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## Gender-based restrictions in tourism: An example of the phenomenon of avaton in the modern socio-cultural expanse

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### Abstract

The article deals with the problems of the impact of tourism, including pilgrimage, on the socio-cultural environment of modern society, changes and reformatting of the gender restrictions of religious content. Investigated the access restrictions based on gender to objects of tourist interest as an example of socio-religious phenomenon "avaton" monastic republic of Athos in Northern Greece. Avaton regarded as a characteristic example of the alignment and sustained physical boundaries of the gender division, which for centuries allows preserving the unique closed social system. The paper focuses on the very concept of gender segregation, signs of it in the archaic and modern religions and on the relationship between the sexual divisions of the principles of Orthodox monasticism. The authors considered conflict of values of modern Western society and conservative traditions of Eastern Christianity. Gender discrimination is contrasted with the need to preserve the unique social phenomenon as part of the socio-cultural heritage of humanity.

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### 1. Introduction

In recent years there has been expansion of the importance of tourism in the world, increasing its impact on the economic and socio-cultural component of modern society. Against the background of the intricate evolution of European society, which fundamentally changes the value orientations of the personality, significantly increases the need for spirituality is manifested as an increase in interest in the pilgrimage tourism, and religious sites. Often this interest is associated with aggressive imposition of modern principles of religious organizations, which provokes conflict with the existing order and tradition. On the one hand we see some changes in the strict taboo world's major religions. On the other hand occurs popularization and promotion of religious denominations and secular social movements that do not restrict individuals in expressing their rights and freedoms. Often these societies themselves initiate the fight against the prevailing traditional values. An example is the active position

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of feminist organizations in Europe on the abolition of the centuries-old "avaton" in the monastic republic of Athos.

## **2. Gender restrictions of a religious nature in the context of tourism**

### *2.1 Sources of Discrimination*

Global Code of Ethics for Tourism, in the second article proclaims that all Tourism activities should respect the equality of men and women. In addition, most of the international declarations and agreements in the field of tourism, emphasize the need to respect the principle of equality of access for travellers to tourist site, regardless of their gender, ethnic or other affiliation. Sharply negative attitude to discrimination became a hallmark of Enlightenment values, one of the most exciting periods in the development of philosophy and spiritual culture in Europe. Since then, the problem of social equality, as well as its antithesis, the problem of inequality is one of the key problems of the society. At the moment, there is no single, comprehensive concept of equality, and sometimes expressed doubts that it can be defined as a single social category.

This is due to the multidimensionality of the concept, which may be considered in the legal, social, economic, ethical terms. Almost all cultures in the past in one time or another attended chauvinistic attitudes regarding sexual differentiation. In ancient Egypt and Persia, despite the fact that the men kept everything under control, women, however, gave sufficient priority role in economic and social life. In ancient Persia, as the history of research relations between the sexes, there was a more liberal attitude towards gender segregation than in ancient Rome, or pre-Islamic Arabia. In the Middle Ages the same, gender separation in the East, acquired a strict form. And if in today's society the concept of characteristic cultural division between men and women is most often associated with Islam, we should not forget that in the West, before the recent time as he has become a modern and progressive, as well on the agenda was the problem of gender segregation.

Separation of the sexes in the society is often formed culture and transferred through religion, despite the fact that not always the religion serves as the initial initiator segregation, however, that religious traditions fix it in a particular social structure. For example, the canons of Orthodox Judaism impose a ban on women singing in public places, where her voice can be heard by a man, while in the synagogues separate areas set aside for them. Sexual differentiation in Orthodox Judaism as repeatedly became a pretext for conflict with international feminist organizations, which achieved the admission of women to the Western Wall, without restrictions based on gender. In Islam, gender segregation is not less pronounced. In the mosque during prayer can be just men, women tend to pray in the aisles. Friday worship is not considered to be mandatory for them (Voronina, 2004). All these features have a direct impact on the organization of tourist trips to visit these religious sites.

Christianity was originally proclaimed in the face of the Apostle Paul, a new reality in Christ, there is no room for any kind of segregation and inequality: "There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (New Testament, 2006). In the early days of Christianity the spiritual equality of all people acted as one of the fundamental ethical principles. But along with such a revolutionary religious position in Christianity also found support for the trend towards gender segregation, especially in the circles of ascetic sects. Subordination of women to men - is primarily a legacy of Jewish tradition and the Greco-Roman world that has gone through a life of the first Christian church, and was fixed for centuries, despite the fact that more is not consistent with the original theological aspects of the Gospel. Later, in the Middle Ages, the idea of a fundamental and universal spiritual equality were rejected by the Church Fathers, who argued that the fall of manmade inaccessible, the full spiritual equality which God originally wanted to give the people, and gave rise to their "natural hierarchy."

