

UNIVERSAL IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL TOURISM AND SAFRANBOLU (*)

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First of all, it must be emphasized that; selection of Safranbolu as a place for “*Development of Cultural Tourism at Eurasia World Heritage Cities*” symposium has invaluable benefits for both Safranbolu and Turkey. Hence, as a city mayor of 1970’s, I would like to thank to the Organization of World Heritage Cities and Eurasia Regional Secretariat.

“Urban Site” decision was taken at those years for Safranbolu. Since 1976 Safranbolu houses have taken under legal and organizational conservation. After approximately 20 years, in 1994 UNESCO has taken Safranbolu in its “World Heritage List”. As a conclusion of these progresses, approximately after 30 years, today, it is an honor to be with the valuable guests of culture and tourism in such an event held in Safranbolu.

It is well known that recently many different types of activities are called as tourism and there are many different descriptions of culture.

With no doubt, tourism could not be limited by vocational purposes only. It includes a wide range of activities such as visiting many different places, getting involved in cultural activities business meetings, congress and symposiums. Cultural tourism can be simply described to visit the natural, monumental and historical values of different regions or the countries, to get more knowledge about the people and their living styles.

On the other hand, whatever the aim is, vocational, educational or participation in meetings there is always some time put for visiting the natural and historical places and meeting with the local people. Thus, it should be considered that every type of tourism includes cultural characteristics.

As a result, the actors of the cultural tourism should not be limited to a few professions like archeologist or historiographer or a limited number of people who have special interests. Whatever the aim of the visit, every visitor can be included in the frame of cultural tourism. The most unique, interesting and authentic objects of the cultural tourism are at the cities in the World Heritage List. Hence, the development of the cultural tourism is very closely related with the organization of the national and international activities such as congress, conferences, exhibitions and fairs. The sub-structure facilities necessary for these purposes could be established in world heritage cities by the help of UNESCO and Organization of World Heritage Cities (OWHC).

Recently, each country puts effort to develop their tourism activities. The one aim of this effort is to get the economic benefits of tourism. It is obvious that economic targets are also essential for development of cultural tourism. The expenses of the

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national and international visitors of the places highlighted for cultural tourism and particularly the cities of World Heritage are obviously an important economic source for the people of these places. Nevertheless, it is more vital that the income of the cultural tourism can be utilized as a supplementary economic source for conservation, restoration and maintenance of the cultural values of these cities.

For instance at Safranbolu, after functional changes of residential houses to hotels and pensions, the increase in number of visitors accelerates the maintenance and restoration of these places.

As much essential as than the obvious economical benefits of cultural tourism to world heritage cities is/should be in the international relations field. Cultural tourism is the most efficient tool to bring people having different social, cultural, economic features together.

These present days in the 21st century, it is clearly expressed in every field as a desire that any kind of war among the nations should be ended, and the dominant understanding should be peace and friendship all around the world. This desire can only become real with the help of cultural tourism which connects different people, causes to forget and overcomes previous enmities and establishes friendships.

Although nowadays a few political teoricians like Samuel HUNDINGTON, foresights "*fight of civilizations*", cultural tourism can be an essential tool for preventing these expectations and establish a civilized synergy.

It is not a fortunetelling to say that in one day a big world union becomes reality. As soon as the relations progress continuously between societies and nations, it will bring together the union of the world. Nevertheless, the world union should not be the one which is supported by the globalism supporters as with the direction of cultural and economic one dominance. By humanist approaches, the aim should be the equality of people and the nations. In this perspective, cultural varieties and national identities should be respected.

In today's world, it is much easier than before to establish a relation between foreign cultures. That stems from the communication and computer age that we are now living in. Is it really necessary to visit other countries as tourists? Are we living in the 13th century; then do we have to look for Marco POLO's notes in order to have information about China? Are we living in the 14th century; do we have to search for IBNI BATTUTA's travel book for having knowledge about Middle East, Caucasian, Anatolia, India, a part of Africa, Spain? We have now written and visual media, such as newspapers, journals, television, internet, CDs, DVDs etc. However, it should not be said that they are enough, infact they can not be enough.

None of these communication tools can take place of personal seeing and observing. There is a nice idiom in Turkish; "people communicate by talking, animals communicate by smelling each other". In order to establish a bridge between different cultures through tourism, the local governments and local tourism companies have essential duties. In order to provide the all the cultural information, there should be experts having background about the cultural values of the place that they live and present them by foreign languages.

