

Historical Basis of Tourism Development in Azerbaijan

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Abstract: - The article presents the stages of formation and development of tourism, and tourist complexes in Azerbaijan, including the Sheki-Zagatala region. The important role of the route of the Great Silk Way on the territory of Azerbaijan in the exchange of cultures and the development of trade relations between the West and the East is noted. It is revealed that the presence of natural tourist resources has determined the prerequisites for the flow of travelers and the creation of infrastructure in the region. The prospects of a new corridor between Nakhichevan and the northwestern part of the republic are characterized.

Key-Words: - Great Silk Way, tourism, tourist complexes, urban planning, historical basis, new transport corridor, infrastructure creation

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1 Introduction

Diverse travels throughout the history of Azerbaijan have played an important role in the formation and development of various cultures and traditions in the region. It is especially necessary to note the contribution of trade caravan routes, including the Great Silk Way, along which the travels of merchants, pilgrims, artisans, historians, and researchers to different regions of Azerbaijan were carried out. The first trips to Azerbaijan were for trade, religious, political, and educational purposes. The movement of trade caravans passing through the territory of ancient Azerbaijan can be considered the first tourists. On the other hand, the favorable natural and geographical conditions of the territories of Azerbaijan greatly attracted the attention of people and for this reason, settlements appeared in these places in ancient times. Based on the above, the history of tourism in Azerbaijan has very ancient roots. The books of ancient scholars (from the 5th century BC) report on the geographical location, nature, economy, borders, rivers, settlements, and trade routes of Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan and its settlements, lakes, rivers, etc. were indicated on the maps compiled by F. Mauro in 1459. These documents and maps are proof that since ancient times Azerbaijan has been a profitable region for travelers from different countries [1].

2 Historical Stages of Tourism Development

The history of the formation and development of tourism in Azerbaijan can be divided into four stages:

- 1) the period from ancient times to the beginning of the 19th century.
- 2) Azerbaijan as part of the Russian Empire 1806-1918
- 3) the period of the Soviet Union 1920-1991.
- 4) Azerbaijan after the restoration of independence, from 1991 to the present day.

The first stage of tourism development in Azerbaijan is characterized by trade, religious, political, and educational travel. An example would be the Great Silk Way, i.e. the trade caravan route that passed through Azerbaijan and connected China with the countries of Asia and the Mediterranean. This trade road of caravans - the Great Silk Way was named so by the famous German explorer and geographer F.F. Richtofen. The Great Silk Way had a great influence on the history and culture of many countries of the world, including Azerbaijan, creating centuries-old relations between the countries of the East and West and determining the all-around development of peoples and countries in the world.

There are several versions of the beginning of the movement along the Silk Way according to different sources:

- 1) III – II centuries before our era
- 2) IV century before our era
- 3) IX century before our era

According to ancient authors, one of the most active movements of the Great Silk Way passed through the territory of Caucasian Albania in the territory of modern Azerbaijan. According to the records of the outstanding philosopher and historian Strabo, Indian goods were transported by river routes through Central Asia to the Gyrgan Sea (Caspian Sea), then by sea to Albania and along the

Kir (Kura) River to Iberia (Eastern Georgia), from there to Pontus Euxine (Black Sea), further to the Mediterranean countries and other destinations. The important role of the cities of ancient Azerbaijan on the route of the Great Silk Way, in the process of transportation, storage, and redirection of goods, is noted. Therefore, the cities through which these routes passed had a certain infrastructure to serve foreign travelers, merchants, and caravans. According to archaeological excavations and ancient sources, the regions of Gabala, Shemakhi, Barda, and Mingechevir were transit cities, so in these cities, the goods brought were placed in warehouses and from there were transported to other cities of Caucasian Albania. Several directions can be noted:

- 1) India - China - Central Asia - Mingechevir (along the Kura river);
- 2) Mingachevir - Barda - South Nakhichevan - the countries of the Middle East;
- 3) Mingachevir - Gabala - Shemakhi - Derbend - North Caucasus and beyond.

