

Developing Islamic Tourism in Kazakhstan: A Result of a Religious Revival or a New Trend of Tourism

A. A. Mustafayeva, G. E. Nadirova, Sh. S. Kaliyeva, and B. Zh. Aktaulova

Abstract—all of religions free towards society in Kazakhstan. Considering that Islam is more widespread religion in the region, Islamic industry is developing sector of Economy. There are some new sectors of Halal (Islamic) industry, which have importance for state developing on the whole. One of the youngest sectors of Halal industry is Islamic tourism, which became an object of disputes and led to dilemma, such as Islamic tourism is a result of a Religious revival and Islamic tourism is a new trend of Tourism. The paper was written under the research project “Islam in modern Kazakhstan: the nature and outcome of the religious revival”.

Keywords—Halal industry, Islamic tourism, pillars, pilgrims.

I. INTRODUCTION

TOURISM sector is a major market in the Islamic and also an important developing market in Kazakhstan. According to Teoman Duman, “Tourism is a complex phenomenon with sociological, behavioural, economical, political, cultural and environmental dimensions influencing every aspect of life in modern societies”[1]. Researchers have some difficulties in subscribing tourism’s borders. In countries, where Islamic religion is an official religion, Islamic tourism is a kind of tourism, which develops country’s economy and it is one of the main incomes of state. In this paper we try to describe Islamic tourism developing in Kazakhstan and define its status. Because for young state as Kazakhstan (got independence in 1991); today Islamic

tourism is very young sphere, that’s why it will be a subject for scientific and practical researches in the future.

All of religions are free towards Kazakhstan’s society, but Muslims are the majority population with 47% [2]. This state has multicultural and multiracial communities [2] as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
MULTICULTURAL AND MULTIRACIAL KAZAKHSTAN POPULATION

| Races | Percentage (%) | Religion | Percentage (%) |
|-------------|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| Kazakhs | 65% | Muslims | 47% |
| Russians | 21% | Orthodox | 44% |
| Uzbeks | 2.9% | Christians | |
| Ukrainians | 1.8% | Protestants | 2% |
| Uyghurs | 1.4% | Catholics | 2-3% |
| Tatars | 1.2% | Buddhists | 0.3% |
| | | Others | 3.7% |
| Germans | 1% | | |
| Koreans | 0.6% | | |
| Turks | 0.6% | | |
| Belarusians | 0.37% | | |
| Dungans | 0.3% | | |
| Kurds | 0.24% | | |
| Tajiks | 0.23% | | |
| Chechens | 0.19% | | |
| Poles | 0.1% | | |
| Bashkirs | 0.1% | | |
| Azeris | 0.05% | | |
| Others | 1.04% | | |

Islamic tourism can be considered in religious, cultural, economic and tourism spheres. Despite of “young existence” of Islamic tourism in Kazakhstan, it develops some sectors. That’s why we cannot consider Islamic tourism merely as type of religious tourism. According to Ala-Hamarneh, “The *economic concept* for Islamic tourism is an extension and expansion oriented concept which focuses on the importance of intra-Muslim and intra-Arab tourism in terms of inclusion of new tourist markets and tourist destinations. The *cultural concept* for Islamic tourism includes visions and ideas that outline the inclusion of Islamic religious-cultural sites in tourism programs with “pedagogical” and self-confidence-building elements. The *religious-conservative concept* for Islamic tourism has not yet been theoretically articulated. But various opinions and remarks in the discussions on the future of tourism in the Arab and Islam worlds as well as some practices of hotel’s managements indicate that articulations and implementations are just a matter of time. Any activities of Islamic tourism can be within in references by the Holy Qur’an and Hadith”[3].

A.A. Mustafayeva is with the Department of Arabic and Persian studies Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi as PhD, 050040, Kazakhstan (phone: +7 (707) 8261383, e-mail: rummana@mail.ru).