Personal visiting and to sightseeing is different than trying to catch the cultural values from a camera's objective. The information that the documentary film may provide could not be the same as having knowledge about a place by communicating with the local people. Visitors would like to see whatever they want without having influences of external agents and would like to have the answers of their questions related to the subjects of their interests.

For instance, the visitors of Safranbolu may want to know why Safranbolu is in the World Heritage List instead of the other historical cities of Anatolia, why most of the Safranbolu Houses are much bigger than the conventional residential in the other parts of the Anatolia.

To answer of this kind of questions, one may say that; there are other historical cities in Anatolia except Safranbolu, nevertheless many of the houses as the Turkish-Ottoman civil architecture samples were demolished, and new concrete buildings were constructed in places of historical houses. On the other hand, at Safranbolu, approximately one thousand of houses are under legal preservation today; the reason of the huge size of preserved houses is a necessity of the patriarchal family living with 3 generations together including grandfather, son and grandchild. It is also an indicator of the high level of social and economic life in Safranbolu.

Another benefit of the cultural tourism could prevent the misunderstanding about the countries and their people. For instance, the people living in Safranbolu have a chance to get more knowledge about the Japanese tourists who visit the Safranbolu in recent years. Previously, there was an image of Japanese people with karate films, sumo wrestling, and "kamikaze" and "hara-kiri" actions. Now, the image of Japanese people has completely changed by their regular visits to Safranbolu and nowadays they are remembered with their simile faces, polite and nice behaviors at Safranbolu.

There is another example from Germany. In a cold and rainy day, a young man from Karabük/Eskipazar helped an old woman for crossing the street. The lady was very pleased of this behavior and asked him "where are you from?", After his answer "Turkish", she replied "I cannot imagine that a Turkish guy will be that much polite!".

This is a real indicator of how will be the mis-judgement which is not supported by any research, misleading of the reality. To prevent from prejudice about the countries and the people of them, cultural tourism has a great function.

We say, in Turkish that "the one who travels more get more knowledge than who lives more." English intellectual BACON said "knowledge is the power." A Turkish researcher and journalist Uğur MUMCU meant that the knowledge is very essential by saying "it is not possible to have an idea without having knowledge".

Knowledge has no boundaries; both knowledge and civilization are not national, rather international. Both knowledge and civilization are the gains of the humanity. It is well known that the civilization which began in China that has the written history based on four thousand years ago, structured around Mesopotamia and Mediterranean during centuries and carried to Europe. Hence, today, it should be accepted that it is better to talk about a contemporary civilization instead of west civilization.

Even the production of paper was progressed in China at the beginning of the second century (BC), almost 600 century later; the world got introduced with paper by

the help of Chinese soldiers who were the slaves of the Arabians. By the same way the compass could get known by the European people after many years later of its invention in China. These are the reasons of the lack of communication between societies. In other words, there was no cultural tourism as an understanding, possibilities and means of those days.

As a result, it should be emphasized that cultural tourism is the most essential ingredients of well established international relations. The cities which are in the World Heritage List have a special importance and function for cultural tourism. In order to have knowledge about a nation, meeting only with the people of visiting only the monuments standing today may not be enough. As a definition of the political law, nations are the societies of the people coming from past to the future together with the ones living today as a river who have common social and cultural values.

Hence, the reliable evaluations about one nation can only be possible by visiting world heritage cities which exhibit the history and present both the past and future issues together. For instance, it is possible to see the scenes of living and managing of Ottoman period at one of the world heritage cities namely Istanbul which was the capital city of Ottoman Empire for about 500 years. It is also possible to get knowledge about the social and economic living styles of Turkish people by visiting the passages and neighborhoods of Safranbolu, having streets which have residential houses and ornamented by mosques and fountains.

World Heritage cities are the exhibition areas of the nation's identity. These cities are not only includes the archeological places as a cultural heritage. They are also living cities therefore they should be preserved together with their people.

Usually it is not enough to wait for preserving the private ownership of immovable cultural values in these cities only by their owners. It is obvious that these are valuable heritages not only for their owners but also for nation, and even for other nations. For that reason, the owner of these immovable which should be preserved could get a financial support from the national and international companies and foundations. The continuity of the cultural tourism and transferring the world heritage to next generations can only be achieved through the help of this cooperation.

I believe that Euroasia International Tourism Seminar will provide essential benefits and contribution to all member countries and cities.

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