

EXPLORING THE ROLE OF THE SAMARKAND STATE MUSEUM-RESERVE IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF MUSEUM TOURISM (SECOND HALF OF THE 20TH CENTURY - EARLY 21ST CENTURY)

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Abstract: This article examines the processes involved in the preservation, study, and promotion of cultural heritage sites within the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve in the context of museum tourism development. Particular attention is paid to key challenges and priorities of museum tourism, including the analysis of visitor needs, seasonal patterns, service planning, and revenue generation. The study highlights the role of the museum-reserve in enhancing the attractiveness of cultural heritage and contributing to the development of tourism.

Keywords: Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, monuments of historical and cultural heritage, project competition, museification, tourist complexes, projects, museum tourism, museum management and marketing

From the mid-1960s, significant efforts were undertaken in cities possessing historical and cultural heritage sites to preserve the surviving parts of ancient structures and to adapt them for use as tourist attractions. In 1975, a decision was made to establish open-air architectural and ethnographic zones in the historical cities and regional centers of the republic, with the aim of providing a visual representation of past material and cultural life. In 1976, in order to promote cultural tourism in Samarkand, a design competition was announced for the comprehensive planning of the historic center and the development of tourist complexes. By the end of the 20th century, the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve had carried out effective activities to attract visitors; however, these efforts were largely limited to the distribution of printed materials and, later, to the promotion of exhibits through modern social media platforms.

Literature directly addressing the activities of Samarkand museums and their role in tourism development remains relatively limited. One of the earliest works in this field is a study by M. S. Yusupov devoted to the history of the Samarkand Museum. Published to mark the 50th anniversary of the museum, this brochure is primarily of a popular science nature, combining historical overview with general

informational content rather than in-depth academic analysis.¹ In the article by G.Ya.Upfal and E. B. Zabrodina, an attempt is made to clarify the date of the establishment of the Samarkand Museum, and information regarding its first collection is presented. The study contributes to a more precise understanding of the early history of the museum and the formation of its initial holdings.² In the article by R. Kayumov, the main stages in the historical development of the Samarkand Museum are outlined. However, the study contains several inconsistencies regarding dates and the museum's institutional orientation³. In another article by the same author, the international relations of the Samarkand Museum during the period of independence are briefly presented in a concise form⁴. The study employs methods of problem-based and chronological analysis, sequential periodization, systematization, external, structural, and comparative analysis, as well as generalization.

In 1975-1979, restoration works were carried out on the Registan ensemble in Samarkand. A special working group was established, including architects A. Zaynutdinov and K. Kryukov, as well as restoration specialists A. Kuliyeu, M. Asadov, and T. Kurbanov⁵. According to the plan, the significance of the monuments in urban planning terms was strengthened and restored, conditions for their viewing and perception were improved, and structures incompatible with the historical environment and diminishing the value of the monuments were removed. Wherever possible, historical buildings and architecturally valuable carved structures contributing to the aesthetic environment were fully restored. A panoramic площадка titled "Heart of Ancient Samarkand" was opened in the center of the Registan ensemble. An amphitheater with a capacity of 1,000 seats was also constructed for cultural events. In 1978, the International Musical Symposium "Shashmaqom" was held here. On July 14, 1979, the grand opening of the Museum-Reserve took place⁶.

According to the itinerary, the tour continued from Tashkent to Samarkand. The program included the world-renowned monuments of Samarkand, such as the Afrasiab archaeological site, Registan Square, the Shah-i-Zinda complex, the Gur-e Amir Mausoleum, the Bibi-Khanym Mosque, the Ulughbek Observatory, and other architectural monuments of the Timurid era. In addition, training courses for excursion bureau staff were organized on the basis of the central museum, and productive work was carried out within the framework of international cooperation.

¹ Юсупов М.С. 50-лет Самаркандского музея (1896–1946 гг.). – Самарканд, 1948. – 58 б

² Упфал Г.Я., Забродин Е.Б. К вопросу о дате возникновения Самаркандского музея. Очерки истории музейного дела в СССР. вып-7, М., 1971, - С. 400-413.

