

HISTORICAL STAGES IN THE FORMATION AND INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUKHARA STATE MUSEUM-RESERVE

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Abstract:

This article studies the process of the establishment of the museum-reserve, its institutional formation, the evolution of the management system, and its activities in the field of protection and promotion of cultural heritage based on historical sources.

Keywords: Bukhara State Museum-Reserve, cultural heritage, museology, historical monuments, scientific research, digitization, cultural tourism, national values, spiritual and educational activities.

Introduction

Museums are scientific and educational institutions that preserve the treasury of our rich history and unique culture, undertaking the collection, conservation, study, and dissemination of historical, material, and spiritual heritage. As one of the cradles of ancient civilization, every region of our country possesses a distinctive historical legacy. Museums play an indispensable role in identifying, safeguarding, researching, and promoting historical, tangible, and intangible cultural monuments associated with the nation's past. In the Republic of Uzbekistan, particularly in a period marked by an increasing respect for and attention to historical values, museums have acquired heightened significance as key institutions for historical scholarship and for transmitting cultural heritage to future generations.

Within the framework of developing a tourism association complex in Bukhara, a comprehensive and systematically planned proposal was advanced in accordance with clearly defined functional objectives. The project prioritized the preservation and restoration of the historic environment in the central part of the Old City, as well as the resolution of existing infrastructural and conservation challenges.

This initiative, developed by A.V. Kazanskiy and O.L. Nazaryans, rejected an earlier proposal that had envisaged the construction of Bukhara's principal tourist center in the newly developed part of the city. The dismissed project was considered economically inefficient and potentially detrimental, as it risked isolating the city from meaningful structural transformation for a prolonged period. Moreover, the allocated financial resources would not have been directed toward restoring the historical appearance of the Old City—the true cultural treasury of Bukhara—or toward conserving its architectural monuments.

In contrast, the newly proposed project focused on the revitalization and development of the city's historic central zone. Such an approach, in our view, fosters increased public and scholarly interest in the historical core and contributes to a transformation in attitudes toward cultural heritage preservation.

Substantial funding was allocated for large-scale restoration and improvement works within the museum-reserve territory. Restoration and conservation interventions were initiated to prevent further deterioration of historically significant buildings that were at risk of structural decay. These measures marked an important step toward safeguarding Bukhara's architectural and cultural legacy within a sustainable heritage management framework.

The integration and reconstruction of the historically fragmented domed trading arcades—such as Toqi Zargaron and Toqi Telpakfurushon—were incorporated into the revitalization strategy. The project envisioned restoring their functional continuity while adapting them to contemporary tourism needs. Within these spaces, souvenir salons, kiosks, artisan workshop-shops, traditional handicraft outlets, vendors of historical and refreshing beverages, and small-scale national cuisine establishments were introduced. Commercial activities under the domes were organized in accordance with their historical specialization (for example, Toqi Telpakfurushon for headwear and Toqi Zargaron for jewelry), thereby preserving their traditional economic identity.

This approach stimulated the revival of Old City commerce and created an integrated link between tourist associations and major heritage attractions. Importantly, it provided visitors with structured opportunities for meaningful leisure engagement within the historic urban environment.

Exhibitions and trade fairs also played a significant role in strengthening Bukhara's international economic relations. During the 1980s, products from Bukhara enterprises were presented at exhibitions and fairs in Leipzig, Brussels, Tehran, London, Izmir, Damascus, Zagreb, Rangoon, Budapest, Prague, Naples, Sofia, and other global cities. In addition to karakul (astrakhan) products and national souvenirs, Bukhara's wine production received high international recognition.

Markets in Bukhara's historic center were reconstructed and adapted to tourism infrastructure requirements. These bazaars, rich in oriental goods and folk applied arts, attracted visitors with their authentic atmosphere. However, the often-disorganized presentation of handcrafted items necessitated systematic classification and spatial organization to enhance both aesthetic and commercial effectiveness.

Beginning in 1977, architectural projects developed by M.N. Gimatulin and V.V. Kim initiated the state protection and adaptive reuse of residential buildings located in Bukhara's historic quarter. Protected properties were subject to expert evaluation, and unauthorized alterations by residents were strictly regulated.

