

LEGAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF CULTURAL HERITAGE PRESERVATION IN UZBEKISTAN

Rasulov Gayrat Pardayevich, PhD

Head of the Department of Islamic History and Source Studies,

IRCICA Uzbekistan International Islamic Academy

rgayrat@bk.ru

Abstract

This article examines the state policies, legal frameworks, and organizational mechanisms established in Uzbekistan to preserve, utilize, and promote tangible cultural heritage. It analyzes the primary functions of the Cultural Heritage Department, including the protection of historical monuments, maintenance of the state register, expert evaluation of architectural documentation, and urban planning for historical cities. The study also explores the potential of cultural heritage to enhance tourism and bolster the national economy at both national and international levels.

Keywords: Cultural heritage, tangible cultural assets, historical monuments, archaeological sites, state protection, legal mechanisms, Cultural Heritage Department, legal framework, historical cities, tourism infrastructure.

Introduction

Understanding national history and preserving cultural heritage are fundamental to societal development. Since Uzbekistan declared independence in 1991, the restoration, scientific study, and transmission of its rich history, culture, and values to future generations have been elevated to the level of state policy. Significant efforts have been made to protect tangible cultural heritage, ensure its rational use, and promote it through robust legal and organizational mechanisms (Rasulov, 2020).

This article provides a comprehensive analysis of Uzbekistan's state policies and institutional frameworks for cultural heritage preservation, focusing on the role of the Cultural Heritage Department (formerly the Main Directorate). It discusses key activities such as the protection of historical and archaeological sites, state registration, and urban development planning, alongside the economic and touristic potential of cultural heritage.

Historical Context and Institutional Development

Following independence, Uzbekistan prioritized the study, preservation, and utilization of its cultural heritage. In 1992, the Main Directorate for the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects was established under the Ministry of Culture, marking the first institutional step toward systematic heritage management (Mukhamedov & Turambetov, 2020). This body was reorganized in 2019 into the Cultural Heritage Department, with expanded responsibilities and authority to align with modern preservation needs (Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, 2019).

The Cultural Heritage Department operates under a legal framework rooted in the Constitution of Uzbekistan, which mandates citizens to protect the nation's historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage (Constitution of Uzbekistan, 1992). Key legislation, including the Law on Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects (2001), the Law on Museums, and the Law on Protection and



Use of Archaeological Heritage Objects, provides the regulatory backbone for these efforts (Lex.uz, 2001). These laws are supported by resolutions from the Cabinet of Ministers, ensuring their practical implementation (Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, 2019).

Core Functions of the Cultural Heritage Department

The Cultural Heritage Department is tasked with several critical functions to safeguard Uzbekistan's tangible cultural heritage. These functions are grounded in national legislation and aligned with international standards, particularly for UNESCO World Heritage sites.

1. Protection and Oversight

The Department ensures compliance with laws governing the protection and use of tangible cultural heritage, including archaeological and architectural monuments, museum artifacts, and other culturally significant assets. It oversees specially protected historical-cultural zones and UNESCO-listed sites, ensuring the implementation of management plans (Rasulov, 2020). For instance, sites like the historic centers of Samarkand and Bukhara, inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, are subject to rigorous state oversight to preserve their authenticity and integrity.

2. State Register and Documentation

A key responsibility of the Department is maintaining the state cadastre of cultural heritage objects. This involves identifying the historical, scientific, or artistic value of sites, documenting them, and registering them in the national inventory. The Department also categorizes immovable cultural heritage objects, defines their protection zones, and assesses their quantitative and qualitative indicators to establish their value (Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, 2019). As of recent data, Uzbekistan has registered 8,647 cultural heritage objects, including 3,013 architectural monuments, 4,763 archaeological sites, 615 monumental artworks, and 256 notable landmarks (Cultural Heritage Department, 2016).

3. Expert Review and Technical Oversight

The Department conducts expert evaluations of historical-cultural and project-estimate documentation to ensure that construction, restoration, or renovation activities do not compromise the historical or unique value of cultural heritage sites. Continuous scientific and technical oversight is provided to maintain the integrity of these objects during such interventions (Rasulov, 2020).

