

THE HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUMS IN THE SAMARKAND REGION DURING THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE.

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Annotation: This article provides a scientific and theoretical analysis of the significant changes and developmental processes in the museum system of the Samarkand region since Uzbekistan gained independence. In particular, the article highlights the role of museums in preserving the region's historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage, the increasing number and quality of museums, the enrichment of exhibitions and exhibits, and the transition of museum activities to a new stage through the use of modern technologies. Furthermore, it discusses how state programs implemented during the independence period, local initiatives, and international cooperation have contributed to the development of the scientific, educational, and cultural functions of museums in the Samarkand region, thereby attracting wider public engagement. This article may be of value to researchers, students, and specialists in fields such as museology, history, and cultural studies.

Keywords: years of independence, Samarkand region, history of museums, cultural heritage, museology, scientific and educational activity, modern technologies, exhibition, exhibit, historical monuments, state programs.

Introduction:

After the Republic of Uzbekistan gained independence, special attention began to be paid to issues of national identity, the restoration of historical memory, and the preservation of cultural heritage. In particular, the modernization of the museum system and the enhancement of their scientific, educational, and moral significance became one of the priority directions of state policy. This is because museums serve as invaluable sources for transmitting a nation's historical, cultural, and aesthetic values to future generations.

As stated in the Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, dated August 26, 2018, “On Measures for the Innovative Development of Culture and Art in the Republic of Uzbekistan,” one of the key tasks defined is the improvement of museum infrastructure in accordance with international standards, the enhancement of their information and communication potential, and the advancement of interactive service levels¹.

Based on this resolution, today state museums are introducing "smart" technologies — information kiosks, 3D visualization and holograms, QR codes, and electronic guides operating in several foreign languages².

These technological innovations are enabling the modernization of museums’ scientific and educational activities, as well as creating an interactive and comprehensible environment for visitors.

Furthermore, based on Presidential Decree No. PQ-261 dated May 27, 2023, “On Measures for the Development of the Service Sector in Museums,” the service system in museum activities has been elevated to a qualitatively new level. Within the framework of this document, practical measures are being implemented to create conveniences for museum visitors, introduce modern service facilities, and improve the efficiency of the use of cultural heritage sites.

In particular, within the framework of the above-mentioned Presidential Decree No. PQ-261 dated May 27, 2023, a number of practical initiatives have been proposed to improve museum activities and strengthen public engagement with cultural heritage³. In particular:

– Since July 1, 2022, a nationwide campaign titled “*My Contribution to the National Heritage!*” has been launched to encourage the transfer of cultural assets held in private collections to the state museum funds. This initiative not only enriches museum collections but also fosters a sense of national identity and responsibility for preserving historical values among citizens;

¹ O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining 26.08.2018 yildagi “O‘zbekiston Respublikasida madaniyat va san’at sohasini innovatsion rivojlantirish chora-tadbirlari to‘g‘risida”gi PQ-3920-son Qarori. // <https://lex.uz/docs/-3882752>

² <https://lex.uz/docs/3882752>

³ O‘zbekiston Respublikasi Prezidentining 27.05.2022 yildagi “Muzeylarda xizmatlar sohasini rivojlantirish chora-tadbirlari to‘g‘risida”gi PQ-261-sonli Qarori. <https://lex.uz/en/docs/-6040013>

– Targeted plans have been developed and are being implemented from 2022 to 2024 to gradually establish exhibitions dedicated to the history of the Uzbek people and statehood, the First and Second Renaissance periods, as well as the lives and scholarly contributions of great thinkers;

– A concept of international cooperation has been developed to expand collaboration in museum activities, establish exchanges with foreign museums, and implement modern management and exhibition methods;

– A program titled “*Journey to the Past*” has been launched to support visits of various social groups — including schoolchildren and students, socially vulnerable populations, persons with disabilities, and senior citizens — to museums and historical-cultural monuments in the country. This initiative aims to bring the general public closer to national history and culture.

Literature Review:

In the years following Uzbekistan's independence, the field of museology has witnessed considerable attention, especially in the context of nation-building, identity formation, and the preservation of cultural heritage. Although some efforts have been made to reconstruct existing museums and establish new ones, and a number of studies have explored specific aspects of museum development, a comprehensive and interdisciplinary approach that offers a systematic analysis of the field is still lacking. There remains a significant need for fundamental research focusing on the transformation of the museum sector, particularly regarding the social and spiritual role of museums, the composition of exhibits, and the broader mission of safeguarding and promoting cultural heritage.

