

## STUDYING, PRESERVING, AND PROMOTING HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE KHOREZM REGION AND ADDRESSING INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION ISSUES

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### Abstract

In the article is discussed issues of international cooperation in the process of studying, restoration and popularization of historical and cultural monuments of the Khorezm oasis and emphasizes that the main place is occupied by the work carried out by the UN organization UNESCO.

**Keywords:** historical and cultural monuments, study of monuments, restoration of monuments, propaganda of monuments.

### Annotatsiya

Maqolada Xorazm vohasida tarixiy-madaniy yodgorliklarni o'rganish, tiklash va targ'ib qilish jarayonidagi xalqaro hamkorlik masalalari ko'rib chiqilgan bo'lib, bunda BMTning YUNESKO tashkiloti tomonidan amalga oshirilayotgan ishlar asosiy o'rinni egallayotganiga urg'u beriladi.

**Kalit so'zlar:** tarixiy-madaniy yodgorliklar, yodgorliklarni o'rganish, yodgorliklarni tiklash, yodgorliklarni targ'ib qilish.

### Аннотация

В статье рассматриваются вопросы международного сотрудничества в процессе изучения, реставрации и популяризации памятников истории и культуры Хорезмского оазиса и подчеркивается, что главное место занимает работа, проводимая организацией ООН ЮНЕСКО.

**Ключевые слова:** памятники истории и культуры, изучение памятников, реставрация памятников, пропаганда памятников.

Cities like Khiva, Bukhara, and Samarkand in Uzbekistan have long been recognized as centers of scientific, cultural, and artistic development. These cities have been listed in the "Common Human Heritage" as their global significance is widely acknowledged. However, until the mid-1990s, Central Asia, including Uzbekistan's historical and cultural heritage, was relatively isolated from the global context. In 1995, UNESCO, the United Nations specialized agency for education, science, and culture, published the book "The History of the Civilizations of Central Asia," particularly emphasizing this situation [9:5].

In that same year, following the UNESCO General Conference's decision to "promote the establishment of institutions for intellectual cooperation in the study of the Silk Roads," an international institute for the study of Central Asia was established in the city of Samarkand. This institute played a pivotal role

in promoting collaboration in the study, preservation, and promotion of the cultural heritage of the region [10:76].

In carrying out this task, the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with the History, Archaeology, and Ethnography Institute of the Karakalpakstan Division and the University of Sydney, initiated the joint Uzbekistan-Australia archaeological expedition. The expedition's research, ongoing since 1995 and extending into the early 21st century, unearthed ancient settlements with names like Oqshaxonqala located on the right bank of the Amudarya River in the Toshqirmankul region among the local population. These investigations have contributed to a better understanding of Khorezm's ancient culture and civilization, as well as addressing the issue of Khorezm's oldest capital [11:43-65]. The northern part of Oqshaxonqala is separated from the rest of the city by another fortress wall. Within the so-called "sacred city," dating back to the 2nd to 1st centuries BCE, a temple and a domed corridor leading to it were discovered and examined [25:29-32]. Due to the presence of grass and traces of people moving along the corridor, as well as the heads of 30 individuals found at the entrance, the gallery of portraits in the Oqshaxonqala temple is referred to as the "Portraits of Unknown Rulers of Khorezm"[26:110-117]. This environment led to archaeological discoveries and discussions. According to E.V. Rtveladze's opinion, the Oqshaxonqala "sacred city" may have housed a vividly colored temple and the portraits of African rulers, with their unique portrait style closer to the artistic traditions of the 3rd to 4th centuries[18:99-100]. However, this idea remains speculative.

D.Sh. Gurbanov emphasizes that the portraits in Oqshaxonqala's paintings tend to reflect a particular reverence for the souls of deceased rulers, which could support the idea of a spiritual connection with the rulers' ancestors[13:136-137]. This aspect can be incorporated into the research. To compare, the "Hall of Kings" in the temple of Tuproqqala from the 2nd-3rd centuries CE is adorned with images of deceased kings, signifying a tradition of honoring the spirits of rulers[21:184-192].

In our view, Oqshaxonqala, along with other monuments like Tuproqqala, Qo'yqirilganqal'a, Qal'aliqir-2, and others, played a pivotal role as a major cultural center in the Khorezm region. Most importantly, through collaboration with foreign scholars, new information about the historical and cultural heritage of Khorezm has been acquired, and the ancient art of Khorezm's historical and cultural heritage has been enriched. Moreover, by promoting the cultural heritage of Khorezm internationally, it has created opportunities for a fresh perspective on the history of Khorezm's ancient civilization,[12:119-144] facilitated cooperation, and contributed to the development of tourism.

