
HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF EDUCATIONAL TOURISM IN THE CAUCASUS REGION

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Abstract

With the purpose of education, traveling of people interested in “Educational Tourism” dates back to the earlier past where the Caucasus in general and Georgia took their special place.

The first quarter of the 20th century saw the rising interest of European countries and Russia towards the Caucasus and Georgia from the point of tourism. For educational purposes people used to arrive here individually or in groups in order to satisfy their scientific interest. Those people mainly came from Poland, Germany, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinoslav, Kiev, etc.

In the Caucasus and Georgia the educational-cognitive, scientific tours were held under the consent and the patronage of government authoritative officials. Tour participants' interest covered unique diversity of the nature, flora, fauna, architecture of historical monuments both in mountains and valleys. Also the ethnic composition of the inhabitants from the geopolitical area, their traditions, culture, peculiarities, religious denominations and others were the subjects of their interest.

The work relies on the documental materials found out in the Department of History of Georgian national Archive and the historical primary sources as well. For the first time we bring into scientific thinking the decisions made as a result of studying and analyzing them critically.

Keywords: Educational Tourism, Teaching-Scientific Tours, Educational Institutions of Russia, Touring Interests, Caucasus.

Introduction

The story of the traveling of people who were interested in “educational tourism” dates back to the earlier past. To get further education, young people used to go as far as European states, as well as to Russia. Georgia, in its turn and the Caucasus in general were also visited by both young students and scholars to meet their educational and scientific needs, to see the remarkable sights, the ancient landmarks of architecture and culture. The foreigners were always enchanted by the remarkable beauty both of the valleys and the mountains. “They enjoyed the outings in the mountains, speculating the landscapes, enjoying watching sunsets and sunrises. Special devices were often set up for tourists' convenience e.g. binoculars. They were offered to try their hand in hunting, fishing, etc”. (Birzhakov M., 2008, pp.128-129).

Teaching –scientific tourism tours were one of the most wide-spread kinds of tourism. It combines both recreational and educational purposes. While traveling and sharing with other cultures, the tourist is also relaxing in the new surroundings.

Materials and Methods

While conducting research, methods of synthesis and analysis have been used. Before the tourists embark on this kind of tour “a number of things are being prepared, such as providing them with relevant methodological literature, specially designed textbooks, the map of the city and a guidebook. While conducting educational tours students are given accommodations in hostels and hotels where there are decent conditions”. Qualified instructors are at the students’ service. Tour operators are employed who sign contracts with the local educational institutions, with universities and colleges. “This kind of tours are tailored for any number of students. (Julakidze N., 2009, pp. 87-89).

“Educational tourism may imply traveling for language studying or qualification advancing purposes. (Maisuradze D., 2011, p. 63)

Excursions from Russia conducted to different parts of the Caucasus were quite frequent. There is plenty of information stored in the history department of the national Archive of Georgia confirming this fact. The list of the tourist groups visiting Georgia at the beginning of the 20th century is quite long and impressive. It is evident how big the interest of foreigners was especially that of educational institutions of Russian Empire towards the region through studying this material.

Here is an example. On March 10, 1910 the imperial society of naturalists existing within the department of anthropology and ethnography of Moscow University addresses His Highness the Governor of Tbilisi on account of the fact that the society has sent “Viacheslav Bankovski, the student of Moscow University to Tiflis Guberniya in order to collect zoological material to submit afterwards to the zoology museum of Moscow University.” The society also requests to render the assistance and support to the student in his research and thus enabling him to successfully fulfill his task”. (Central Archive of History, Fund 17, Reregistration 1, Case 6823, Leaf 24).

The purpose of the student coming to Georgia on an individual basis to conduct a research becomes clear from this document. Georgia was always famous for its rare species of both flora and fauna and it was one of the biggest appeal for explorers.