### *2.2 Gender segregation*

Historical, anthropological studies have evidence that some form of gender segregation, until the emergence of closed male and female institutions and cults existed and exist in every human society (Bem, 2004). In this paper we use the term segregation - not so much in the context of discrimination, and as signifying a similar definition is separation. Systems of segregation are traditionally characterized by criteria which in turn may be subdivided into groups such as biological, cultural and/or status, and also depending on situations or prescribed roles. Segregation is not always correlated with prejudice, because it can be achieved by the institutions of society, regardless of the attitude of people, but in general, the system of separation based on the prejudices of the person and actually encourages them. Segregation is a kind of institutional form of social distance in terms of its physical, which means that the convergence of physical and social space, and these differ from other social forms that structure the social distance and spatial conditions. Segregation, as a rule, does not regulate social relations between people in contact, but rather the opposite characterizes avoidance of contact. Despite the fact that segregation involves the separation of individuals and groups, it is far from being the antithesis of social integration. Segregation of social units may also be the basis for integration, such as in a traditional Indian society, where the basis for consensus caste division partially protrudes common religious values. In fact, the segregation can serve as a common, although not universal aspect of social organization, by defining the boundary between groups, ranking hierarchy, as well as controlling the interaction of these groups (Kon, 2001).

Orthodox monasticism basically refers to the life of Christ, which is free from family and kinship loyalties, travels, living in voluntary poverty, fasts and spends the night in prayer. Monasticism - the desire to maximize the closer to this ideal. Monastic asceticism means nothing more than self-denial, and it is often rooted in a negative attitude to the outside world. In Christianity, ascetic look at the world as a source of temptation and sin, so they try to avoid harmful spiritually contacts and concentrate their forces for rescue alone. The most inappropriate for an ascetic contact, which can cause serious spiritual conflict, and that is associated directly with the concept of seduction is the contact with the opposite sex. From this arises the necessity for gender segregation as necessary for the very existence of the institution of monasticism.

### **3. On the definition of the phenomenon of avaton**

#### *3.1 The social anachronism*

Mount Athos, which for thousands of years a stronghold of Orthodox monasticism, is located on the Khalkidhiki peninsula in northern part of mainland Greece. Already the second millennium Athos is a spiritual beacon for the Christian East. In 885, the emperor Basil I decreed an official recognition of the fact that belongs exclusively to the monks of Athos. Shepherds and other laymen, who used to be here unhindered access to the peninsula, was closed. At the end of the tenth century the Emperor Alexius Comnenus I extended the ban on visiting Mount Athos for all women, as well as prohibit the introduction into the Holy Mountain female animals. In 1046 the Byzantine emperor Constantine IX recognized Athos monastic center and gave him the official title "Holy Mountain," as used in the present time. Athos Orthodox gave the world a host of saints, patriarchs, bishops, theologians (Kadas, 2006). For the Greeks, Mount Athos has become a repository of national traditions, where for more than a thousand years kept the Greco-Christian tradition, literature and truly Byzantine rites. It is a sacred storehouse of hitherto unknown sources for research in the field of theology, philosophy, history, Byzantine and post-Byzantine art and Eastern mysticism, as well as a huge museum of precious jewels and treasures of the Greek Orthodox tradition.

Modern studies of Mount Athos are reflected mainly the spiritual and cultural dimensions of the monastic republic, while its unique social system and its relationship with the external environment are overlooked. In this case, the phenomenon Avaton initiates in the European Community the entire spectrum of antagonistic views and brings the individual countries of the Union to heighten anti-religious sentiment. Secularized Europe is putting pressure on Greece, which Samuel Huntington in his book "The Clash of Civilizations" characterizes as

"Orthodox outsider among Western organizations" (Huntington, 2003). Greece in many ways is not a part of Western civilization, but in the meantime it has spawned classical civilization, which has become an important source for the west. In view of such historical background most acutely perceived now those differences of economic, social and religious character with which it is faced with a development project of a united Europe.

In this monastic republic of Athos, persists in many traditional ways of Byzantine hermits, is incompatible with the European reality anachronism. The main argument against Athos in the space of Europe has been precisely set in the 11th century Avaton, contrary to all the liberal principles of modern Western society.

This religious phenomenon is expressed in the strict ban on the entry and residence in the monastery of the opposite sex. In this case, under the persons of the opposite - "other" gender refers to the actual women, eunuchs, individuals who have changed their gender identity and sexual orientation. Monastic Republic of Athos, located on the territory of Northern Greece and actually existing within the European Union, is the object of permanent conflict of various organizations defending the rights of the above mentioned categories of persons who oppose the constitutional principles of the United Europe millennial socio-religious phenomenon (Shkarovsky, 2010). Avaton ancient Orthodox Republic for secularized European society - is primarily an anachronism and an invalid element of gender discrimination.