³ Каюмов Р. Самарканд давлат бирлашган тарихий-меъморий ва бадий музей-кўриқхонаси. Мозийдан садо. Т., 2015. №3(67) 44-46-бетлар.

⁴ Каюмов Р. Самарканд давлат музей-кўриқхонасининг халқаро алоқалари. Мозийдан садо. Т., 2005. №4 (28). 11-бет.

⁵ Крюков К.С., Худойкулов А.Х., Арадовский Я.Л. Восстановление ансамбля Регистан в Самарканде // Архитектура и строительство Узбекистана. – 1982. № 2. – С. 18.

⁶ Там же – С. 19.

Since 1977, the Samarkand Museum has been actively engaged in international activities as a collective member of the International Council of Museums. In 1981, a regional conference of the International Council of Museums was held at the Samarkand Museum⁷. The conference addressed issues related to the system of conservation of museumified immovable objects, the conduct of research activities, and the storage of exhibits in accordance with established regulatory requirements.

In 1982, the Samarkand United Historical-Architectural and Art Museum-Reserve was established on the basis of this museum. The reserve included the State Museum of the History of Culture of Uzbekistan, the regional local history museum, and the Museum of the History of the Founding of Samarkand in the Afrasiab settlement, as well as the memorial museums of Mirzo Ulugbek and Sadriddin Aini, the historical and local history museum of Kattakurgan city, the museums of the history of the Isti khan and Pakhtachi districts, the Mausoleum of Amir Temur, the Bibi-Khanym complex, the Hazrati Khizr Mosque, the Nadir Devonbegi Madrasah, and the Mausoleum of Khodja Doniyor⁸.

In the development and organization of tourist routes in Samarkand, primary attention was given to harmonizing the modern life of the city with the activities of the tourist complex. In addition, the objective was set to create the most favorable conditions for the full observation and appreciation of the Registan, Gur-e-Amir, and Bibi-Khanym complexes, which are the main sites of tourist routes. According to the itinerary, the journey continued from Samarkand to Bukhara. Tourists visited the Mausoleum of Ismail Samani, the Magoki Attori Mosque (10th-12th centuries), the trading domes (tim) at major crossroads, and the Kalan Mosque and Minaret (16th-17th centuries) in Bukhara, which was a major center of the medieval Islamic world. On July 29, 1969, a joint decree of the Ministry of Culture of the Uzbek SSR and the Directorate for Foreign Tourism titled "On Improving the Sphere of Artistic Services for Foreign Tourists" was adopted⁹. In that year, the 2,500th anniversary of the city of Samarkand was celebrated. As part of the jubilee activities, students specializing in foreign languages were also involved in excursion services as volunteers.

In 1973, the Samarkand Excursion Bureau became the main center for organized tourist services in the city. A series of tours launched by the Bureau under the title "Historical and Architectural Monuments of Samarkand" provided visitors with an opportunity to explore the city's rich historical heritage, architectural landmarks, and museums. In addition, the Bureau expanded its activities by organizing excursions to other major cultural centers of Uzbekistan, including Tashkent, Bukhara, and

⁷ Махмудов Н, Қаюмов Р. Самарқанд музей дурдоналари. Каталог. «Ўзбекистон маданият тарихи давлат музейи». – Тошкент: «Мозийдан садо» журнали тахририяти томонидан нашрга тайёрланган. 2004. – Б. 39.

⁸ Ўзбекистон Миллий энциклопедияси. 7-жилд // Қаюмов Р. Самарқанд бадий музей-қўриқхонаси – Тошкент: «Ўзбекистон Миллий энциклопедияси» Давлат илмий нашриёти. 2004. – Б. 462–463.

⁹ ЎзР МДА, Р - 2753-жамғарма, 1-рўйхат, 47-иш, 2-варак.