During the years of independence, Uzbekistan continued its collaboration in the fields of archaeology and ethnology with museums and institutes in the Russian Federation. This collaboration followed traditional practices and, at the same time, aimed to attract local researchers to the Khorezm archaeological and ethnographic expeditions, providing them with specialized training [14:20-21].

In 2019, an agreement on scientific collaboration was signed between the State Museum of the East (Moscow), the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Humanities Research Institute of the Uzbekistan Academy of Sciences, Karakalpakstan Branch. According to this agreement, a joint Uzbekistan-Russia complex archaeological expedition was organized, with its main task being the study of ancient rural heritage in the right bank of the Amudarya River. As a result of the conducted research, traces of wall paintings from the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE were discovered in the palace complex of Katta Qirqqizqala [5:9-12].

Prior to these investigations, S.B. Bolelov, a scientific expert from the State Museum of the East, had conducted archaeological work at Khumbuztepa and Ayozqala, as well as studying the development of ancient agrarian civilizations in the Lower Amudarya region [2:157-160]. Russian researcher N.D. Dvurechenskaya's monograph focused on the terracotta figurines art of Khorezm from the 4th century BCE to the 4th century CE [6:144-133]. Furthermore, V.A. Livshits, a renowned Russian scholar, conducted research on new specimens of Khorezm script dating back to the 3rd to 2nd centuries BCE, which were found in Qal'aliqir-2 and Govurqala.

In addition to these contributions, [15:188-212] E.G. Saryova, the leading expert of the Anthropology and Ethnography Museum in Saint Petersburg, conducted significant ethnographic studies aimed at cataloging fragments of the ancient Khorezm textiles, which are preserved in the State Hermitage Museum [20:16].

It is essential to emphasize that, during the years of independence, Uzbekistan's ancient heritage was researched in collaboration with scientific centers in various countries such as Australia, the United States, China, Germany, Italy, France, Russia, Japan, Poland, Czechia, and others on an international scale. Agreements and partnerships were established, enabling cooperation with foreign scholars and conducting archaeological research on an international level [3:3-4].

However, in the process of studying historical and cultural heritage, challenges remained regarding the integration of Central Asian states and mutual scientific collaboration. These challenges hindered the organization of more regional international conferences, the publication of joint publications, and the formulation of proposals and recommendations, which could have propelled collaborative efforts forward in both academic and practical terms. For instance, due to changes in the ecological conditions in the Aral Sea region, the restoration and preservation of historical monuments became a crucial undertaking. In response to this, archaeologists, ethnologists, architects, and art historians from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, and other countries came together to conduct joint international fundamental scientific research. Particularly, addressing these issues, including the broader theme of Central Asian cultural heritage, was discussed at the international cultural forum titled "Central Asian World Civilizations in the Mirror of the 21st Century," which took place in 2021 in the city of Khiva with the participation of 22 countries' scholars. During the forum, among various critical topics, the discussion included contemporary challenges such as threats to the preservation of historical monuments due to changing circumstances, the encroachment of modern urbanization, reckless construction activities, unauthorized usage of heritage sites, ecological and technological factors. These issues were highlighted as significant threats to the historical and cultural heritage of Central Asia [16:60].

Recognizing the significant place of Khiva in global civilization and its role in cultural advancement, a resolution was adopted during the 1995 UNESCO General Conference to commemorate the 2500th anniversary of Khiva on a global scale. In this context, restoration work was undertaken on historical landmarks in Khiva, including Tosh Hovli, Ko'hna Ark, Feruz and Olloqulixon madrasahs, and the Juma Mosque. Due to the increasing popularity among tourists, UNESCO, in collaboration with Uzbekistan, established silk and carpet weaving craft centers within some of the historical sites in the Ichan Qal'a [24:171].

Additionally, a crafts fair was organized with the assistance of the United Nations (UN). Substantial efforts were made within the framework of the UN's "Cultural and Educational Tourism and Crafts

Development" project, as well as the "Crafts Assistance" project under the Counterpart Consortium. According to researchers, this collaboration facilitated practical arts in Khorezm, such as pottery, ceramics, miniature art, and the production of traditional toys and games. It also aided in rediscovering effective reed cultivation methods [1:34-38].

