the Ust-Koksinsky district of the Altai Republic, which makes this unique region very attractive for tourists. Historically one of the first settlements of Altai — Upper Uymon — was founded by the Old Believers approximately in 1786. Upper Uymon village is on the right bank of Katun river, at the foot of Katun ridge with the famous Belukha mountain. Russian researcher of this unique region R.P. Kuchuganova in her book, dedicated to the peoples of the Altai, writes: "Old Believers humbly carried their cross as "foreigners" and benefited from it. They easily established connections with the Altai tribes, mutually helped each other" [12].

Since the first Old Believers, the indigenous population has been keeping their customs and traditions, transmitting their culture and religious rules of life orally and in writing. Religious customs and sacral texts of the Old Believers are unusually interesting to those who wish to see the history of medieval Russia directly. R.P. Kuchuganova writes about some of the customs that have survived to our days: "With deep reverence people of the "old faith" refer to the icon. Despite all hardships, persecutions, and deprivations, they saved pre-Nikonian icons and books that were passed from hand to hand, from generation to generation. Who entered the house before saying greeting the owners, had to bow to the sacred image. If you were jealous or angry in the daytime — you shouldn't get up to the icon <...> The "skete repentance," in which all believers, while reading prayers, repent of their sins, is maintained by the Kerzhaks. The mentor reads the holy books, and the penitents pray" [13].

Many of these traditions can still be seen in the Altai region today. In the everyday life of the Altai Old Believers, the culture of that distant epoch is kept intact, which makes this area especially attractive for travelers. In Uymon, both native Altai and Russian people have been living together for centuries, gradually creating the culture and image of the native land. The first settlers brought medieval Russian pictures of buildings and houses to the Uymon Valley, which still defines the appearance of the Uymon settlements. Here one can see historical villages of the Russian North, the Volga region, and Novgorod. And in the construction business, much was determined by traditions and beliefs, conveyed from generation to generation. "The appearance of the village was not defined by anyone. The owner of the house chose the place for the estate as follows: he closed his eyes and threw a splinter. If worms, beetles, and bugs were planted under it — it is necessary to build here, the place is good: the cattle will harbor, the house will be rich, and the family will be kind" [14].

Such historical places are a treasure for truly ethnic tourism. They preserve the primordiality of both culture and religion. They are caused ideologically and philosophically: getting acquainted with the origins of Russian culture, which has kept the antiquity and medieval customs, the traveler better and deeper

comprehends the modernity. The remoteness in time gives the chance to estimate more objectively own history, travails of formation of religious life in Russia, to understand the reasons for the occurrence and preservation of the Old Believer's Church and its followers.

V. CONCLUSION

The role of ethnic tourism in the modern world is significant because it aims at the interaction of cultures and religions of the great diversity of peoples of our planet. However, ethnic and religious types of tourism should not be linked exclusively to the commercial purposes. The correlation of these forms of tourism with profit and commercial use deprives them of the main thing — search and achievement of cultural meanings in the knowledge of numerous peoples of modernity, and it means "in satisfaction of need in ethnicity" [15]. The tourists by their status are not only and not so many clients paying for a tour, but someone, possessing their own ethnic identity, religious and civil, and striving to understand the same phenomena of another ethnos. He or she enters into a certain kind of inter-ethnic and inter-religious dialogue with people of other ethnic cultures and thus exchanges spiritual values. The responsibility of the organizers of ethnic routes to such tourists is incredibly great — altogether, they become participants of intercultural dialogue on a global scale.

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