

# THE JEWEL OF UZBEKISTAN: THE HISTORY OF THE SHODMALIK OTA PILGRIMAGE SITE

Shoira Jumaeva

Acting Associate Professor, PhD. Chirchik State Pedagogical University  
shairajumayeva@cspi.uz

## Abstract

The article covers the history of the pilgrimage place Shoabdumalik-ota, located in the Akhangaran district of the Tashkent region, as well as its restoration by the international charitable foundation “Oltin Meros” (‘Golden Heritage’) and its activities today. The authors express their views on the role and importance of the pilgrimage place Shoabdumalik-ota in the development of pilgrimage tourism in our country.

**Keywords:** Great Silk Road, Shoabdumalik-ota, pilgrimage tourism, Islamic civilization.

## Introduction

There are world-famous shrines in Uzbekistan, the visit to which in Islam is equivalent to the “Little Hajj”. In particular, thousands of tourists from all over the world come to visit Bukhara every year, which is recognised as the “strength of Islam”. They will visit the seven shrines of the “golden series” started by the Prophet Muhammad: Abduhaliq Gijduvani, Muhammad Arif Revgari, Mahmud Anjir Fagnavi, Khoja Ali Romitani, Muhammad Baba'i Samosi, Sayyid Amir Kulol and Bahauddin Naqshband. As the famous scholar Ghaybullas-Salam said, “Our country is such a sacred place that wherever you walk, you must be careful, because every stone or piece of it can be the dust of a great person!”

The contribution of the scholars of our country to the development of Islam and science, their scientific and spiritual heritage and the role of Central Asia in the formation of Islamic civilisation, the rich history and hospitality of our people are the basis for the development of pilgrimage tourism. The famous shrines of Ismail Somoni, Chor Bakr, Chashmai Ayub, Shahizinda, Ruqabad, Imam Al-Bukhari, Bahauddin Naqshband, Gori Amir, Khoja Ahror, Pahlavon Mahmud, Hazrati Imam, Zangi Ota, Sultan Saodat, Hakim at-Termizi are proof of this opinion. In particular, the Zangiota shrine in the Tashkent region is a very sacred place for the peoples of Central Asia. This is evidenced by the fact that every day 5,000 pilgrims and tourists visit this historical and architectural complex. To the pilgrims in various countries it deserves attention (Eraliev B., Ostonakulov I., Abdulahatov N., 2015).



Fig. 1 Zangi-ota Shrine (Tashkent Region)

(From the archive fund of the Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation “Oltin meros”)

Such a huge potential, in turn, plays an important role in the development of pilgrimage tourism in our country. The Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoev to the Oliy Majlis on January 24, 2020 also critically noted that there are more than 8,200 cultural heritage sites in the country, of which only 500 are included in tourist routes. The task outlined by the head of state this year is the submission of 800 routes<sup>1</sup>. In this area, first of all, it is necessary to study and promote the sacred sites and shrines, which are the main objects of pilgrimage tourism. After all, the land of Uzbekistan attracts tourists from all over the world as an important centre of Islamic civilisation. One of the most pressing issues today is to raise the economy of our country, increase the welfare of our people and pass them on to future generations, using the unique historical heritage of the ancient cities of Bukhara, Margilan, Samarkand, Khiva, Tashkent, Termez or Kokand.

### Methods

The article is based on the generally accepted principles of history – historical, comparative and logical analysis, consistency and objectivity. It aspires to address the mentality of the Uzbek national cultural heritage and its unique places and traditions, at the same time being an important component of the culture of mankind.

To date, the shrines of Uzbekistan have not been studied in a complex archeological, ethnographic and epigraphic way. Sources on the history of the shrines can be divided into several groups: traveller diaries, archaeological research and descriptive publications. It should be noted that not only on the history of the shrines, but also the general history of Uzbekistan,

<sup>1</sup> Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh.M.Mirziyoev to the Oliy Majlis on January 24, 2020. People's Word newspaper. №19.25.01.20.1-3 p.



there are very few manuscript sources on the social life before the Arab conquest. It was explained in the book of Abu Rayhan Biruni named "The rest of the people of the ancient monuments": The vicar of the eastern of the Arabic Khalifet, rich heritage and works of art in every market were gathered and burned with the special order of the Arab Caliphate Kuteiba. (Yormatov I., 2005).

