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CHANGES AND LEVEL OF PRESERVATION OF HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS OF THE KASHKADARYA OASIS DURING THE SOVIET ERA

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Abstract. This article examines the changes and preservation level of historical and architectural monuments in the Kashkadarya oasis during the Soviet era. The study analyzes the impact of Soviet cultural policy, urban modernization, restoration activities, and scientific documentation on the condition of architectural heritage in the region. Particular attention is given to the preservation of historical authenticity, the transformation of monument functions, and the influence of ideological and administrative decisions on cultural heritage management. The findings indicate that the Soviet period was characterized by both significant conservation achievements and irreversible losses resulting from urban reconstruction and socio-political transformations. The research contributes to a deeper understanding of regional heritage preservation history and provides a historical basis for improving contemporary conservation strategies in Uzbekistan.

Keywords: Kashkadarya, monuments, architecture, preservation, restoration, heritage, urbanization, conservation, archaeology, modernization.

Introduction. The historical and architectural monuments of the Kashkadarya oasis represent an integral part of the cultural heritage of Central Asia, reflecting the region’s long-standing traditions of urban planning, architecture, craftsmanship, and socio-cultural development. Located at the crossroads of ancient trade routes, the oasis served for centuries as one of the principal centers of political, economic, and cultural interaction, where numerous civilizations contributed to the formation of a unique architectural landscape. The cities of Shahrisabz, Karshi, Kitab, and several smaller settlements preserve valuable examples of Islamic architecture, medieval urban infrastructure, religious complexes, caravanserais, fortifications, and public buildings that demonstrate the continuity of local architectural traditions. These monuments constitute not only national heritage but also an important component of world civilization. The twentieth century, particularly the Soviet period, introduced significant political, ideological, and socio-economic transformations that substantially affected the preservation and utilization of historical monuments throughout Uzbekistan. State policies toward cultural heritage were characterized by contradictory tendencies. On one hand, scientific expeditions, archaeological investigations, architectural documentation, and restoration projects were initiated under centralized institutions responsible for monument protection. These activities enabled the identification and registration of numerous historical sites and contributed to the emergence of systematic conservation practices. On the other hand, ideological priorities emphasizing modernization and socialist urban development often resulted in the neglect, reconstruction, functional alteration, or destruction of many historical structures whose religious or traditional functions conflicted with official state policy. Within this context, the Kashkadarya oasis experienced considerable changes in its historical environment. The expansion of industrial infrastructure, new residential districts, transportation networks, and administrative centers transformed the traditional urban fabric that had developed over centuries. Several monuments lost their original functions, while others underwent reconstruction without sufficient consideration of historical authenticity. Some architectural ensembles were incorporated into new urban planning schemes, whereas numerous archaeological sites remained insufficiently studied or inadequately protected. Consequently, the Soviet period represents a complex

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stage in the history of architectural heritage preservation, combining both conservation initiatives and irreversible losses.

Contemporary heritage studies increasingly emphasize the necessity of reassessing Soviet-era approaches to monument preservation through interdisciplinary historical analysis. Modern scholarship recognizes that understanding the mechanisms of preservation, adaptation, and transformation implemented during the twentieth century provides valuable insights for present-day conservation strategies. In Uzbekistan, recent academic research has focused on archival materials, restoration practices, cultural policy, and regional heritage management, offering new perspectives on the interaction between state ideology and architectural conservation. These investigations demonstrate that regional case studies are essential for revealing local specificities that cannot be fully understood through generalized national narratives. Despite growing scholarly attention to the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan, the Soviet-era preservation history of the Kashkadarya oasis remains insufficiently explored from a comprehensive historical perspective. Existing studies primarily examine individual monuments or restoration projects, while broader analyses of preservation policies, institutional activities, urban transformation processes, and their long-term consequences remain limited. The absence of integrated research complicates the objective evaluation of both the achievements and shortcomings of Soviet conservation practices in the region.

The relevance of this study is determined by the increasing importance of preserving historical and architectural heritage within the framework of sustainable cultural development and national identity formation. Investigating the changes experienced by the monuments of the Kashkadarya oasis during the Soviet era contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationship between political ideology, urban modernization, and cultural heritage management. Furthermore, the results of such research may provide a historical foundation for contemporary restoration policies and contribute to improving strategies for the protection and promotion of architectural monuments in Uzbekistan. The purpose of this article is to analyze the transformations and preservation level of historical and architectural monuments in the Kashkadarya oasis during the Soviet period by examining conservation policies, restoration activities, urban development processes, and the historical factors that influenced the survival or alteration of architectural heritage. The study seeks to identify the principal trends that shaped the preservation of the region's monuments and to evaluate their historical significance within the broader context of cultural heritage protection in Uzbekistan.