Cultural exhibitions of folk crafts, history, and archaeology were installed in Ulugbek and Abdulazizkhan madrasahs, as well as in the Magoki Attori Mosque, integrating these monuments into the tourism service network. The Bukhara tourist center complex was designed to accommodate up to 500 visitors per day and to provide diversified services. The “free travel”

concept within cultural tourism routes also became an important component. Experimental retail outlets showcasing Bukhara's handicrafts and applied arts were established to promote supplementary tourism services.

From the southern walls of the Ark fortress to the former coppersmiths' quarter (Arroki Misgari), rare examples of the Bukhara school of applied arts were exhibited. Historically, this area had functioned as a commercial and artisanal zone. Taking into account that metal casters traditionally resided near Abdulazizkhan Madrasah, specialized artisan trading rows were reintroduced in that area. Similarly, blacksmith stalls were established in the Toqi Telpakfurushon district, reinforcing historical continuity in urban craft zoning.

The Central Council of the Uzbek SSR assigned the Ministry of Culture the task of developing proposals for the creation of a unified state authority responsible for the protection, use, and restoration of cultural monuments. In accordance with this directive, the "Me'mor" Republican Scientific-Restoration Production Association was established in 1976. This organization accelerated restoration and urban improvement initiatives across numerous historic cities and facilitated the organization of internationally significant events. By the end of 1980, more than 7,000 immovable cultural monuments had been officially registered and classified under union, republican, or local protection status.

The comprehensive development plan for republican tourism associations defined restoration priorities up to the 1990s, emphasizing the need for integrated rehabilitation of historic city centers—not only restoring monumental structures but also preserving surrounding traditional residential buildings. Rapid growth in domestic and international tourism necessitated extensive interventions in historic cities. Effective museification of architectural monuments and restoration of historical urban topography required a single responsible management authority for the entire heritage complex.

It is well recognized that the cultural heritage of any nation extends beyond architectural monuments created by architects, artisans, and scholars; it also encompasses intangible assets such as music, folklore, festivals, customs, and ritual practices. Therefore, the creation of open-air museum exhibitions demanded interdisciplinary collaboration among ethnography, folklore studies, and art history to ensure both historical authenticity and aesthetic coherence.

The responsibility for safeguarding and managing cultural heritage was assigned to the Department for the Protection and Use of Cultural Monuments. Its principal functions included: identification, registration, and documentation of monuments; supervision of restoration and use regardless of institutional affiliation; preparation of protective documentation; inclusion of architectural monuments in official balance records; urgent archaeological interventions; protection of monumental art, historical buildings, and landscape-park heritage; and preservation of valuable interior elements. These responsibilities underscore the department's critical institutional role.

In 1983, pursuant to a resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Uzbek SSR, the Bukhara State Historical-Architectural Museum-Reserve was established on the basis of the Bukhara Regional Museum of Local History and its architectural monuments, together with the regional

heritage inspection authority. The Executive Committee of Bukhara City approved the protection zones and boundaries of the museum-reserve.

In accordance with the resolution “On the Protection and Use of Historical and Cultural Monuments,” the Main Scientific-Production Directorate for Cultural Monuments under the Ministry of Culture was entrusted with overseeing the protection, utilization, and restoration of movable and immovable heritage, as well as developing visual, decorative-applied, and monumental arts. It was also responsible for organizing museum and exhibition activities and initiating new monument projects.

During the 1980s, the Research and Design Institute for the Restoration of Monuments of Uzbekistan was established in Tashkent. Functioning as a scientific center for architectural conservation, urban planning, preservation of ancient territories, and adaptation for tourism, the institute was founded on the basis of a specialized restoration and design workshop. It conducted studies of historic urban zones, identified protected objects, and developed projects for historical-architectural and ethnographic museum-reserves.

This scientific institution became the principal successor to restoration initiatives carried out across Central Asian republics. Based on its research and design projects, major architectural monuments in Bukhara, Samarkand, Khiva, Shahrisabz, Termez, Kokand, and Tashkent were restored, significantly contributing to the preservation and revitalization of Uzbekistan’s historical urban heritage.

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