G.E. Nadirova is with the Department of Arabic and Persian studies Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi as Professor, Head of Project, 050040, Kazakhstan (phone: +7 (777) 2372074, e-mail: gulnad@mail.ru).

Sh.S. Kaliyeva is with the Department of Arabic and Persian studies Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi as Associate Professor, 050040, Kazakhstan (phone: +7 (777) 5713432, e-mail: shynar_kaliyeva@mail.ru).

B.Zh. Aktaulova is with the Department of Arabic and Persian studies Kazakh National University named after al-Farabi as Candidate of History studies, 050040, Kazakhstan (phone: +7 (701) 4507592, e-mail: bakyt1976@mail.ru).

A necessary condition for development of Kazakhstan's tourism is the tourism potential which can be measured in different factors: natural, cultural, historical, archeological recourses and socio-economic development of country. Some developed countries are visited by many tourists for their high economic level and some of them for their rich spiritual recourses. About a necessary condition for Islamic tourism development, it is measured in some recourses, such as alcohol-free drinks, pork-free foods, dress-code both of men and women, places for praying, separate pools for men and women, bathrooms equipment for pray preparation and etc.

II. THE FIRST PRECONDITION OF TOURISM IN ISLAM

Abbasid Empire (between 749 year and 947 year) of Arabic world has significantly contributed to science, culture, architecture, education and travel. Baghdad city as a capital of this huge empire was not only political and economic centre, but also was a unique place, where were located a lot of important establishments with great value for many spheres of Abbasid dynasty progress. One of such establishments introduced a prosperity of this empire is bazaar, which is more known in the Arab world such as "souk al-Warraqueen" (arab. "سوق الورقین" bazaar of papers), was visited by scientists, poets, philosophers from the entire world to get some value papers, books. Representatives of education and science in the Arab world showed activity in their empire and out of it. Sometimes their searching for education and science had big risks for them; in spite of it many of them achieved success leaving for world's science (especially for the Arab world's science) and culture the great works. It be clearly seen that the Arab world (particularly the Abbasid dynasty) was an object of many scientific works and is valuable for researching in our days too. Researchers of the East visited places with historical, archaeological, religion, geographic, astronomical, linguistic, literary importance and thus enriched the world science. Famous researchers of the Arab empire were Naser Khasrou, Ibn Fadlan, Ibn Jubir, Ibn Battuta and etc. According to Madrid-Dr. Kadhim, "Ibn Jubir's fame is due to his work "Rihla Ibn Jabir (The Travel of Ibn Jubir)", which he wrote after his three trips, the most important of which lasted more than three years from 578 H/1182 AD to 581H/1185 AD. He described all the cities he visited and all the wonders and beautiful scenes he observed, as well as political, social and moral matters" [4]. Thus, tourism in Islamic world is very important and has a long history.

III. AIMS OF ISLAMIC TOURISM

Travelling in Islam is a purposeful activity that aims to achieve some goals for people, the first of all, stress free life, good health are in the *physical goal*. *Social goal* contains Muslims brothers, such as Muslim brothers can be considered any Muslim people without family bonds. And of course, the third goal is important too. During travel person gets *spiritual riches*, such as education, object for new research and valuable information.

Tourism is a dominate industry in Turkey, Egypt, Malaysia, Morocco, Tunisia and a growing industry for Indonesia and the UAE. Based on the WTO report, an 8%, 19% and 8% increase in tourist arrivals respectively in the UAE, Indonesia and Jordan between 2003 and 2004 [5].

Travelling in Islamic religion can be considered as sport, religion (Hajj), visit, medical, education and research. Islamic tourism aims at travelling which is not contrary with Islam, such as drugs, alcoholism, pork, prostitution and etc. For example, the hotels of Islamic tourism separate pools for men and women, sell non-alcoholic beverages, non-pork food, apply dress code for men and women, ban photographing in swimming facilities and other rules according to Islam.