In order to analyze the current state of scholarship on museums in Uzbekistan more effectively, the existing body of literature can be broadly categorized into two main groups:

1. Soviet-era scholarly and historical sources:

This group includes works written during the Soviet period, in which the formation and functions of museums were typically framed within the ideological boundaries of Marxist-Leninist discourse. These sources often emphasized the educational and propagandistic roles of museums, viewing them as institutions designed to support the values of the Soviet regime.

Museum collections, acquisition policies, and exhibition practices were interpreted through a politically charged lens, which limited the scope of academic inquiry. The methodology in these works was generally prescriptive and oriented toward centralized cultural management, leaving little room for alternative narratives or national identity representation.

2. Post-independence research and studies:

The second group comprises studies produced in the years following Uzbekistan's independence in 1991. These works reflect a shift in focus toward national identity, historical consciousness, and the revitalization of cultural memory. Contemporary researchers explore the role of museums in fostering patriotism, strengthening national values, and popularizing intangible cultural heritage. Moreover, there has been an increased emphasis on the use of modern, interactive technologies in museum practices—such as digitalization, smart technologies, and multilingual virtual guides—which aim to transform museums into dynamic, educational spaces for diverse audiences.

These modern studies, often guided by new methodological approaches, advocate for the reinterpretation of museum spaces not just as repositories of artifacts, but as platforms for dialogue, education, and inclusive cultural representation. Notable themes include the social responsibility of museums, the importance of participatory practices, and the integration of international museological standards.

Despite the progress in this area, critical gaps still exist—particularly in the systemic evaluation of institutional reforms, visitor engagement strategies, and long-term impacts of technology adoption in Uzbek museums. Therefore, further research is needed that combines historical insight with empirical case studies and international best practices, particularly as Uzbekistan's museum infrastructure continues to evolve within the framework of state cultural policy and global museology trends.

During the years of independence, certain scientific studies and publications carried out in the field of museum studies in Uzbekistan have served as important steps in the formation and development of this discipline. In particular, articles, educational manuals, and monographs authored by researchers such as M. Bekmurodov, G. Rashidova, R. Almeev, L. Mankovskaya, D. Kuryazova, G. Fuzailova, M. Khasanova, and I. Inamov have addressed various aspects of

museum activities during the independence period, with each contributing to the advancement of the field in its own way⁴.

Additionally, the brochure prepared jointly by B. Davletov and O. Ibragimov can be recognized as an initial stage in the development of modern Uzbek museum studies, and it serves as an important source, particularly for studying the terminology and conceptual system of museum science.⁵

The textbook “Museum Studies” authored by Sh. Ulzhayeva serves as an important scientific and practical manual that provides a general overview of museum work, its historical development, and modern stages during the years of independence. In this research, special attention has been given to the use of the aforementioned literature in relevant sections during the process of covering the topic.

Analyses and results

As one of the ancient historical and cultural centers, Samarkand region holds a special place on the map of museums in Uzbekistan. The archaeological, historical, ethnographic, and art museums located in this area are of great scientific and spiritual significance not only for the local population but also for foreign visitors. Especially during the years of independence, the expansion of activities in these museums, strengthening of their material and technical base, and the establishment of modern exhibitions and interactive displays have further increased social attention towards them.

From this perspective, this article analyzes the historical development of museums operating in the Samarkand region during the independence period, their stages of development, implemented reforms, as well as their role and impact in cultural and educational life. The study draws important conclusions based on official documents related to museum activities, local experiences, and international approaches.

A museum is a historically established multifunctional social and educational information institution that performs the functions of identifying, systematizing, preserving cultural-

⁴ Sodiqova N Madaniy yodgorliklar xazinasi -T.: Fan, 1995. –B. 42.

⁵ Bekmuradov M., Rashidova M Muzeyshunoslik. -T.: Voris Ali, 2006-102b; Al'meev R. Buxoro gorod muzey.- T.: Fan, 1999. –B. 205; Маньковская Л.Ю. Бухара: Музей под открытым небом. -Т.: Гафур Гафуров, 1995-255 ш; Kuryazova D. O'zbekistonda muzey ishi tarixi. -T.: San'at 2010-153b; Fuznilova G. Hasanova Muzevedenie Toshkent: Fan, 2008-192 s; Inamova I Muzevedenie. -T.: Musiq, 2006-357 s

historical and natural-scientific heritage objects, and delivering and promoting them to the public through museum exhibits⁶.