According to Arab sources, the cities of Azerbaijan Baku, Tabriz, Magara, Ardabil, Ganja, Nakhichevan, Ordubad, Nukha (Sheki), and others have turned into trade centers, based on which Azerbaijan has established comprehensive trade relations with many eastern and western countries, exporting oil, carpets, jewelry, handicrafts, saffron, salt, etc. Taking into account that the caravan trade was considered an important source of income for the country, much attention was paid to its development: surveillance posts were built to ensure the safety of merchants and caravans, roads, bazaars with domes, bridges, rabats, caravanserais used as guest houses, maps were issued showing important trade points and routes. It should be noted that in the Middle Ages, about 200 guest houses functioned in Tabriz, and about 100 guest houses were built on the Iran-Azerbaijan route by order of Shah Abbas, which were intended to receive, accommodate and stay travelers [2].

In the middle of the XIV century, the city of Baku, which was located on the sea and dry routes the Northern Dvina - Volga - Caspian Sea - Baku - Iran - India, played a huge role in trade relations between East and West. Therefore, it was necessary to build caravanserais in Baku, thus there appeared "India", "Bukhara", "Persia", "Lyazgi", and others. Caravanserais "Multani" (XII-XIV centuries) and "Bukhara" (XV -XVI century) in Icheri Sheher (Old City) in Baku and today they serve tourists. In 1806, the Baku Khanate became part of Russia, which marked the beginning of the era of the development of a new culture in Azerbaijan. The glory of Baku

oil led to the flow of specialists from different countries of the world to the city of Baku. Hotels were built, cinemas, night entertainment centers, and a casino club for guests and tourists were opened.

Organized tourism in Azerbaijan began in 1908, and a branch of the Crimean-Caucasian Club was opened in Baku. One of the objectives of the club was to organize excursions to the Caucasus. Since 1910, tourism began to develop more actively, although from 1917 to 1919 the activities of tourism organizations, bureaus, and private offices were suspended. Further, in 1920, after the restoration of Soviet power in Azerbaijan, the structures of union tourism institutions and organizations functioned. In subsequent years, the geography of excursions gradually expanded and covered all regions of Azerbaijan, including the north-western region.

3 The Current State of Tourism

After the 60s of the last century, resort and sanatorium services began to develop in the country. In particular, in the 1970s, various sanatoriums (Mardakyan, Buzovna, Shuvelan, Pirshagi) were put into operation in Absheron. From 1960 to 1990, the number of places in sanatoriums and boarding houses reached 6,000 seats. These enterprises served on average 250-300 people a year, including those from other republics. The highest level of tourism development in Azerbaijan before gaining independence was in 1987. About 250 thousand tourists from 50 countries came to the republic that year. The transit routes were attended by 20 thousand people. In the same year, 10 thousand citizens of Azerbaijan visited foreign countries, and more than 300 thousand - the USSR. The events in Nagorno-Karabakh, the difficulties of the transition period, and the rupture of economic and cultural ties hurt the tourist movement [2].

The stabilization of the socio-political situation in our country since the mid-1990s has created conditions for certain achievements both in tourism and in other areas. In modern times, the state pays special attention to the development of tourism in Azerbaijan. The adopted programs in this area are a vivid confirmation of this. The State Program for the Development of Tourism for 2002-2005 and 2010-2014 was a special place in the State Program of Socio-Economic Development of Regions of the Republic of Azerbaijan for 2004-2008 and 2009-2013 years, Promotion of various types of tourism was planned in the "Azerbaijan - 2020: a look into the future" concept [3]

The number of tourist complexes has greatly increased in recent years. Table 1 presents data on the number of tourist complexes and tourists by the year [4-7]. The latest statistics and market research show that the number of foreign visitors who want to spend their holidays in the region and get to know it better is growing every year. The “free travel” tourism model has been increasingly popular in recent years [8]. Personalizing travel routes based on the perspective of tourists remains to be studied.