### *3.2 Interpretation of the definition*

The notion Avaton meaning "untouchable" goes back to antiquity. Initially, the term was used to describe the limit of the Temple, where only the priests had access. In the writings of Greek archaeologists are mentioning the existence of Avaton on the peninsula of Athos, populated by servants of the pagan cults. Avaton is in the list of prohibitions and restrictions to function in other areas of worship in Greece - Delphi and Olympia. The word is often associated Avaton ancient Greek sacred forests and groves, which was inhabited by the Deity, and mere mortals were forbidden to approach them under pain of damnation (Kirsopp, 2009).

With the spread of monasticism in the Christian East, the Greek term transformed and transferred its value to the new religious environment. Avaton came into use as a term for a set of rules that prohibit entry of certain categories of persons within the monastery. In the Catholic Church there are similar rules, referred to the Latin term *clausura*.

Avaton more broadly includes a ban on the entry and residence in the monastery of the opposite sex. Prohibition applies as eunuchs, children and persons who have changed their gender identity and sexual orientation. Athos monastic republic is characterized by a more rigorous implementation of these restrictions, as expressed in the presence of inadmissibility on the peninsula of female animals. Unauthorized Republic are those of non-Christian religion, especially the followers of organizations whose ideology can be regarded as antipathy towards Orthodoxy (Majewski, 2009).

Monastic way of life assumes that the Gospel commandments of poverty, chastity, obedience and adherence to the definition of "the statute." All the daily and spiritual life of a monk regulates charter. Monk a man who decided to devote his whole life to God, achieve moral perfection. Choosing his way, and based on the Christian tradition, to strive to be the set of rules and prohibitions, which is the basis of his ministry. Athos as a monastic community, acts more protected area, which preserves all the prerequisites for a fruitful monastic ministry.

Categorical ban on the entry and residence of persons of the opposite sex is sacred in the strict sense and it follows from the very essence of monasticism. Same-sex monastic society is one of its basic principles. Violation Avaton as tradition and as a basis for the existence of the republic itself may cause serious changes and lead to catastrophic consequences for Athos. Monks themselves lifting of the ban is associated directly with the eschatological expectations that clearly express their concerns and position on this issue.

Athos monk is a socio-cultural phenomenon with its own characteristics. By its very nature a form of expression of the religious organization of people's lives, it suggests a number of peculiar only to him the rules and restrictions. Monastic community, while in well-defined natural boundaries, and under the protection of the

social and ethical barrier - Avaton for centuries allows you to save a unique closed social system based on three main principles: abstinence, poverty and humility (Anthony-Emil, 2003). Avaton Mount Athos is one of the most characteristic and stable (known for about 1000 years) examples of building the physical boundaries of the gender division. And right now in Europe today there is a complete lack of understanding of the problem of preserving the identity of this unique society and the historical and cultural heritage of the Holy Mountain.

### 3.3 View of the problem

Today, there are a large number of feminist organizations set a goal to seek the abolition of avaton Holy Mountain as an unacceptable element of discrimination against women in Europe. Such communities are actively created in the European Internet. Known for more than a hundred forums express the attitude of European citizens of both sexes in this subject, participation of several thousand people also confirms the interest of the public. The greatest number of opponents of the ban can be found among the citizens of Sweden, France and Germany. It is also important to note that sociological studies in Greece show a positive attitude towards tradition. More than 90% of Greek women were in favour of the need to preserve Avaton Mount Athos (Maximos, 2009).

It can be noted that the essence of the conflict Orthodox monastic republic and secularized Europe, lying in the plane of the gender restrictions Avaton, in our opinion has a dual interpretation. On the one hand, the confrontation of social and cultural traditions of the conservative Byzantinism, and in his face - the Christian East - and the combined ideas of secular humanism of the West. On the other hand, the socio-political perspective of the conflict is closely linked with the process of globalization. European Union itself is formed under the influence of globalization trends, an essential feature of which is the destruction of borders, national, cultural, religious and other differences. The existence of such a closed system at the base, which is discrimination based on sex, in Europe, is seen as a throwback to a western man, and threatens the very basis of a single constitutional Union. At the same time it is unilaterally ignored by international humanitarian law, which implies the inadmissibility of the opposition of any one right or freedom to others.

In our view, the problem of limiting women's access to Mount Athos as a tourist object does not lie in the plane of gender discrimination, and is an indispensable condition for the preservation of a unique society, having a world historical and cultural significance. Considering each case gender restrictions in tourism, it is important to take into account its validity in the socio-cultural context.

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