Archaeological monuments and the material evidence found therein are invaluable sources that embody the historical development, spiritual life, and cultural values of a particular people. Therefore, on the global stage, the identification, preservation, and transmission of archaeological heritage to future generations hold urgent scientific and practical significance.

After the Republic of Uzbekistan achieved state independence, extensive reforms and practical efforts have been carried out in the preservation, protection, restoration, and effective use of archaeological monuments. In particular, national cultural heritage sites located in the historic part of Samarkand city have been placed under state protection, and systematic measures have been implemented for their renovation, as well as archaeological and restoration works. As a result of this process, the architectural appearance and historical significance of the area were strengthened, and it emerged as a cultural-educational space meeting modern requirements.

As a result of these extensive efforts, the Samarkand Fortress and its surrounding area were included in 2001 on the UNESCO World Cultural Heritage List under the nomination "Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures." This designated area is divided into three parts and encompasses a total of 513 tangible cultural heritage sites. This prestigious status has contributed not only to local but also international recognition of Samarkand's historical and spiritual importance⁷.

Today, the recognition of this area as part of the world's cultural heritage and its multifaceted history and rich cultural legacy has become an important milestone in introducing it to the global community⁸.

In the Samarkand region, a total of 1,851 tangible cultural heritage objects have been identified: among them, 1,105 are archaeological monuments, 670 are architectural monuments, 37 are specially significant landmarks, 18 are monumental project objects, and 21 are memorials. These heritage sites of various categories provide the opportunity for a

⁶ Davlatov B. Muzeyshunoslik atamalarining izoxli lug'ati. –T.: Fan, 2005 – B. 117

⁷ UNESCO. Cultural Heritage and Museums: International Perspectives. – Paris, 2018. – [Online manba]: www.unesco.org/culture

⁸ Samarqand viloyat hokimligining rasmiy sayti: www.samarkand.uz – (Afrosiyob muzeyi, Ulug'bek rasadxonasi haqidagi ma'lumotlar).

comprehensive and detailed study of the region's history and culture. They were placed under state protection by the decree of the head of state dated November 14, 2013. However, it is necessary to further improve the normative-legal framework and strengthen the active participation of local communities to enhance the effectiveness of preserving cultural and historical objects.

Among the archaeological monuments are historically significant sites such as Robinjon, Charxintepa, Uchtepa (Narpay district), Köktepa (Payariq district), Quldortepa (Urgut district), Arabtepa, Navbog'tepa (Samarkand district), Tillatepa, Bo'ritepa, Kapsatabobotepa (Kattaqo'rg'on district), Kumushkent and Sug'uda (Oqdaryo district), and Mingtepa (Jomboy district).

It should be emphasized that each of these sites has its own unique history, architectural features, and archaeological significance. To illustrate this point, a deeper study is needed on how the trade routes of the Köktepa monument were formed. Additionally, monuments such as the ancient fortress in the village of Sazag'on in Nurobod district, Qo'rg'ontepa in Pastdarg'om district, Langartepa in the village of Ko'prikboshi in Narpay district, Shirinhotintepa in Yonariq village, Qo'shtepa in Urg'unchi village, Sho'rtepa in Xo'jakorson village, as well as Qorovultepa and nearby Mozorqo'rg'on in Payariq district, demonstrate how ancient the history of the region is.

Moreover, these findings represent a true scientific treasure, and it is essential to continuously conduct research and prepare scientific publications on them to provide future generations with rich spiritual and cultural heritage.

Efforts have already begun to assign internationally compliant codes to archaeological monuments, create high-quality photographs for documenting their current condition, prepare topographical maps, and determine GPS coordinates. At the same time, such a comprehensive approach is crucial for protecting these monuments and presenting them to a wider public.

However, to deepen this process, it is necessary to train local engineers and specialists, equip them with modern technology and tools, and expand cooperation with grant programs and international organizations. It is also appropriate to create a primary multidimensional database to preserve and analyze these monuments in a holistic manner.

The results of the study allow us to say that it is necessary to strengthen cooperation between schools and higher education institutions in the scientific research of archaeological monuments in the Samarkand region. In addition, it is advisable to invigorate the exchange of experience by organizing scientific roundtables, seminars, and conferences involving national and international scholars.

Such activities not only help to better preserve the appearance of the monuments but also foster love and respect for historical heritage among the younger generation, encouraging their participation in scientific work.