Table 1. Number of tourist complexes and tourists by year

Year	2019	2012	2002
Number of tourist complexes	75 %	57 %	23%
Number of tourists	3200000	2484000	834000

Today tourism in Azerbaijan is developing rapidly; there have been positive changes in the tourism sector. Construction complexes, hotels, tourist complexes, recreation areas, sanatoriums, and consumer services have been created, which, as they grow, will allow receiving a sufficient number of tourists. 2011 was marked as the “Year of Tourism” and appropriate measures were taken. In the same year, several brand hotels were built in Baku, regional and international conferences dedicated to tourism were held, and so on. Thus, the development of tourism, which brings great profits, can solve the problems of socio-economic development, which in general will affect the transformation of tourism into one of the main points of growth of the country's economy.

Under the agreement adopted between Azerbaijan, Russia, and Armenia, the construction of new transport communications linking Nakhichevan with the western regions of Azerbaijan and, accordingly, Turkey with Central Asia will be provided. The opening of this corridor to Nakhichevan not only "significantly changes the picture from the point of view of the economic system of Azerbaijan, but will also significantly affect regional development." We think this corridor will open up wide opportunities for the development of tourism in the region.

4 Development of Tourism in the Sheki-Zagatala Region

Sheki-Zagatala region is located in the northwest of Azerbaijan, on the southern slope of the Greater

Caucasus Mountains. This region covers the administrative districts of Sheki, Gabala, Oguz, Gakh, Zagatala, and Balakan with ancient history and great tourism potential. There are many monuments here that tell about the ancient history of the region. There are about 100 state-protected monuments registered in the region. The most ancient of them are the fortresses Peri (V century), Armatai, Tsingoz (XIV century), Sheitan, and Zagatala. In the rural areas of the region, there are dozens of Albanian monuments of the VI-VIII centuries: the village Mazikh and Akhakhdere (XII century), the village of Pashan (XIII century), the village of Kebeloba (XIV century), Albanian towers have been preserved. Isfahan, Tabriz, Lezgi caravanserais, the Gellersen-Gorsersen fortress, the Yukhari Bash historical and architectural reserve, etc. (Sheki), ancient castles (Gakh, Zagatala), traces of the Yaloylutepe culture (Gabala), belonging to the ancient tribes of the Caucasus Albania and other historical and architectural monuments are important factors for the development of educational tourism.

The ancient history of each region that is part of the Sheki-Zagatala region has a positive effect on the tourism potential of the whole region. The villages rich in historical monuments are mainly Kish, Tsar, Gabizdere, Yukhari Tala, and others.

The number of tourists visiting the Sheki-Zagatala region of Azerbaijan, which is rich in ancient natural, historical, and cultural tourism potential, is growing every year. With the expansion of the areas serving tourism in the region (accommodation, food, transport, excursions), there is an opportunity for the development of various types of tourism. Statistics and marketing research of recent years give grounds to assert that every year the number of foreign guests wishing to spend their holidays in the Sheki-Zagatala region and get to know the region is growing. Many of them try to come to this beautiful place to get acquainted with our culture, others - to touch the exotic nature, as well as to witness oriental hospitality. According to the number of visitors to this region for recreation and entertainment, Sheki, Gabala, and Gakh regions are among the top three and Sheki, Zagatala, and Balakan regions are chosen for business trips. In the Sheki-Zagatala region, it is possible to develop various types of ecological tourism, taking into account the available natural opportunities for mountain adventure (Zagatala, Sheki), and rural green (Gakh, Sheki, Gabala), hunting (Gabala, Zagatala, Balakan).

Thus, the tourism opportunities and the nature of the current situation in the Sheki-Zagatala region

prove the existence of a broad potential for tourism development.

5 Conclusion

Thus, the article presents the stages of the formation and development of tourism in Azerbaijan, including in the Sheki-Zagatala region. The important role of the Great Silk Way as a trade caravan route on the territory of the country in the exchange of cultures and the development of trade relations between the West and the East is assessed. It is shown that the presence of natural tourist resources has determined the prerequisites for the flow of travelers, and the creation of infrastructure in the region. The prospects of a new corridor between Nakhichevan and the north-western part of the republic in the development of tourism in the region are characterized.

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