4. Urban Planning and Coordination

The Department coordinates urban development, construction, and economic activities in areas hosting specially protected cultural heritage sites. This ensures that such activities preserve the historical environment, natural landscape, and architectural distinctiveness of these zones. For example, urban planning in historical cities like Khiva and Shakhrisabz integrates cultural preservation with modern development to maintain their historical authenticity (Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, 2019).



Legal Framework for Cultural Heritage Preservation

Uzbekistan's legal framework for cultural heritage is comprehensive, combining constitutional mandates, national laws, and governmental resolutions. The Constitution emphasizes the state's role in protecting cultural monuments (Constitution of Uzbekistan, 1992). Specific laws, such as the Law on Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects (2001), outline procedures for preservation, restoration, and utilization (Lex.uz, 2001). Additional legislation addresses museums and archaeological heritage, ensuring a holistic approach to heritage management.

The Cabinet of Ministers' Resolution No. 265 (2019) further strengthens the Department's role by approving the national list of immovable cultural heritage objects, which includes 8,208 sites (Uzbekistan Cabinet of Ministers, 2019). This list categorizes sites by region and type, providing a clear framework for their protection. For example, Samarkand hosts 1,607 registered objects, including 70 nationally significant architectural monuments, while Bukhara has 660, with 283 of national importance (Cultural Heritage Department, 2016).

Cultural Heritage and Economic Development

Cultural heritage in Uzbekistan is not only a matter of national pride but also a driver of economic growth, particularly through tourism. The Strategy of Actions for the Further Development of Uzbekistan (2017) emphasizes the role of cultural heritage in expanding the tourism industry, diversifying services, and improving infrastructure (Presidential Decree, 2017). Historical and architectural monuments are central to national programs aimed at enhancing Uzbekistan's social and economic potential.

The integration of cultural heritage into tourism development has led to significant achievements:

- **Expansion of the State Register:** The list of state-protected cultural heritage sites has grown substantially, reflecting increased recognition of their value.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Inscriptions:** The historic centers of cities like Samarkand, Bukhara, and Shakhrisabz have been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, elevating their global profile (Rasulov, 2020).
- **Global Promotion:** Uzbekistan has intensified efforts to study and promote its cultural heritage internationally, attracting researchers and tourists alike.
- **Tourism Programs:** National programs leverage historical monuments to boost tourism, contributing to economic stability and job creation (Presidential Decree, 2017).

The Cultural Heritage Department's statistical reports highlight the scale of these efforts. For instance, the national register includes 4,748 archaeological sites, 2,250 architectural monuments, 678 monumental artworks, and 532 notable landmarks, distributed across regions like Tashkent, Khorezm, and Kashkadarya (Cultural Heritage Department, 2016).

Challenges and Future Directions

Despite significant progress, challenges remain in cultural heritage preservation. These include the need for enhanced monitoring systems, the integration of advanced information technologies, and stronger international scientific collaboration. The restoration and museumification of heritage sites, alongside their transformation into globally recognized tourism hubs, require sustained investment and expertise (Rasulov, 2020).

Future priorities include:



- **Improved Monitoring:** Developing digital tools to track the condition of heritage sites in real-time.
- **Technological Integration:** Leveraging technologies like 3D scanning and virtual reality to enhance preservation and public engagement.
- **International Cooperation:** Strengthening partnerships with organizations like UNESCO and academic institutions to advance research and conservation techniques.
- **Sustainable Tourism:** Balancing tourism growth with the preservation of cultural heritage to prevent overexploitation.

Conclusion

The preservation of cultural heritage in Uzbekistan is a cornerstone of national identity, historical memory, and societal development. Through a robust legal framework, institutional reforms, and strategic policies, the country has made significant strides in protecting its tangible cultural assets. The Cultural Heritage Department plays a pivotal role in these efforts, overseeing protection, documentation, and urban planning while promoting the economic potential of heritage sites through tourism.

Continued investment in monitoring systems, technology, and international collaboration will ensure that Uzbekistan's cultural heritage remains a source of pride and prosperity for future generations. By preserving its historical monuments, archaeological sites, and cultural landscapes, Uzbekistan not only safeguards its past but also builds a sustainable future.

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