Literature review. The study of historical and architectural monuments in Uzbekistan has expanded considerably during recent decades, reflecting the growing importance of cultural heritage preservation in both academic research and national development strategies. Contemporary Uzbek scholarship increasingly emphasizes that architectural monuments should be examined not merely as isolated historical objects but as complex cultural systems that embody political history, religious traditions, artistic achievements, and regional identity. Such an interdisciplinary approach has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution of historical cities and the mechanisms influencing the preservation of architectural heritage across different historical periods. Research devoted to the Kashkadarya oasis occupies a special position within Uzbek historiography because of the region's exceptional concentration of archaeological sites and medieval architectural complexes. Recent investigations highlight that the oasis developed as one of the principal cultural and economic centers of southern Central Asia, where urban civilization continuously evolved through various political epochs. Studies devoted to Shahrisabz and Karshi demonstrate that local architectural traditions combined influences from Timurid, Islamic, and indigenous construction schools, resulting in unique architectural forms characterized by monumental scale, decorative diversity, and advanced

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engineering solutions. Scholars argue that understanding these regional characteristics is essential for evaluating subsequent preservation processes during the twentieth century.

A significant body of literature examines the institutional development of monument protection in Uzbekistan during the Soviet era. Researchers note that centralized administrative systems established specialized organizations responsible for archaeological investigations, monument registration, restoration planning, and technical documentation. These institutions created the first systematic inventories of historical monuments and introduced scientific methods for architectural measurement and conservation. According to recent studies, these activities formed an important basis for contemporary heritage management because many monuments were documented before undergoing substantial transformation or deterioration. Consequently, Soviet scientific documentation remains a valuable historical source for present-day restoration projects and comparative architectural analysis. At the same time, Uzbek scholars emphasize that Soviet cultural policy toward historical monuments was strongly influenced by ideological considerations. Research demonstrates that architectural heritage associated with religious institutions frequently experienced changes in function, administrative control, or physical structure as a consequence of secularization policies. Numerous mosques, madrasas, shrines, and traditional public buildings were converted into warehouses, museums, educational institutions, or administrative facilities. Although such adaptation occasionally prevented complete destruction, it often altered the original architectural composition and reduced historical authenticity. Contemporary historians therefore characterize Soviet preservation policy as a combination of conservation efforts and ideological transformation rather than a purely protective system.

Urban planning studies provide another important perspective for understanding changes in the architectural landscape of the Kashkadarya oasis. Recent literature indicates that rapid industrialization and socialist urban modernization significantly affected the spatial organization of historical cities. The construction of new residential districts, industrial enterprises, transportation infrastructure, and public institutions frequently required extensive reconstruction of historical neighborhoods. Traditional urban morphology was partially replaced by standardized planning models that prioritized economic development and administrative functionality. Scholars argue that these interventions transformed not only individual monuments but also the broader historical environment that gave architectural complexes their cultural significance. The restoration practices implemented during the Soviet period have also received considerable scholarly attention. Contemporary Uzbek researchers observe that restoration methodologies evolved gradually from simple structural repair toward scientifically based conservation principles. Architectural surveys, archival research, and archaeological excavations increasingly informed restoration decisions, particularly for monuments recognized as nationally significant. Nevertheless, several studies point out that restoration projects occasionally introduced modern construction materials or design elements that differed from original historical forms. As a result, questions concerning authenticity, reconstruction accuracy, and the balance between preservation and renovation remain central themes in current heritage studies.

Recent investigations focusing specifically on Shahrisabz emphasize its outstanding role as one of the most important architectural centers in Central Asia. Scholars describe the city's monumental complexes as exceptional examples of Timurid urban planning and architectural innovation. Research demonstrates that several major monuments underwent restoration during the Soviet period due to their historical significance and international scholarly interest. However, surrounding historical neighborhoods experienced substantial restructuring, leading to changes in the traditional urban context of these monuments. Modern researchers therefore stress that evaluating preservation should include not only individual buildings but also their relationship with the surrounding historical

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landscape. Another important direction of contemporary literature concerns the documentation and preservation of archaeological heritage within the Kashkadarya oasis. Archaeological surveys conducted during the twentieth century identified numerous ancient settlements, fortifications, irrigation systems, and cultural layers that significantly expanded knowledge about regional history. Recent Uzbek scholarship argues that archaeological research played a crucial role in protecting many sites from complete destruction during agricultural expansion and urban development. Nevertheless, several investigations indicate that insufficient legal protection and limited financial resources prevented comprehensive conservation of many archaeological monuments, resulting in irreversible losses for historical science.