In conclusion, it can be said that the archaeological monuments in the Samarkand region and the measures being taken to preserve and protect them hold great significance. However, in my opinion, to fully realize their social, cultural, and economic potential, it is necessary to further improve scientific approaches, advanced technologies, and systems for actively involving the community. This will serve as a foundation for more effectively showcasing Samarkand's rich historical and cultural heritage and transforming it into a distinctive tourist and scientific center in the future.

The Samarkand City History Museum was established in 1970 in the Afrosiyob settlement — the ancient part of Samarkand that existed before the Mongol invasion. The museum preserves over 20,000 cultural heritage artifacts spanning the city's history from the middle of the first millennium BCE to the early 13th century CE. The exhibition, consisting of 11 halls, displays rare relics such as pottery, glass, stone, metal, bone, and architectural decorations related to the political, cultural, religious, and economic life of Samarkand as the center of Sogdiana.

On the first floor, exhibits focus on the Afrosiyob settlement and the Sogdian period history. The central hall features a depiction of the "Hall of Ambassadors" from the palace of the Sogdian ruler Varkhuman. On the occasion of Samarkand's 2750th anniversary, the museum's second floor was completely renovated and enriched with exhibits illustrating the culture and history of the Muslim Renaissance period from the 9th to 13th centuries.

The Samarkand City History Museum successfully fulfills not only the preservation of artifacts but also the important mission of presenting them to the wider public on a scientific and educational basis.

The Ulugh Beg Observatory, built in 1429 by Mirzo Ulugh Beg on the Kohak hill near Samarkand, is a unique scientific monument in world astronomy. The three-story cylindrical structure, with a diameter of 60 meters, houses a double-arc quadrant with a radius of 40 meters and an angle of 90 degrees. This quadrant rises 31 meters above ground level, while its base extends 11 meters deep into the mountain.

Near the observatory, a museum was established in 2010, playing an important role in honoring the legacy of Ulugh Beg. The museum opens with a portrait of Ulugh Beg by master artist A. Ikromjonov and features words about him by President Islam Karimov.

The museum exhibits include maps from the Timurid Empire, letters from European monarchs, portraits of Ulugh Beg and other scholars of his era, the “Zij” astronomical tables, qibla indicators, and various models. Additionally, the exhibition displays an image of a newly discovered planet named “Samarkand,” found in 2009 at the Maydanak observatory in Kitab. This symbolizes the continuity of the astronomical heritage that began with this historic observatory and extends to the present day.

Conclusions

Since Uzbekistan gained independence, there have been profound changes in preserving the country’s historical heritage and instilling it into the consciousness of the wider public, especially the younger generation. Such transformations are clearly visible in the activities of museums in the Samarkand region. During the years of independence, existing museums in this area have been renewed, their exhibitions enriched, scientific research improved, and rapid development based on modern museology approaches has taken place.

Using the Afrosiyob History Museum as an example, the rich scientific reconstruction of historical processes from ancient times to the early 13th century, based on archaeological findings, has firmly affirmed Samarkand’s status as an ancient cultural center. The museum’s rich collection, exhibition structure, and accuracy of historical facts have made it a relevant scientific source not only locally but also internationally.

Moreover, the activities of the Ulugh Beg Observatory and its adjoining museum, the extensive modern interpretation of the great scholar’s legacy, and the harmonious combination of scientific-historical artifacts, models, ancient manuscripts, artworks, and examples of calligraphy in the exhibitions turn this museum into a direct symbol of medieval scientific

achievements. The displayed “Zij” work, quadrant model, 17th-century engravings, qibla indicators, and the exhibit about the modern “Samarkand” planet all demonstrate the continuity of the history of scientific progress.

During the independence period, not only the exhibitions but also the scientific, cultural-educational, and pedagogical roles of museums have fundamentally changed. Today, museums in the Samarkand region serve as important tools for educating the younger generation in patriotism, national values, and respect for historical memory. Thanks to the attention and investments provided by the country’s leadership, museums are now equipped with modern technologies, digitalization efforts are underway, and international cooperation is expanding.

Summarizing the above, it can be said that museums in the Samarkand region during the years of independence have distinguished themselves not only as places preserving tangible cultural heritage but also as scientific, cultural, and spiritual-educational centers. Their activities serve as a crucial factor in deeply studying the historical roots of the Uzbek national identity, promoting the rich spiritual heritage of the people, and integrating it into the global scientific community.

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