Shakhrisabz¹⁰. The sharp increase in tourist flows necessitated a significant expansion in the circulation of tourist publications. The number of foreign tourists arriving in Uzbekistan exceeded 100,000 people annually, while only around 150 copies of informational materials (in various languages) were available for them, which proved insufficient. At the same time, the training of qualified specialists in this field and the development of methodological manuals for guides became increasingly challenging.

To address this issue, annual training courses for tour guides were organized by the Samarkand Bureau of Travel and Excursions. Considerable practical support in the development of excursion activities was also provided by museums and theatrical ensembles of Samarkand. Museum researchers actively participated in the training of guides and the creation of high-quality exhibitions, while theater professionals not only contributed to the development of public speaking skills but also performed concerts for tourists at local tourist bases¹¹. By 1980, a network of qualified tour guides had been established across the republic, working in more than 800 tourism and excursion organizations, as well as at 133 enterprises and 54 museums. In order to further improve the quality of excursion services, a professional competition titled "Best Tour Guide of the Republican Council for Tourism and Excursions" was introduced¹².

Since 2000, in order to promote Uzbekistan's rich historical and cultural heritage abroad, film projects have been produced in cooperation with UNESCO and German television as part of the series "World Heritage and Heritage of Humanity," focusing on the cities of Samarkand, Khiva, and Bukhara. In particular, the films *"Three Roads to Samarkand"* and *"Bukhara - Pearl of the Silk Road"* provided extensive information about masterpieces of museumized architecture, as well as monumental mosques and mausoleums. The production of a large number of documentary films plays an important role in collecting, studying, and popularizing factual information about heritage sites, and is expected to contribute significantly to the development of cultural tourism.

At the same time, it should be noted that many of the current exhibitions within the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve are outdated and no longer meet contemporary requirements. For example, the exhibition of the State Museum of the History of Culture of Uzbekistan was opened in 2014 after the museum's relocation to a new building and has remained largely unchanged since then. The "Embroidery" and "Textiles" exhibitions, previously displayed only in the main hall of the art department, were completed in 2021; subsequently, the textile display was replaced with an exhibition of paintings, while a new scientific concept was developed for an

¹⁰ ЎзР МДА, Р-2776 жамғарма, 1-рўйхат, 87-иш, 15-варак.

¹¹ ЎзР МДА, Р-2776-жамғарма, 1-рўйхат, 87-иш, 16-варак.

¹² Хизматингиздамиз, одамлар // Совет Ўзбекистони. 1980 йил 24 декабрь.

exhibition based on materials from the Baysun expedition to replace the embroidery section. Two departments located on the first floor of the museum are primarily used for permanent and temporary exhibitions, while other sections operate on a periodic basis.

Since 2014, no re-exhibition has been carried out in the history and ethnography department. The technical equipment of the exhibitions is also outdated, and in recent years no significant efforts have been made to introduce innovative technologies into the museum's work. Staff members responsible for this area (including the chief engineer and employees of the tourism and marketing department) have been unable to fully perform their duties, and many of their proposals have not been taken into consideration. It is also important to emphasize that the museum building is adapted rather than purpose-built, which significantly limits the full realization of the institution's potential.

The main part of the exposition of the regional local history museum is based on displays created in the 1980s. A relatively new exhibition was introduced in 2009 under the title "Jews of the Region: Past and Present." However, proposals by museum staff to update the exhibitions, along with the development of a new scientific concept, were not submitted to the administration. Existing displays in the history and nature departments also do not fully represent the region's historical and natural heritage and remain technically at the level of the 1980s. The museum's furniture collection is noteworthy mainly for its contribution to the interior design of exhibition halls rather than for its independent value.

An exhibition dedicated to the life of the Jadids of the region was completed with the establishment of the M. Behbudi Museum. However, over time, no new exhibition has been developed to replace the vacated display space, leaving an important thematic gap in the museum's presentation.

In addition to the above, it should be noted that the shortcomings related to museum exhibitions within the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve are not isolated but are common to museums across Uzbekistan. This situation is primarily explained, firstly, by the fact that most museums are located in adapted, non-purpose-built buildings, and secondly, by the shortage of qualified specialists in the technical design and equipment of exhibitions.