Studies devoted to cultural heritage management increasingly emphasize the importance of integrating historical research with modern conservation policies. Contemporary authors argue that preservation should extend beyond physical restoration to include historical documentation, public education, sustainable tourism, and community participation. Such approaches reflect international heritage management principles while considering local cultural traditions and regional historical experience. Within this framework, the Soviet period is analyzed not exclusively through ideological evaluation but also through objective assessment of administrative structures, scientific achievements, and practical conservation activities that influenced the current condition of historical monuments. Despite the considerable expansion of heritage studies in Uzbekistan, recent literature identifies several unresolved issues concerning the Kashkadarya oasis. Existing publications often focus on individual monuments, archaeological discoveries, or restoration projects without providing an integrated historical analysis of preservation processes across the entire Soviet period. Comparative assessments of conservation policies, urban transformation, institutional development, and regional heritage management remain relatively limited. Furthermore, insufficient attention has been devoted to examining how modernization policies influenced the authenticity and integrity of architectural ensembles within their historical urban context. The analysis of contemporary Uzbek scientific literature therefore demonstrates that the preservation history of the Kashkadarya oasis during the Soviet era remains a complex and multidimensional research problem. Existing scholarship provides valuable information regarding architectural history, restoration practices, archaeological investigations, and cultural policy, yet comprehensive synthesis of these factors remains insufficient. This situation highlights the necessity of further historical analysis aimed at evaluating both the positive contributions and the limitations of Soviet-era preservation activities while identifying their long-term impact on the current state of the region's historical and architectural heritage.

Research discussion. The historical and architectural monuments of the Kashkadarya oasis experienced both preservation and transformation during the Soviet period, reflecting the complex interaction between state ideology, modernization policies, and scientific conservation activities. The analysis of available historical materials and contemporary scholarly interpretations indicates that Soviet heritage policy cannot be evaluated solely as a destructive or protective phenomenon. Instead, it represented a multifaceted process in which conservation initiatives coexisted with extensive urban restructuring and ideological adaptation. One of the most significant achievements of this period was the institutionalization of monument registration, archaeological surveys, and architectural documentation. Scientific expeditions organized by specialized research institutions contributed to identifying numerous historical sites and recording their architectural characteristics. These activities created valuable archival materials that today serve as important references for restoration projects and historical reconstruction. In many cases, monuments that no longer exist physically remain documented through surveys, drawings, and photographic archives prepared during the Soviet era.

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Simultaneously, rapid industrialization and socialist urban planning significantly altered the historical environment of cities within the Kashkadarya oasis. Traditional neighborhoods surrounding monumental complexes were partially replaced by new administrative buildings, residential districts, and transportation infrastructure. Such interventions frequently disrupted the historical urban landscape that had developed over centuries and reduced the integrity of architectural ensembles. Although individual monuments were preserved, their historical context often disappeared, limiting opportunities to understand their original cultural and spatial functions. Religious architecture experienced particularly profound changes during this period. Many mosques, madrasas, and shrines lost their original religious functions and were converted into museums, warehouses, educational institutions, or administrative facilities. While these adaptations occasionally prevented structural collapse, they also transformed the cultural meaning and authenticity of historical monuments. Nevertheless, several nationally significant monuments received systematic restoration, reflecting recognition of their exceptional historical and artistic value despite prevailing ideological constraints. The findings suggest that Soviet conservation policies produced contradictory long-term consequences. Scientific documentation and restoration efforts contributed substantially to preserving architectural heritage, whereas urban modernization and ideological interventions resulted in irreversible losses affecting both individual monuments and their historical surroundings. Therefore, contemporary heritage management in Uzbekistan should integrate historical experience with modern conservation principles to ensure that restoration efforts preserve not only architectural structures but also their cultural and urban context.

Conclusion. The Soviet period constituted a decisive stage in the preservation history of the historical and architectural monuments of the Kashkadarya oasis. Government-supported scientific investigations and restoration activities established the foundation for systematic heritage protection and contributed to documenting numerous monuments that remain valuable for contemporary scholarship. At the same time, modernization policies, urban reconstruction, and ideological transformations altered many historical structures and their traditional environments, reducing their authenticity and cultural integrity. The study demonstrates that Soviet-era preservation policies produced both positive and negative outcomes, requiring balanced historical evaluation rather than one-sided interpretation. Understanding these processes provides important insights for contemporary conservation practice and sustainable cultural heritage management in Uzbekistan. Future research should focus on comprehensive regional analyses combining archival documents, archaeological evidence, urban planning history, and architectural studies to develop more effective strategies for preserving the unique historical landscape of the Kashkadarya oasis.

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