

The Architecture of Zarafshon Monuments

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Keywords: Central Asia, Registan, Bukhara, Karmana, Deggarani, Historical Process, Natural Climate, Islamic Religion, Heritage, Middle Age, Architectural Structure, Remains, Ruins, Archival Data, Monument, Mosque, Mausoleum, Minaret, Dome, Pediment, Column, Khonimariq, Varq, Dormon, Precipitation, Atmosphere, Domestic Water, Zakh, Plate, Repairman, Urban Planning, Structure, Mosque, Arch, Wide, Bright, Wide Object.

Abstract: This article explores the architectural landscape and construction practices of cities within the Middle Zarafshan oasis, particularly focusing on monuments and cultural heritage sites. Through extensive research conducted in Uzbekistan's central region, numerous cultural artefacts were identified, leading to systematic restoration efforts, particularly during milestone events. The study encompassed various stages, shedding light on ancient urban planning processes and architectural styles. To elevate cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Karmana to global standards, meticulous master plans were devised, urban development was meticulously regulated, and measures were implemented to safeguard architectural treasures. This comprehensive approach aims to preserve the rich historical legacy while promoting sustainable development in these ancient cities, thus contributing to their cultural significance on a global scale.

1 INTRODUCTION

The Middle Zarafshan oasis, renowned for its architectural marvels, stands as a testament to the rich cultural heritage of the republic. Over time, the region's urban planning ethos and grand architectural traditions have evolved through various stages. With independence, the preservation of these monuments has emerged as a paramount duty, symbolizing our nation's history, scientific advancements, and cultural legacy for future generations. However, the relentless passage of time, coupled with natural and human-induced factors like climate fluctuations, seismic activities, and urbanization, has led to the erosion and deterioration of these treasures. The expansion of cities, infrastructural developments, and societal changes in the 19th and 20th centuries exacerbated these challenges, resulting in the loss and degradation of numerous historical landmarks. Consequently, safeguarding these monuments has become an urgent imperative, necessitating comprehensive conservation efforts. This responsibility falls upon the state, which, despite facing transitional hurdles, has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to preserving and restoring cultural heritage sites, marking a significant milestone in the nation's architectural journey. The research aims to uncover the principal

directions of studying and restoring historical monuments within the Middle Zarafshan oasis, both before and during the years of independence, from a historical perspective.

2 METHODOLOGY

Before independence, a series of distinctive restoration and conservation efforts were undertaken to repair monuments, establishing the theoretical basis of scientific methodology. These theories, largely articulated in scholarly publications at the time, drew from years of observation and practical expertise. By the late 1920s, the core principles of the architectural-archaeological approach to studying cultural monuments were outlined, culminating in the 1928 publication "Problems of Restoration." Post-independence, renovation phases primarily coincided with jubilees and events, incorporating the city planning state alongside antiquity in practical applications. Restoration and conservation undertakings adhered to a program outlined by design expertise, ensuring meticulous registration, accuracy, and inspections. The Middle Zarafshan oasis boasts a rich architectural heritage, symbolizing the region's

historical and cultural significance. However, the preservation of these ancient structures has been challenged by various historical, climatic, and human factors. With over 600 architectural monuments under state protection in Uzbekistan, mosques dominate the landscape, serving as key markers of religious and civic life. From the grandeur of the Shahizinda architectural complex to the intricate minarets of Samarkand, these monuments stand as testament to the ingenuity of past craftsmen. Yet, the relentless march of time and environmental pressures necessitate ongoing conservation efforts. Fortunately, recent decades have seen substantial investment in restoration projects, revitalizing iconic landmarks and reaffirming Uzbekistan's commitment to preserving its architectural heritage. By drawing on historical sources and modern expertise, the task of safeguarding these treasures for future generations remains an ongoing endeavour, ensuring that their legacy endures for centuries to come.

3 RESULTS

Historical monuments in the Middle Zarafshan oasis, including those in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Karmana, are facing the need for repair and restoration. Through a comprehensive study incorporating historical evidence and oral surveys, the involvement of local residents and patrons in the preservation efforts of mosques and mausoleums is examined. Their contributions to each historical site shed light on the symbiotic relationship between the community and cultural heritage. Moreover, this research underscores the pivotal role of cultural heritage in urban development, highlighting how these monuments serve as anchors of identity and pride for local communities. By documenting and analysing the collaborative efforts of various stakeholders, this study aims to inform future conservation strategies and foster a deeper appreciation for the cultural significance of these architectural treasures.

4 DISCUSSION

According to archival data, comprehensive theories explaining the decay of monuments remain underdeveloped. However, experts classify monuments into three groups based on common reasons for their deterioration and methods of restoration.

Group I encompass monuments experiencing physical wear and tear due to time and climate,

gradually losing their original architectural features. The extent of deterioration depends on various factors, including the materials used, geographical location, and usage conditions.

Group II consists of monuments with structural defects caused by soil compaction or erosion, leading to loss of stability. Human activities and lack of maintenance exacerbate these issues, resulting in overall deterioration.

Group III includes monuments affected by rising groundwater, causing flooding and accelerated deterioration. Research indicates that many monuments were built on unsuitable soil types, further contributing to their degradation.

Despite these challenges, repair efforts have been initiated, focusing on structural reinforcement and restoration. However, financial constraints and transitional difficulties have complicated these processes, leading to delays and inadequate maintenance.

Addressing these issues requires a collaborative approach involving skilled restoration specialists and adherence to historical and artistic preservation principles. Modern repair methods must be carefully applied to maintain the integrity and authenticity of the monuments, while natural building materials should be prioritised to prevent further damage.

Ultimately, the repair and restoration of historical monuments in the Middle Zarafshan oasis demand meticulous planning, technical expertise, and a commitment to preserving cultural heritage for future generations.

5 CONCLUSION

The extensive efforts undertaken to conserve, study, and restore historical monuments in the Middle Zarafshan oasis have yielded significant results, accompanied by valuable scientific insights. Despite notable achievements during the initial years of independence, challenges emerged during the transitional period, particularly concerning financial constraints within the Ministry of Culture of Uzbekistan's main scientific production department. These deficits hindered the systematic organization of restoration and repair works, highlighting the need for improved resource allocation and institutional support.

Furthermore, restoration efforts unveiled deficiencies in repair quality and material selection, underscoring the importance of meticulous planning and adherence to international standards. Recommendations include the establishment of restoration schools, advanced preparation of high-quality repair materials, and the implementation of

technical strengthening measures to enhance monument preservation. By addressing these issues comprehensively, Uzbekistan can further enhance the conservation, restoration, and reconstruction of its cultural heritage, ensuring the transmission of original architectural marvels to future generations in Bukhara, Samarkand, Navoi region, and beyond.

Ministry of Culture and Sports of Uzbekistan. (2018). *Current archive information sheet from the Chief Directorate for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects.*

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