In our opinion, so called tours of naturalist scientists are one of the most important among the various forms of ecotourism that exist today. These kind of tours are conducted in order to familiarize with endemic species of flora of a specific region. Equally interesting are specially designed tours on exploring zoology, entomology (study of insects), ichthyology (study of fish), paleontology, geology, etc”. (Alkhanishvili, N., 2012, p. 73)

“The number of tourists interested in ecotourism is comparatively low. Their findings can provide rich material for a solid branch of science and on the other hand, it may facilitate

efficient planning of ecotourism development. For this very purpose the number of the volunteer tourists participating in scientific field expeditions as assisting personnel is remarkably increasing.” (Maisuradze, T, 2008, p.25)

Archival material throws light on one certain explorer among the others. This is Max Korb who “ arrived in Georgia with his wife Rosine on a scientific mission in 1910. His aim is to travel to Bordjomi, Akhaltsikhe, Abastumani and the Caucasus in general and he asks His Highness Governor-General to provide them with a guide who knows these places well and also speaks German. (Fund 17, Case 6823, Leaf 30)

It should be mentioned that Abastumani district is well-known for its pure mountainous air, mild dry climate, mineral waters. The atmosphere is characterized with high clarity. Proceeding from these remarkable microclimatic benefits it was here that the very first astrophysical observatory in the USSR was built in 1932. (Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, 1975, Volume 1, p.14). As for Bordjomi, it is one of the most popular balneological health resort which has been famed for its rich and full of diversity nature, unique mineral waters already since the first half of the 19th century. Numerous tourists were attracted to narrow ravines, sky-reaching evergreen mountains, alpine pastures, the streams gently flowing on the slopes and historical monuments. In 1862 Prince M. Romanov, the uncle of Russian Emperor Alexander Two was appointed the chief ruler of the Caucasus Region. He came to love Bordjomi district so much that he made it into his summer residence and built a palace here. (Bordomi Ravine, 2003, pp., 3,4). Bordjomi State National Park was established in 1935 and later it was expanded as BordjomiKharagauli National Park. Here one can see lots of rare and endangered relict and endemic species. It is a true shelter for many species of Caucasian flora and fauna. (Metreveli, M., 2008, Tbilisi, p.162) There are many historical monuments in the vicinity of the park. “Those visitors who are keen on history and antiquity will enjoy seeing the following monuments which are located in perfect harmony with the nature. These are TimotesUbani, Nedzvi church, Nunisi church, Sakviriko basilica, Chitakhevi Green Monastery, GogiasTsikhe and PetresTsikhe. (Saakashvili, N., 2011, p.40) The scientists from Germany had a wide range of choice for their explorations. They could conduct their research in many directions, such as astrophysics, ecology, zoology, history, etc.

Among the archive documents we should pay due attention to the following. It informs us about the students' visit from the mining high school of Ekaterinoslav in June, 1910. “This was a geological expedition consisting of 30 members led by N.I. Lebedev, a professor and A.K. Karegin, who was both an assistant and an engineer of geological mines. The document is completed with students' list. Their itinerary was as follows: the excursionists were to set off at the beginning of June and head for Vladikavkaz. They would stay there till 3 or 5 of June. Then they would leave for Mtskheta via Georgian Military Road. It would take them seven days. On June 12 or 14 they would leave from Mtskheta for Baku by railway where they would see the oil refinery and the surrounding area. On their return they would see the

sights around Tbilisi. Around June 19, they would visit Alaverdi copper factory and then move on to western Georgia. One day in Kutaisi and Tkibuli and then they would go to Batumi. On June 22 or 24 they would travel by sea first to New Athos and then to Novorossiysk and go back home to Ekaterinoslav on June 26 to 28. (Fund 17, Case 6823, Reregistration 1, Leaf 36).

The archive documents make it clear that the students from Ekaterinoslav were more interested in geological observations and explorations than in getting acquainted with historical and architectural landmarks. At first they choose to walk on Georgia's Military Road and for seven days they have excellent chances to observe, survey and put down their findings. They learn about the properties of Baku oil and Tkibuli coal mines. "Coal mines of Tkibuli had huge industrial significance. The first information about discovering coal in Tkibuli dates back to the twenties of 19th century. As for its thorough exploration it began hundred years later." (Geography of Georgia, 2002, p. 108)

The students were getting familiar with Batumi and New Athos on the Black Sea coast as they were major ports. From today's perspective it seems impossible that they would not study the hollow which draws our attention both for speleological and mining-wise.

The documents which we studied clearly underline the fact that Tbilisi Governor was to assist the students in every way. The visitors were supposed to get the maximum possible information about mining industrial plants. They used various kinds of transport, including railway and marine.