During the years of independence, certain artisanal sectors in Uzbekistan received investments from foreign countries (such as Turkey, China, and Russia), leading to the modernization of these industries through contemporary technologies. However, as noted by researchers, while factories produced a wide range of textiles, with up to 152 different patterns, the number of patterns in traditional Khiva textiles exceeded 900 [7:279-280]. Therefore, traditional handwoven textiles held significant importance in preserving the traditional craft of carpet weaving in Khorezm. This, in turn, has contributed to the development of urban and regional areas through Khorezm's craft traditions, local initiatives, and investments, helping to preserve the secrets of this practical art.

The "Lazgi" dance holds a special significance in the history of Uzbekistan's traditional dance art, not only within our country but also internationally. Under the Presidential Decree on the organization and conduct of the "Lazgi" International Dance Festival, issued on September 28, 2020, this festival has been held every two years starting from 2022, along with an international scientific-practical conference, both taking place in the city of Khiva.

In April 2022, the inaugural "Lazgi" International Festival in Khorezm included an international scientific-practical conference on the theme "The Place of Uzbek National Dance in World Dance Art," attended by musicians, artists, and dance masters from various countries [4]. The purpose of showcasing the "Lazgi" national dance on the international stage and exploring its performance techniques is to enhance the education process in music and art fields in higher educational institutions, develop additional projects related to the history of dance art, and foster international collaboration. The festival also featured exhibitions of national costumes, craft workshops, and displays of visual and performing arts, contributing to the promotion of Khorezm's cultural heritage on an international scale.

These international events, academic conferences, and cultural forums serve a vital role in Uzbekistan's state policy, aligning with the Presidential Decree on the "Complex Development Plan for Enhancing the Tourism Potential of Khiva City and Khorezm Region for 2017-2021," issued on May 4, 2017. During the implementation of this decree, attracting foreign tourists and promoting cultural heritage among international visitors became a crucial mission.

Indeed, in 2020, Xiva was declared the "Cultural Capital of the Turkic World" during the meeting of the permanent council of the International Organization of Turkic Culture (TURKSOY). Furthermore, in 2022, during the 11th session of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) Member States' Tourism Ministers in Baku, Xiva was announced as the "Tourism Capital of the Islamic World" for the year 2024 [23]. In connection with these events, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan issued a decree on preparations and hosting of the international event "Xiva - 2024 as the Tourism Capital of the Islamic World." The information mentioned above demonstrates that in recent years, international cooperation has gained significant momentum in addressing the role of historical and cultural heritage in contemporary society in Khorezm. This includes studying and promoting the role of historical and cultural heritage in contemporary society, as well as repairing and preserving architectural and

archaeological objects and improving museum work using 3D modeling techniques and modern information technologies.

In this regard, the collaborative project "3D Digital Silk Road," conducted in partnership with Lublin University of Technology by Urgench State University from 2019 to 2022, with the participation of National University of Uzbekistan, Samarkand State University, and Chirchiq Pedagogical University, plays a vital role in exploring and preserving cultural heritage. The project focuses on researching historical monuments, repairing and preserving them, and enhancing tourism development in Uzbekistan, while adhering to the international standards and requirements of UNESCO [17:11-18].

Projects like these play a crucial role in addressing the global challenges of studying and preserving cultural heritage. They contribute to the enhancement and development of the national system for the study and protection of cultural heritage, as well as identifying the activities of state and non-state organizations in this area.

It is worth noting that the "3D Digital Silk Road" project, implemented in coordination with the existing programs for studying and digitizing cultural heritage in the Republic of Uzbekistan, has yielded positive results. As a result, scans of Xorezm national costumes from the Pahlavon Mahmud and Sayid Alovuddin mausoleums, Ko'hna Ark, as well as items from Ayozqal'a and museum collections dating back to the 3rd-2nd centuries BC, have been created [18:7-9]. The collected data is used to create 3D models of cultural artifacts and is shared among research projects.

Within the framework of this project, two international conferences were organized, and four scientific collections were published [21:178]. Uzbekistan's partner universities, including Urgench State University, expanded their international scientific contacts. Four researchers from the university gained theoretical and practical knowledge related to 3D scanning of both large and small cultural objects and the creation of virtual museums. Additionally, students from the university's History Faculty participated in 3D scanning seminars and training sessions, and a special course titled "Digital Khiva" was developed based on the project materials for university students [12:193-196]. Continued international cooperation in the field of historical and cultural heritage and 3D modeling technologies is essential. Firstly, such collaboration allows for the use of valuable global experience in the positive outcomes of researching historical artifacts, further enhancing the system for repairing, preserving, and restoring historical and cultural heritage objects. Secondly, it enables the preservation of archaeological and architectural monuments, which are often located far from settlements, abandoned, and at risk due to various factors, in a virtual form using 3D modeling techniques, especially in the context of modern possibilities.

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