The first information about the shrines on the territory of our country began to be recorded in the works of Muslim historians from the X century. In particular, in the work of Abu Jafar Narshakhi "History of Bukhara", written in 944, the socio-political life and religious views of the local population are widely covered on the basis of ethnographic materials.

In studying the history of the shrines, the works of scholars such as M.E. Masson, Yu.V. Knozorov, B.N. Kastolskiy, B. Veymarn, V.V. Bartold, M.S. Andreev, S.P. Tolstov, O.A. Sukhareva, P.P. Ivanov, A. Ranovich, L.Yu. Mankovskaya, G.P. Snesev, V.N. Basilov, V.A. Arshavskaya, S. Mirxasilov, Dj.X. Karmyshcheva, E.V. Rtvladze, Z.A. Xakimov were important [12].

Also, archaeologists and scientists such as Yu.F. Buryakov, M.R. Kasymov, O.M. Rostovtsev, Y.G. Gulyamov, Yu. Kazbekov, V.M. Filimonov made a great contribution to the study of historical and architectural monuments in the Tashkent oasis [13]. In particular, the Shoabdumalik-ota shrine, which is the subject of our research, was first studied in 1896 by orientalist-archaeologists NG Mallitsky and MS Andreev. In 1929-1934, M.E. Masson conducted archeological excavations here. According to the archaeologist, there are many manuscripts and books in the sagana, which were taken away by previous investigators. A total of about 30 of these manuscripts were written by Sheikh Shoabdumalik. Unfortunately, none of these books have survived.

In 1936 N.M. Veselovskiy gave information about a few pieces of gold, silver coins and book named "Moral upbringing orphan" which were founded in the grave in his work of "Minaret of the sheikh Shoabdumalik father".

In the Soviet-era literature, under ideological pressure, shrines were sharply criticized as a tool of religious exploitation, with an emphasis on artificially strengthening relations between the population [14].

It should be noted that in the early twentieth century, the study of the history of Central Asia by Western, especially Russian orientalists, was based on political, ideological and socio-economic principles. The scientists, such as Bartold and Samoylovich did research work on the basis of political and economic principles and Pokr. Like a true Marxist historians worked on the basis of political and ideological principles (Abdulkhair B., 2011).

With the disintegration of the Soviet Union, attitudes towards shrines changed, and research was conducted on the basis of new spirit, national and traditional values. In particular, several books, monographs and scientific articles were published by scholars such as I. Jabbarov, H. Karomatov, B. Ahmedov, A. Ashirov, T. Qilichev, A. Malikov, M. Sattor, A. Abdurasulov, G. Xodjiniyazov, C. Esberganova, X. Xakimniyazov, I. Ostanaqul, N.U. Abdulakhatov and orientalist K. Muminov published a number of monographs and scientific articles [15]. Works such as "Legends of the Silk Road", "Religious Monuments of Central Asia", "Tazkirasi of

Saints and Scholars of Turonzamin", "Pilgrimages and Places of Uzbekistan", "By the roads of Shash and Ilak" were created [16].

During this period, the shrines began to be studied not only by local, but also by foreign researchers. Visiting places of worship and ceremonies by foreign researchers Jurgen Paul (Germany), Jo-Ann Gross (USA), Terry Zarko, Habiba Fathi (France sett), Yayoi Kavaxara (Japan) engaged in the study of research plays an important role [17].

### Research results:

The Shoabdumalik-ota complex, located on one of the main branches of the Great Silk Road (now the Tashkent-Ahangaron highway), is one of the spiritual centres that played an important role in the cultural development of the Tashkent oasis. The Shoabdumalik-ota complex is a mediaeval architectural monument and is under state protection.