There are a lot of documents confirming the interest towards the Caucasus and its exploration. For instance, the extraordinary department of His Highness representative in the Caucasus informed Tbilisi Governor that "on June 5, 1910 Bogachov, the assistant on Department of mathematics and physics of Yureevsk Imperial University was conducting an educational tour for a group of 18 students. Their purpose was to explore Georgia's Military road, studying its surroundings and drawing a geological map. They asked for a permission of using four hunting guns in order to make ornithological collections (ornithology-a branch of zoology that studies birds). It is obvious that they were allowed to have on them 4 hunting guns for their scientific aims. (Case 6823, leaves 86-87)

Thus the educational institutions in Russian Empire had ever growing interest towards the Caucasus. Moreover, exploration of Military Road of Georgia was especially important for them in terms of strategy.

By the beginning of the 20th century the interest rose even higher. Among the tourists who came to the Caucasus region for educational and scientific purposes, were students from Kiev St., Vladimir Imperial University. The Rector of the University sent a request to Tbilisi governor to grant them permission in written form. The archive document reads as follows: "A group of 34 students of the University were led by the ordinator of the same University surgery faculty clinic. There is also the list of the students. (Leaf 161) Related document shows that other scientists from the same University got interested in conducting their

researches in Georgia. This refers to the department of histology laboratory. A group of students did arrive in Tbilisi in December-January of 1910. Their head is Alexander G. Chernoxovski, the prosector of the laboratory. (Leaf 16)

We may assume that the prosector was pleased with the efficient scientific work done since he comes to Georgia again four months later with a group of 20 students. (Case 6823, Leaf 103) The educational tours were becoming a regular practice in the matter of exploring the Caucasus.

There are also confidential documents among the archive material. They bear a special signature stamp. One of them states in not so many words that the rector of Kiev St., Vladimir Imperial University is sending a group of 55 students to the Caucasus region, including Tbilisi. Their tour was scheduled from May 21 to September 1, in 1910. The students were from the anatomy chair. Their supervisor was the deputy prosector M. Rudetski. This educational tour was one of many of its kind from Kiev University. The visits of engineer-technologists were more frequent. (Leaf 77)

By the year of 1910 Tbilisi had received a group of 25 students from Kiev Polytechnic Institute named after Alexander Two. They were supervised by Trophim T. Usenko, the laboratory's engineer-technologist of the Institute. Later another group arrived to Georgia from the same Institute. This time there were 45 people headed by Boris G. Shaposhnikov. (pp. 171, 172)

The Governor's Office documents clearly show that scientific tours to the Caucasus were not infrequent. The authorities of Borchalo district were notified by the Governor's office that two groups of students from St. Petersburg Polytechnic Institute named after Peter the Great would arrive in Borchalo via Vladikavkaz by June 13, 1910. The groups were supervised by Professor F.I. Levinson Lessing and A. Bayakovsky. Among the places they wanted to go, was also a factory in Alaverdi. (Leaf 44)

Almost the same time a group of 35 students from Kiev Polytechnic Institute named after Alexander Two comes to the Caucasus. The supervisor is the Institute laboratory member K. Timofeyev. (Case 6823, Leaf 61). These documents are complete with the students' lists.

The Caucasus Region hosted scientific and educational tours from Europe as well. They had to take a special permission from His Highness Governor General. According to the circular № 1271, on May 26, 1910 a representation from Warsaw Imperial University led by Dr. G. G. Airapetian arrived in Tiflis for scientific purposes. The list of the visitors has also survived. (ibid 102)

There were many educational institutions in Moscow okrug which were attracted to geographical location and tourism resources of the Caucasus. Among them was Oryol Alexandrovski non-classical secondary school. The headmaster of the school notified Governor of Tbilisi that "25 pupils from Oryol non-classical secondary school were going on an excursion to the Caucasus to see the following places; Pyatigorsk, Kislovodsk, Esenduk, Zheleznovodk. After they would have seen these cities they would have to choose one of the

two itineraries. Itinerary A meant taking Military Road of Ossetia and visiting DargiKokhi, Gulaki, Upper Tsea, Tibi, Utseri, Oni, Kutaisi, Batumi, Kerch, Itinerary B meant taking Military Road of Georgia and visiting Vladikavkaz, Tbilisi, Kutaisi, Sokhumi, Kerch. Head of the excursion was Andrei S. Voznesenski, the school instructor and advisor. (Case 6823, Leaf 62) A special permission was requested on the list of excursion makers. E.g. whether there were students of Jewish faith. They inquired for details of their family background.