In Tashkent, this field is supported by qualified experts and private companies. However, such professionals are largely absent in the regions. These circumstances have also led to the involvement of foreign specialists in the design and construction of the new building and exhibition halls of the State Museum of Arts of Uzbekistan.

Another significant issue is the very limited number of companies in Uzbekistan that produce equipment for museums and libraries. Existing producers often supply low-quality products, which in many cases leads to operational difficulties with

installed equipment, such as display cases. Furthermore, the development of scientific concepts-which form the basis for the creation of exhibitions-as well as thematic planning, is often carried out at an insufficient level. Many researchers lack relevant experience, show limited motivation for scientific work, and this directly affects the quality of exhibition design and implementation.

At present, equipping museums in Uzbekistan in accordance with modern standards has become a matter of state importance. In response to these challenges, the Agency of Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports is currently developing technical standards for museum exhibition equipment with the involvement of qualified specialists.

Currently, one of the key tasks of museum marketing worldwide is the analysis of visitor needs, forecasting visitor profiles with regard to seasonal variations, identifying services that museums can provide in the future, assessing visitors' purchasing power, and determining opportunities for museums to generate revenue.

At the same time, most museums in Uzbekistan, including the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve, derive income primarily from entrance tickets and guided tour services. Nevertheless, some additional service activities have been introduced within certain museum systems. For example, at the Mirzo Ulugbek Museum Complex, services include wedding photo sessions for newlyweds, city viewing through binoculars, photo sessions with pigeons for couples, as well as the sale of printed materials. At the Afrasiab Museum, services include a café, a souvenir and publications shop, and a cinema hall. Souvenir and printed material shops also operate at the Amir Timur Mosque and the mausoleums of Amir Timur. However, in many other museums and heritage sites, such service-oriented activities remain underdeveloped.

Meanwhile, in almost all CIS countries, museums are classified as non-profit institutions. However, this status has not prevented them from actively developing diverse service offerings. In most CIS countries, the production and sale of replicas of museum objects is a well-established practice rather than an innovation. The Bukhara State Museum-Reserve has accumulated significant experience in this area. On the one hand, such activities enhance marketing efforts; on the other hand, they make an important contribution to the wider promotion and popularization of museums.

Conducting marketing research in the development and outfitting of museum exhibitions also contributes to increasing visitor numbers. In particular, shortcomings can be observed in areas such as the insufficient consideration of different age groups and the lack of a visitor-oriented approach in exhibition design. For instance, overcrowding exhibition halls with display cases filled with objects does not always meet the expectations and interests of visitors.

Revitalizing work in this direction and widely implementing modern marketing technologies within the museum system is an essential requirement of contemporary development. The activities of branches within museum-reserve systems are now widely promoted through websites and social media platforms, where newly organized exhibitions (announcements and updates) as well as unique and rare museum objects are actively presented to the public.

In Samarkand, all monuments currently included in the tourist routes were museumified during the period under consideration. In some of them, exhibition spaces were also established. These museumified monuments were brought together under the Samarkand State Museum-Reserve. Although, like other museum-reserves, it was initially designated as an "historical, architectural, and artistic" institution, it was unable to fully develop its activities in line with this status.

The main reasons for this included a shortage of qualified personnel, as well as the fact that museums were primarily viewed by the Soviet authorities as instruments for ideological propaganda. As a result, the influence of the museum-reserve remained limited to the monuments and museums included within its structure.

The incomplete transformation of museums into genuine cultural and educational institutions, along with the absence of a scientifically grounded management program within the Ministry of Culture, led to a relatively weak level of research activity in museums. Consequently, both exhibition and publishing work remained unsatisfactory. A significant portion of exhibitions was dominated by displays promoting communist ideology.

Moreover, there were no clear regulations or instructions governing the transfer and presentation of museum objects for temporary or traveling exhibitions at the republican or international level. This significantly restricted the ability of museums to showcase their collections more widely, reduce their outreach potential, and increase financial revenues.

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