The footprint of ethnic women in the community through art crafts for tourists:

A case of Baluchis in Iran

Abstract: Research shows that tourism plays a paradoxical role in the preservation of traditional art crafts and in the empowering of ethnic communities. It provides means and justifications for arts crafts’ revival, but it may also commoditize and trivialize cultural production. Tourism can bring economic and social benefits to ethnic communities, but also result in conflicts or loss of cultural pride. This paper contributes to this ongoing academic debate by providing insights on an ethnic community of a tourism destination in the first stages of development. The theoretical concept of “footprint” is applied to examine the case of ethnic women in the Baluchis community in Iran. Baluchis women produce a unique form of pottery (Kalpuregan) as art craft and souvenir for tourists. Kalpuregan pottery is a reputed artwork of the Baluch ethnic group that is being produced exclusively by women and is related to prehistoric cultural heritage. Archeological studies show that Baluchis women have protected this form of cultural heritage for thousands of years and transferred it from generation to generation. Fieldwork was the methodological frame adopted in this study, including specific methods such as interviews, visual ethnography and participant observation. Findings show how the production of art crafts helps women in Iran Baluchistan to have fundamental footprint in the society.

Keywords: Art crafts, Ethnic women, Tourism, Kalpurgan village, Iran