

**THE HISTORY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE OLD CITY OF BUKHARA
DURING THE YEARS OF INDEPENDENCE: TRADITION AND MODERNITY**

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Abstract: This article examines the history of the transformation of the old city of Bukhara during the years of independence: the harmony of tradition and modernity. In addition, it is studied that the period of independence marked a new stage in balancing the preservation of historical authenticity with the requirements of modern life, tourism and infrastructure development. It is also analyzed that efforts to preserve historical heritage were carried out simultaneously with modernization and economic development.

Keywords: UNESCO, universal value, ancient city image, architectural monuments, mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, Ismail Somoniy mausoleum, cultural heritage, conservation.

Introduction

Bukhara is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia, famous for its rich historical heritage, unique architectural monuments and long-standing urban traditions. The Old City of Bukhara, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, has preserved its medieval urban structure, religious complexes, madrasahs, mosques and traditional residential buildings for centuries. After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, significant changes began to occur in the socio-economic, cultural and urban development of the country. These changes had a strong impact on the appearance and function of the Old City of Bukhara. The period of independence marked a new stage in balancing the preservation of historical authenticity with the requirements of modern life, tourism and infrastructure development. Social and economic changes also played an important role in transforming the Old City. Traditional residential areas have been adapted to new living standards, and many historic houses have been converted into boutique hotels, craft workshops, and cultural spaces. This process has helped revive traditional crafts, local entrepreneurship, and cultural tourism, while integrating the Old Town into the modern economy.

Research Methodology

The methods of historicism, analysis and synthesis, comparative-typological analysis, and a sequential-chronological approach were used to shed light on the history of the transformation of the old city of Bukhara during the years of independence.

Results and Discussions

During the years of independence, the restoration and conservation of Bukhara's historical monuments became a priority for the state. Large-scale restoration projects were carried out at such famous sites as the Ark Fortress, the Poi Kalon complex, the Labi-Hovuz ensemble, and numerous madrasahs and mosques. These efforts were aimed at preserving traditional architectural styles, decorative elements, and construction techniques, preventing further deterioration of historical structures. The use of traditional materials and crafts helped preserve the originality of the visual image of the Old City. In 1993, a significant milestone was reached when the historical center of Bukhara was officially included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This international recognition not only confirmed the city's immense universal value, but also served as a solid foundation for its long-term protection and preservation. The

historical center of Bukhara was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List after independence - in 1993. This became the basis for the protection and preservation of the ancient city's appearance at the international level¹. Bukhara is noted as one of the most complete and well-preserved medieval urban centers in Central Asia. With its labyrinthine streets, ancient trading domes, religious complexes, caravanserais, and centuries-old residential buildings, the city reflects the cultural, architectural, and commercial achievements of various historical periods, especially the Samanid, Karakhanid, and later dynasties.

After being inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, Bukhara has received increased international attention and support for restoration projects. Many historical monuments, such as the Po-i-Kalyan complex, the Ark fortress, the Labi-Khouz ensemble, and the Samanid Mausoleum, have undergone conservation and rehabilitation work aimed at preserving their originality. The government of Uzbekistan has worked with international organizations to develop new strategies for sustainable tourism, urban planning, and the restoration of historic neighborhoods. This recognition also encouraged cultural studies, archaeological research, and educational programs aimed at raising public awareness of the importance of preserving Bukhara's cultural heritage. As a result, the city has not only retained its historical image, but has also become an important destination for global tourism, attracting millions of tourists each year interested in its rich past and vibrant traditions. Today, the historical center of Bukhara serves as a symbol of Uzbekistan's commitment to protecting its cultural treasures. Its inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993 plays an important role in ensuring that the city's ancient character, architectural masterpieces, and cultural spirit are preserved for future generations.

During the years of independence, ancient architectural monuments - mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, and other monuments - have been renovated and their original appearance has been preserved². In the years following independence, Uzbekistan has paid great attention to the protection of the country's historical and cultural heritage. A wide range of ancient architectural monuments – mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums, khanaqohs, caravanserais and other culturally significant structures – have undergone extensive restoration and conservation work. These initiatives have aimed not only to repair physical damage, but also to preserve the original appearance, craftsmanship and architectural identity of each monument. Restoration specialists and historians have worked together to ensure that traditional building techniques, materials and decorative patterns have been carefully observed. Decorative tile work, brickwork, wood carving and calligraphic inscriptions have been carefully restored to reflect their original historical style. Many monuments that had suffered from erosion, neglect or structural instability have been strengthened and restored without compromising their historical integrity. These efforts have also been applied to the restoration of the historical districts surrounding the monuments. Old city quarters, market squares, and cultural ensembles have been cleaned, stabilized, and protected from inappropriate modern construction. As a result, visitors today can see the historical environment of ancient cities in a form closer to their original design.