Islam consists of five pillars, firstly, the witness (shahada) of there is no God except Allah and Muhammad is the last Messenger of Allah. Secondly, praying five times a day, thirdly, gives the Zakat, fourthly, fasting on Ramadan and fifthly, performs Hajj. Performing Hajj is one type of the Islamic tourism as compared with types of Islamic tourism such as medical, shopping, visit.

According to the article "A study on Islamic tourism: a Malaysian experience", Islamic tourism is *flexible, rationale, simple and balanced*. The authors of this article explain that "Firstly, Islamic tourism is flexible because it is not fit into certain purpose only, secondly, Islam encourages Moslems to visit places in the world, thirdly, Islam is a simple religion because it relieves human burden, lastly, tourism in Islam is balance for dual life, which is in the world now and hereafter" [6].

The tragedy of September 11th 2001 and "Arabic spring" of 2011 year affected all countries. There are many factors that influence the development of tourism, for example, a *political factor* (stability of any country), an *economical factor* (a high degree of income), *cultural factor* (history, tradition, religion and etc.). Egypt is as one of the Islamic countries after revolution in its territory has lost a lot of tourists from all of the world and Kazakhstan too. In spite of the political stability in Egyptian tourism cities and cheapness of tours from Kazakhstan to Egypt, tourists are afraid of visiting pyramids' country.

Based on data of Kazakhstan's Muslims Religious Administration [7], the most popular kind of Islamic tourism in Kazakhstan is Hajj performing. A number of pilgrims from Kazakhstan to Saudi Arabia rose significantly between 2000 and 2012 (see Fig. 1).

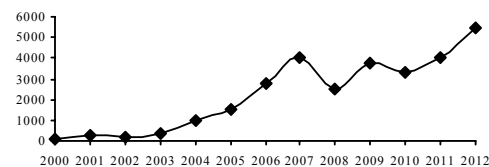


Fig. 1 A number of Hajj performers from Kazakhstan (2000-2010)

Islamic tourism can be considered as “tourism activities have done by Muslims aim to Islamic goals and based on Islamic principles (Shariah)”. These activities can be Umrah, Hajj, to get Islamic education, to visit Islamic places or tourism (health, holydays) according to Shariah principles and religiously acceptable (Halal). During recent ten years the products with logotype “Halal” are widespread and are in great demand in Kazakhstan.

Kazakhstan has a big tourism potential. Each region differs from others by its uniqueness. Based on the geographical position – located in the Eurasian continent’s heart, this country is a unique region of the CIS. Thus, geographic position, climate, territory and multicultural (multi-religion, multi-races) make it more attractive for tourists. It is the ninth biggest country in the world. It borders Russia to the north, the Caspian Sea to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan to the south and China to the east.

For many centuries the ancient caravan roads (including the Silk Road) passed through Kazakhstan leading from China to the Middle East and Europe. The Silk Way became eyewitness of construction many old commercial, cultural cities, such as Turkestan, Otrar, Syganak and etc. Some mausoleums (Khoja Ahmed Yassawi, Aysha Bibi, Daudbek) located in the South Kazakhstan, which are Holy places for Kazakh pilgrims. Turkestan city, according to opinion local pilgrims, is the second Mecca. Nowadays, there are not many touristic agencies (Farab Travel, Hikmet Travel, Zhibek-Zholy-AP, Kazserviceavia and others) in Kazakhstan offer Islamic tours in Turkey, Egypt, UAE, Malaysia and etc. The most popular trend of Islamic tourism in Kazakhstan is Hajj. There are not many hotels (Tumar Halal, Kausar Complex), where Muslim tourists can visit.

IV. CONCLUSION

Islamic tourism, such as Islam and tourism, is multidisciplinary area. It is new trend for economy, tourism, Islamic tourism. That is why; it can be useful for developing these sectors. Nowadays, Islamic tourism is in great demand for tourists going abroad. In spite of rich natural resources of Kazakhstan, Inside Islamic tourism is less popular than External. A number of travelers to Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Malaysia and other countries, where Islamic principles are provided, rise significantly.

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