The original name of the Sheikh Shoabdumalik ota was Malik Abdullakh bin Kulmukhammad bin Kadir al Ilaki and famous as Shoabdumalik ota and Shodmalik ota among people. Shoabdumalik was the son of Hazrat Mansur, the murid of the founder of the Yassaviya sect, Khoja Ahmad Yassavi, and the grandfather of Zangi, one of the most famous saints in Central Asia. Shoabdumalik's father lived in the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries and was first educated at madrasah in Bukhara. While studying at the madrasa, Shoabdumalik, who was known for his sharp intellect and interest in science, studied the basics of Sufism, the teachings of Yusuf Hamadoni, and was fluent in Arabic and Persian. In addition to teaching philosophy, logic and mineralogy at the Bukhara and Ilaq madrassas, the Sheikh became famous throughout Movoraunnahr for his interpretations of Islam and the Qur'an, the mysteries of theology, spirituality and enlightenment. Sheikh was honoured as the Saint among the people for his justice, love to people, having world and religious knowledges, generosity. Shoabdumalik's grandfather died in 1203. His grave will be placed on the Angren-Tashkent road. The mausoleum will become a sacred place of worship not only for the locals, but also for people from neighbouring and distant lands.

Structure: In 1934 archeologist M E Masson did research works for the first time in the Sacred place. According to the results of the research Shoabdumalik parents complex circled the pool next summer and winter mosques, hotels, awnings, large courtyard and urban residence, buildings began to decay. Upon entering the ground, the square-shaped dome was built in the style of "Balkhi", where pilgrims prayed in honour of the saint by the light of a lamp. The next room, measuring 7.6x2.47 meters, contained a large wooden tomb (1.87x0.65m) with a paper curtain over and next to the tomb. Next to the tomb is a book written in printed Arabic letters and two lamps, one made of wood and the other of cast iron. On the north side of the tomb, 4 small tombs are stacked on top of each other. To the north of the old cemetery is a 2-meter-high, rectangular (27x28.5 m.) artificial hill and the mausoleum of the saint at the foot of the hill is built of brick, widely used in Shosh-Iloq. On the west side of the tomb of the saint the door is covered with brick. In 1934, when members of the. "Uzkomstaris" commission demolished a brick wall, it was discovered that there was an empty cell measuring 3,5 x 2,2 m. During archeological excavations, the remains of a medieval building (X-XII) and fragments





of pottery were found on the south-east side of the Shoabdumalik main tomb (Masson M.E., 1953).

This sagana is a great work of art built underground oriental architecture, its length is 1.87 meters. According to archaeologist Yahyo Gulyamov, the tombs other than the tomb of the saint are very small and 1.25 meters long, they are symbolic wooden tombs with the participation of the Alawites in the XIX century (Razzoqov A., 2019)

Nazirkhan Eshan, the son of the Mufti of Piskent Khojakhon Haji, was the last sheikh at the shrine in 1928-1930. A negative attitude towards religion based on Soviet ideology it was neglected for 70 years. As a result, the holy shrines and shrines, which have been cherished by the Uzbek people for centuries, have lost their historical appearance and become abandoned, and some shrines have been destroyed. In particular, the Chokardiza cemetery in Samarkand, where famous saints are buried, was almost completely preserved until the 1940s. However, but in 1946-1955 the cemetery was demolished and given over for housing. A similar tragedy can be seen in the treatment of the "Gulobod" cemetery in Bukhara (Mustafoev S., Ablaev M., 2015). We can cite many such examples in history.

During World War II, attitudes toward religion in the former Soviet Union softened somewhat. In 1943, the Central Asian and Kazakh Muslim Religious Board was established in Tashkent. Later, Mirarab Madrasah (1945) and the Higher Islamic Institute (1971) were established under the department. In 1947, the magazine "Muslims of the Soviet East" was established under the department. It has only been published regularly since 1968. The budget of the religious office consisted of donations collected from Muslim charities and mosques. Much of the revenue came from donations collected from large shrines (Bahauddin Naqshband, Qusam ibn Abbas, etc.) at the disposal of the Central Asian Muslim Religious Board at the time. In order to legitimise this income, a fatwa was issued to visit people who had reached the level of saints, based on the Hanafi (Sufi) point of view. (1953) However, in the summer of 1957, the Committee on Religious Affairs under the Council of Ministers reached an official decision to close all pilgrimage sites, calling the mass introduction of pilgrimage traditions a "danger of the emergence of religion" and an "informal gathering of believers". (Textbook. 2010).