Conservation work carried out during the period of independence has played a significant role in preserving the cultural continuity of Uzbekistan. Restored mosques and madrasahs serve as spiritual and educational centers, while mausoleums and other monuments serve as eternal symbols of the architectural skill of the people. In addition to their cultural and historical value,

¹ Historic Centre of Bukhara. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/602/?utm_source

² HAYOTOVA N. ISSUES OF REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MONUMENTS IN BUKHARA. International Journal of Intellectual and Cultural Heritage Volume: 2 Issue: 01 | 2022.

these restored sites have also made a significant contribution to the development of tourism and helped to introduce Uzbekistan's rich heritage to the world. Today, these achievements reflect the country's deep respect for its past and its commitment to passing on this invaluable legacy to future generations.

The Ismail Somoni Mausoleum was renovated in 1997 and remains the oldest element of the city's image³. The Mausoleum of Ismail Somoni, one of the most outstanding architectural masterpieces of early medieval Central Asia, was thoroughly renovated in 1997. This renovation played a significant role in preserving the monument's original structure, intricate brickwork, and unique architectural style, reflecting the high level of craftsmanship of the Somoni era. As one of the oldest surviving buildings in Bukhara, the mausoleum has long been a distinctive element of the city's historical landscape. Its harmonious proportions, geometric patterns, and symbolic design continue to attract scholars, architects, and visitors from all over the world. Despite the passage of more than a thousand years, the Mausoleum of Ismail Somoni has been remarkably preserved, reflecting the spiritual and artistic achievements of its time. Thanks to the restoration work carried out in 1997, the monument remains not only a symbol of Bukhara's ancient heritage, but also an important factor in preserving the original appearance of the city. Today, it serves as a witness to the eternal cultural heritage of the Samanid dynasty and remains one of the most valuable monuments of Uzbekistan.

By a resolution of the Government of Uzbekistan dated March 23, 2010, a special program was adopted for the scientific study, conservation and restoration of the cultural heritage of the historical part of Bukhara for 2010–2020⁴. On March 23, 2010, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted a special resolution aimed at protecting and restoring the cultural heritage of the historic center of Bukhara. On the basis of this resolution, a comprehensive program was introduced for 2010–2020 to support the scientific study, preservation, and restoration of architectural monuments within the ancient city. The program focused on several main goals: documenting historical sites, conducting archaeological and architectural research, protecting vulnerable structures, and carrying out high-quality restoration work in accordance with international conservation standards. Particular attention was paid to preserving the authenticity of Bukhara's historical monuments - mosques, madrasas, caravanserais, mausoleums, and residential buildings, while ensuring that restoration work respected traditional materials and craftsmanship. In addition to physical protection, the program encouraged scientific research, training specialists, and the development of integrated management strategies to protect the city's cultural environment. It also developed cooperation between national experts and international organizations involved in heritage conservation.

As a result of this government initiative, many of Bukhara's architectural treasures were restored and stabilized, contributing to the long-term protection of the city's unique urban landscape. The program played an important role in strengthening Bukhara's position as one of the most important historical and cultural centers of Central Asia.

Bukhara has strengthened its tourism potential during the years of independence. Work has been carried out to attract tourists through the restoration of historical monuments and the

³ HAYOTOVA N. ISSUES OF REPAIR AND MAINTENANCE OF HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL MONUMENTS IN BUKHARA. *International Journal of Intellectual and Cultural Heritage* Volume: 2 Issue: 01 | 2022.

⁴ Historic Centre of Bukhara. https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/602/?utm_source

creation of infrastructure⁵. During the years of independence, Bukhara has significantly strengthened its tourism potential. Extensive efforts have been made to attract visitors from all over the world by restoring historical monuments and creating modern infrastructure. As one of the most important cultural centers of Uzbekistan, Bukhara has greatly benefited from policies aimed at restoring its architectural heritage and improving the urban environment. Large-scale restoration projects have helped breathe new life into ancient mosques, madrasahs, caravanserais, and other famous monuments. These efforts have ensured the preservation of the city's rich historical image for future generations, while making it more accessible and attractive for tourists. Conservation work has emphasized the careful preservation of authenticity, traditional crafts, and original architectural elements. Along with restoration work, modern tourism infrastructure has been actively developed. New hotels, guest houses, cultural centers, pedestrian zones, and transportation facilities that meet international standards have been built or modernized. Improved services, amenities, and the introduction of cultural events such as traditional festivals, exhibitions, and performances have further enhanced the visitor experience. Together, these initiatives have contributed to the steady growth of domestic and international tourism. Bukhara has become a vibrant destination where history, culture, and hospitality blend together, demonstrating the country's commitment to promoting its heritage globally.

Conclusion/Recommendations

In conclusion, the transformation of the Old City of Bukhara during the years of independence reflects a careful and continuous dialogue between tradition and modernity. Efforts to preserve historical heritage have been carried out in parallel with modernization and economic development. Although difficulties remain in maintaining authenticity in the face of growing tourism and urban needs, the experience of Bukhara shows that it is possible to protect and develop the unique character of a historical city. The Old City of Bukhara today is a living example of how cultural heritage can be preserved, revitalized, and adapted to modern life without losing its historical essence.

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