In the same year, the permission to enter the region was granted to M. M. Milorava, the headmaster of Nizhegorod private non-classical secondary school from His Highness Governor-General, Adjutant General, Count Vorontsov-Dashkov. "Milorava was notifying Governor General to allow a group of 25 tourists to cross the border. There are three Jews in the group. For them he was asking for a special permission and requested that no problems hindered their work. The aim of the students was to see the sights of Tbilisi surroundings and then to leave for Batumi. (Case 6823, p. 27)

And again there was another group from Poland. The managing inspector of Sennitski Seminary from Warsaw learning district notified Governor of Tbilisi that a group of 14, those who had completed the course of the seminary would go on an excursion. (Fund 17, Case 6823, Leaf 93) Another educational establishment from Ljubliane guberniya, Warsaw learning district was New Alexandria Institute specializing in agriculture and forestry. The rector addresses Governor of Tbilisi with the request for rendering support and assistance "to the group of students supervised by teachers". The itinerary of their tour has survived. (Fund 17, Case 6823, Leaf 106)

Foreign visitors to Georgia were especially interested in the country's natural mineral springs and waters well-known for the healing power they had.

There are lots of mineral waters in Georgia varying in the minerals they contain. They occur both in the mountains and the valleys which makes it easier to build balneologic health resorts in many places. The healing power of these springs were already well-known in the first half of the 19th century. In the capital city of Tbilisi there are ancient sulphurous thermal springs (the most prominently old part of the city Abanotubani, meaning the district of bathhouses) that were quite by chance discovered by King Vakhtang Gorgasali while his hunting in the 5th century. It is no wonder that scientists from Moscow Imperial University show their keen interest in mineral waters in the first decade of the 20th century. "Rector of Moscow University was planning to send a group of 27 students under the supervision of Vladimir Chelintsev, the privat-dozent on a teaching-scientific tour to see and survey sulphurous and iron-containing waters.

Eager tourists used to arrive to Georgia from Yerevan Gubernya, from our closest neighbour country Armenia. The headmaster of Alexandropol commercial school wrote the following to His Highness, Governor of Tiflis: "The pupils of the seventh grade are keen on going to Tiflis on an educational tour at the end of this month". (Case 6823, p. 156)

Georgian periodicals covered well and brought to the reader public all the news and facts about the people who pursued teaching-scientific tourism in the Caucasus.

Representatives not only from public schools but also from theological seminaries came to Georgia. For instance, a group of 15 students arrived from Nachchivan theological seminary. They saw the sights of Tbilisi and visited the museum of Literacy promoting Society. (02.06.1909, p. 2. Newspaper, "ChveniAzri")

There are also tourists from Germany to visit the Caucasus. They had been advised to do so by Leipzig Club. The Office of His Imperial Highness notified Governor of Tbilisi that the embassy of Germany had sent the list of the visiting group. Their itinerary was as follows: "Odessa, Sevastopol, Yalta, Tiflis, Echmiadzin, Vladikavkaz, and Moscow. The office demanded that Governor of Tiflis render all the necessary assistance to the excursion-makers. (Case 6823, Leaf 1450) The document is complete with the details about the visitors' profession, their permanent address and age.

There is another document from the Governor-Generals Office notifying host Governors that a group of 34 people from Dantzig Botanical-Zoological Society will take an educational tour to the Crimea and the Caucasus. Head of the excursion is Lakoviev

Professor, Dr. of Sciences. The information about this very excursion can be found in contemporary Georgian press: "A group of 34 naturalists from Dantzig Botanical-Zoological Society led by Dr. Lakoviev is coming to the Caucasus. They intend to visit Batumi, Bordjomi, Tbilisi, Baku and then leave for Moscow". (5. 06. 1910, № 53, p.3, "CveniGazeti")

Dantsig is the former German name of Polish city Gdansk. (Georgian Soviet Encyclopedia, Vol., 3, p.377) The group had a very interesting itinerary. (Case 6823, Leaves 97, 98, 00).