As a result of neglect, like other shrines in the country, the Shoabdumalik ota shrine has lost its historical architectural appearance and has been preserved as a basement.

The revival of international Charity Fund of Shoabdumalik ota "Oltin Meros" is related to the department of Tashkent region. The Golden Heritage International Charitable Foundation was established in 1996 on the initiative of the First President of the Republic of Uzbekistan I. A. Karimov to study the invaluable sources of our national culture – historical monuments, shrines, manuscripts, lithographs and pass them on to future generations. Taking into account the letter of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan from September 27, 1996 of the International Charitable Foundation "Oltin Meros" under the International Charitable Public Centre "Ma'naviyat va Marifat". No. 01-08 from January 17, 2000, Tashkent In accordance with the decision of the governor of the region No. 93 of March 3, 2000, 24 shrines located in the territory of the Tashkent region were transferred to the Tashkent regional branch of the International Charitable Fund "Oltin Meros".

At the initiative of the chairman of the Tashkent regional branch of the International Charitable Fund "Oltin meros" Z. Eshmirzaeva in 2008 began design work at the shrine Shoabdmalik ota. The new design of the shrine was designed by architect Muhammadjon Fozili.



Fig. 2. Shoabdmalik-ota shrine in Akhangaron district (1992 and 2008)  
(From the archive fund of the Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation "Oltin meros")



Fig. 3. Tomb of Shoabdmalik father  
(From the archive fund of the Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation "Oltin meros")

A 300-meter-deep pipe was dug to supply Shodmalik mahalla, the shrine and the population with drinking water. In 2018, Shoabdmalik-ota main shrine was gasified and lighting was installed on the territory of the shrine.

In order to study the medieval urban culture in Ahangaron district and pass in on to the younger generation, the Institute of Archaeological Research and History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic Uzbekistan since 2018 with the initiative and financial support of the "Oltin meros" Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation Archaeological excavations were carried out by a joint team of the and the Institute. As a result of scientific research, a residential complex of the Karakhanid period (X-XI centuries) was found.



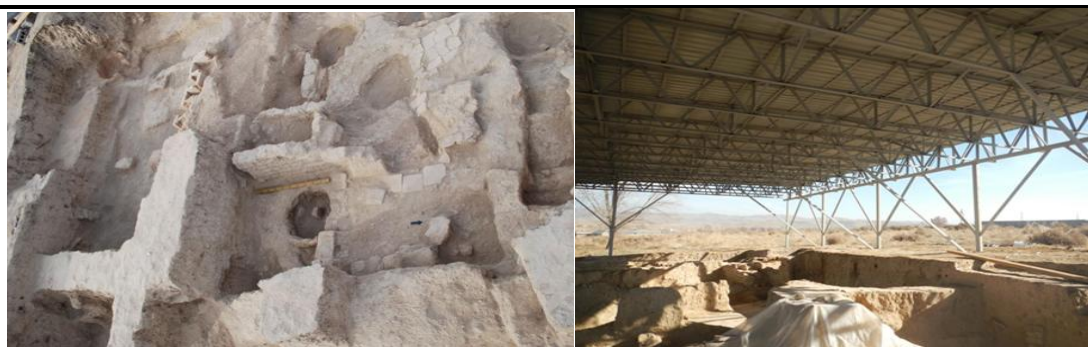


Fig. 4. Residential complex of the Karakhanid period (X-XI centuries)  
(From the archive fund of the Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation “Oltin meros”)

In order to preserve the invaluable historical monument of our people, excavations were carried out on 200 sq.m. ceiling was installed on top of the place. This is the first archeological monument in Tashkent region.

The Shoabdumalik-ota complex, one of the busiest shrines in Tashkent region, includes a mausoleum, an archeological site, an open-air museum and a stationary archeological base. In the future, it is planned to build an archeological museum on the basis of the complex. Today, the shrine is visited not only by the republic, but also by neighboring countries and countries such as Russia, Turkey, Iran, Indonesia and Malaysia.

### Conclusion

It should be noted that the Shoabdumalik-ota shrine is not only a religious and educational centre, but also an important object of historical and cultural heritage. Shrines are centres of faith of enlightenment, educational significance based on national and spiritual history. In conclusion, it is worth noting the following:

- In the mentality of the Uzbek people, many important events in the life of people have long been recognized as the result of visiting holy places and beliefs about personal problems in everyday life have been formed in other important aspects of the mental image, including love for the motherland, father The spirit of the formation of the etiquette of honor and respect. The archaeological monument and an open-air museum at the Shoabdumalik-ota Shrine play an important role in studying the history of our people and passing it on to future generations. It would be expedient to organise open-air museums in the archeological monuments of Shohrukhhiya and Choshtepa in Tashkent region. For years, these unique monuments decay, extinction threshold. In addition, these historical sites serve the development of domestic and foreign pilgrimage tourism.
- According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated December 31, 2019 “On accelerated development of tourism in Tashkent region in 2019-2021” 7 regions of Tashkent region – Bostanlyk, Ahangaron, Parkent, Boka, Chinoz and Zangiota districts and Angren to develop tourism on the basis of the “Oltin Xalqa” (“Golden Ring”) concert. 40 new hotels worth 638 billion will be built. 420 guest house activities will





be launched. Free internet and bio toilets will be provided. It is also planned to build a new mountain road from Angren to Parkent district in the future.

- Trade, handicrafts, architecture, culture, literature and art are widely developed in the Tashkent oasis, located at the crossroads of the ancient Great Silk Road. At the same time, there are famous shrines such as Zangiota, Shoabdumalik-ota, Machit Ali, Qadamjoy, Paygambar-ota, Qirq qiz, Shah Omar Vali Boghustani, which should be studied and included in tourist routes, develop virtual tourism programs in 3D format. Through the program, tourists will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the historical monuments and get information about the object they want to travel. In the framework of the project "Travel along the Great Silk Road" it is necessary to conduct a comprehensive advocacy work, to create a large-scale database through Internet sites.

A number of influential foreign media have included Uzbekistan in the list of countries recommended for travel in 2020. This, in turn, plays an important role in the development of tourism in our country. We must seize this opportunity.

### References

1. Address of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan Sh. M. Mirziyoev to the Oliy Majlis on January 24, 2020. People's Word newspaper. № 19.25.01.20. pp. 1-3.
2. Abdulkhair B. History of mausoleums or brochure about Yunus Khan and his mausoleum. T. Fan. 2011. 4-5 B.
3. Abdurakhmanova J., Jumaeva Sh., Ismailov U. The Importance of Shrines in The Spiritual Life and Mentality of Uzbek People //International Journal of Psychosocial Rehabilitation, Vol. 24, Issue 09, 2020. p. 5217.
4. Eraliev B., Ostonakulov I., Abdulhatov N. Pilgrimages and shrines of Uzbekistan. Volume 3. Tashkent. 2015. 295-b.
5. Jumayeva Sh. Women's pilgrimage rites and rituals (as an example of Tashkent oasis)// EPRA International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research (IJMR) Peer Reviewed Journal Volume: 6 | Issue: 7 | July 2020. p. 472.
6. Yormatov I. "History of Iloq". Tashkent Publishing House of the A. Navoi National Library of Uzbekistan. 2005. p. 8.
7. Islam and modernity. Textbook. T. 2010. pp. 35-36.
8. M. E. Masson. Axangeran. Izdatelstvo AN UzSSR. T. 1953g. pp. 54-56.
9. Mustafoev S., Ablaev M. Turonzamin dear saints and Ulamolar the printers. T. 2015. 23b.
10. Razzoqov A. Ohangaron gavharlari. T. 2019. "Press Oltin Meros" pp.175-176.
11. [11]. Masson M.E. The settlement of Old Termiz and their study.-Tashkent, 1939, p.p.5-122; Knozorov Yu.V. Mazar Shatun-nabi (Some remnants of pre-Muslim beliefs among the peoples of the Khorezm oasis). P.p.86-98.