Head of Tiflis police was in charge of the security of the travelers and he also warned his subordinate colleagues throughout the Guberniya to secure the proper progress of the excursion in order to let the visitors go back to their country with positive emotions and unforgettable impressions.

St. Petersburg had always been the educational and cultural centre of Russia. Many representatives of Georgian intelligentsia went for further education there and returned to their homeland equipped with progressive European ideas and education. It is only natural that their friends, colleagues and acquaintances in the scientific circles would get interested in visiting Georgia and seeing its sight. One of the documents informs us about the tour of 36 pupils from St. Petersburg lyceum for girls to Tbilisi. They were given accommodation for two days in the building of Tbilisi №2 lyceum for girls." (Case 6823, Leaf 55)

Also from St. Petersburg came several groups of students taking qualification advancing courses for women. They arrived in Georgia in Mid-May of 1910. They meant to visit "sites of mineral waters, Tiflis, Bordjomi, Abastumani, Kutaisi, Batumi, the Black Sea coast as far as Novorossiysk. Head of the courses asked the host authorities to provide the excursion-

makers with all the conditions to ensure the success of the educational tour. (Case 6823, p. 31)

Results and Discussions

There is a huge distance of one hundred years between our present time and the chronological time of the documents studied by us. Lots of things have changed during this one century in economic, social and political terms. Changless is the geographical location, landscape, natural resources and geo-political area of the Caucasian countries. Also the same is the multiethnic population and variety of religious denominations and last but not the least there still is a huge tourism interest in the Caucasus region.

From the documents dating back to the first decade of the 20th century we can state that there was a huge interest towards the sights and landmarks of the Caucasus. The leading educational institutions, colleges, universities, institutes in Russian Empire were especially enthusiastic about teaching-scientific tours. The tourists took both individual and group tours to Georgia and the Caucasus. They got familiarized with historic and cultural rarities and remarkable sights. Along with sheer tourist activities they pursued their scientific interests in many aspects.

It is noteworthy to mention the scientific research tours in mining and geological terms. The mountainous landscape of the Caucasus, breathtaking crossings, the Military Road of Georgia, contrasts of nature were immensely appealing to foreigners.

The prevailing interest among those who visit the Caucasus on educational tours is the interest in the local zoological world. That was why Max Korb, a German scientist and his wife Rosine visited Abastumani, Akhalkalaki, Bordjomi. It was interest in Zoological world of the Caucasus that drove V.P. Bankovski, a researcher from Moscow. Among the different forms of eco-tourism, scientific tourism enjoys considerable popularity. It had many advocates throughout the world. The Caucasus region and Georgia in particular with their rich and diverse flora and fauna and a number of national parks are excellent grounds for conducting educational programs and doing eco-scientific researches.

Conclusions

Thus we can sum up the following:

The educational, teaching-scientific tours to the Caucasus and Georgia which were arranged by students and their supervisors from as diverse places as Moscow, Kiev, St. Petersburg, Ekaterinoslav, Yerevan have already gained historical importance. From today's perspective it will be appropriate to hail them as teaching tours for the youth. The distinguished scholars of tourism give the following account for the essence of youthful tours: "Young people have more freedom and more flexible lifestyle. They can spend more time on traveling especially during their summer and winter vacations. The students are usually guided and supervised by their teacher/instructor or any other staff member from their educational institution. It is not

infrequent that students make up groups of 3 or 5 and they embark on quite long tours both within their country and abroad. The supervisor of the students enjoys some travel allowances. (Metreveli, M. 2008, p.49)

The educational tours from Poland and Germany require further studying since often their visits were of confidential nature.

Tourists that ever came and still keep coming to the Caucasus and Georgia have always been fascinated by rich and diverse flora and fauna of the region, by countless architectural and historic monuments and landmarks. The local people's unique hospitality played a very positive role in tourism as time-tested and timeless traditions of Caucasian traditions of welcoming their guests proved truly unforgettable for visitors. Almost anybody who ever set their foot on this land was attracted by local folklore, cuisine and lifestyle traditions which vary from one district to another.

The Caucasus region was and still is wonderful place to visit for various tourism interests and researches. It provides excellent opportunities for those who pursue teaching-scientific, ecological, mining, cultural-cognitive, ethnographic, agro or extreme touring interests.

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