

PROTECTING CULTURAL HERITAGE OBJECTS IS THE CIVIC DUTY OF EACH OF US!

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Abstract: This article generalizes information about the state policy and legal foundations regarding the preservation of cultural heritage objects in our country, as well as the essence and significance of recent activities in this field.

Keywords: cultural heritage, tourism, object, reform, historical monument, sacred site, pilgrimage site, archaeology, restoration, memorial, tourist, UNESCO

Since the early years of Uzbekistan's independence, significant attention has been paid to the preservation, reconstruction, and study of the historical origins of cultural heritage objects, sacred pilgrimage sites, and historical monuments. Scholars have created a variety of scientific and popular works on these unique cultural heritage objects and historical and architectural monuments.

Article 61 of the updated Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan emphasizes: “Citizens must preserve the historical, spiritual, cultural, scientific, and natural heritage of the Uzbek people. The historical, spiritual, cultural, scientific, and natural heritage shall be protected by the state.”

This constitutional provision ensures that thousands of historical and cultural heritage objects in our country are under state protection. Preserving these objects as they are, safeguarding them for future generations, and passing them on intact is considered a sacred duty and responsibility for the nation's citizens. Indeed, historical pilgrimage sites and monuments inherited from our ancestors are invaluable treasures that have survived through centuries of trials and historical turbulence to reach us.

The grandeur, unique style, and aesthetic harmony of this exceptional heritage speak to the intellectual brilliance and unparalleled architectural skills of our great ancestors.

In Uzbekistan, systematic efforts have been undertaken to preserve and safeguard cultural heritage objects, and the legal foundations for these efforts have been solidified. Among such measures is the establishment of the Agency for Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan, organized under the Presidential Decree dated June 19, 2021, titled “On Measures to Organize the Activities of the Agency for Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports of the Republic of

Uzbekistan and to Promote the Innovative Development of the Sector.” This initiative exemplifies the systematic approach to advancing this domain.

The Cultural Heritage Agency is a specialized state management body authorized in the Republic of Uzbekistan in the fields of tangible cultural heritage, museums, archaeology, and the export and import of cultural valuables.

Following this, by Presidential Decree No. PF-14 dated January 25, 2023, “On Priority Organizational Measures to Effectively Establish the Activities of the Republic’s Executive Bodies,” it was restructured as an independent agency. Additionally, by Presidential Resolution No. PQ-177 dated June 1, 2023, “On Measures to Effectively Organize State Management in the Field of Cultural Heritage Within the Framework of Administrative Reforms,” the directions of its activities were determined.

The tasks of the Cultural Heritage Agency are defined in accordance with Resolution No. 649 of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan and include the following:

In the field of safeguarding tangible cultural heritage objects:

- Identifying, registering, preserving, and promoting tangible cultural heritage objects, maintaining the state registry, electronic catalog, passport, and state cadastre, designating protected boundaries, and implementing state control in the field of tangible cultural heritage.
- Rational use of tangible cultural heritage objects, including their effective management through public-private partnerships, digitization of the tangible cultural heritage sector, and the introduction of modern information technologies.
- Implementing conservation measures for immovable tangible cultural heritage objects, performing the functions of a client for preservation projects, conducting continuous scientific and technical monitoring, and carrying out historical and cultural examinations as well as assessments of the impact of project-estimate documentation on historical and cultural values.

In the field of museums:

- Maintaining the state catalog of the national museum fund, including adding and removing museum objects and collections from the fund, transferring ownership through universal legal succession or other methods, and exercising state control in the museum sector.
- Coordinating and developing museum activities, enhancing the qualifications of museum staff through training and certification, determining museum classifications, ensuring the openness of the national museum fund, and conducting research, popularization, restoration, and conservation of museum objects and collections.

In the field of specially protected historical and cultural territories:

- Protecting specially designated historical and cultural territories, preparing their passports, management plans, and regulations, establishing protected boundaries, and preserving the historical and cultural value, uniqueness, natural landscape, and distinctive features of these territories and historical neighborhoods.
- Proposing historical sites for inclusion in the World Heritage List, ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, and monitoring the implementation of recommendations from UNESCO, the World Heritage Center, and the World Heritage Committee within the country.

In the field of archaeology:

- Supporting, coordinating, and monitoring archaeological research, granting permits for archaeological studies, conducting expert reviews of scientific reports, and ensuring their preservation.
- Maintaining the state catalog of archaeological artifacts, organizing the transfer of archaeological items to the state, and assigning them to academic, cultural, and educational institutions or deaccessioning them.
- Safeguarding archaeological heritage objects, conducting urgent studies of endangered archaeological sites, conserving and museumizing archaeological sites, and establishing archaeological parks.

In the field of cultural assets within the country and abroad:

- Safeguarding cultural assets, including issuing certificates for their export from and import into the Republic of Uzbekistan, coordinating their realization, conducting artistic expertise, determining their classification, maintaining the state registry, and exercising state control in this sector.
- Identifying cultural assets related to the history and culture of Uzbekistan abroad, creating a comprehensive database of these items, regularly updating it, and bringing their originals or copies, as well as photo and video records, to Uzbekistan.
- Publishing bibliographic collections, catalogs, books, albums, information bulletins, and other printed materials in various languages based on scientific studies and analytical findings, widely disseminating them through mass media and the Internet, and collaborating with international and foreign organizations.

Historical and cultural sites located across various regions of our country are among the primary destinations for foreign tourists visiting our homeland. These marvels of history, standing tall for centuries, naturally leave every tourist in awe. These enchanting examples, which captivate any visitor, serve as crucial tools for the development of tourism in our nation.

It is worth noting that 8,210 cultural heritage sites have been registered in our country to date, each carrying its unique rich history and past. The cultural heritage sites in our country are our national wealth and a testament to our rich history. Hence,

preserving them is the duty, constitutional responsibility, and obligation of the present generation.

To study the work being carried out in this direction, the Committee on Science, Education, Culture, and Sports Issues of the Legislative Chamber has been regularly organizing activities under parliamentary oversight. Notably, a hearing was held with the participation of the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan to review the state of efforts to preserve and protect cultural heritage sites.

According to the information provided during the hearing, advisory councils established in the regions have been examining cultural heritage sites, identifying those to be included or removed from the national register. Specifically, it was recommended to remove 308 sites from the register and to add 616 new sites.

Additionally, in November of this year, a parliamentary inquiry titled "On the work being carried out to account for, preserve, and ensure the protection of cultural heritage sites" was submitted to Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Tourism and Cultural Heritage A. Abdukhakimov by the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis.

According to the survey results, it has been noted that immovable cultural heritage objects are being re-evaluated through historical and cultural expertise based on the relevant decree of our President dated June 19, 2021. Specifically, to date, 178 objects in the Republic of Karakalpakstan, 105 in the Andijan region, 196 in the Jizzakh region, 245 in the Navoi region, 130 in the Namangan region, 66 in the Syrdarya region, 354 in the Tashkent region, 70 in the Fergana region, and 63 in the city of Tashkent have undergone re-evaluation through historical and cultural expertise. It has been stated that by the end of 2022, 6,803 more objects are planned to be re-evaluated, and conclusions are to be obtained.

The role of historical and cultural heritage sites in the development of tourism is significant. Therefore, the regular maintenance, restoration, and conservation of these monuments are of utmost importance. The increasing amount of funds allocated for these purposes each year is noteworthy.

According to the Ministry of Tourism and Cultural Heritage, special attention is being given to the restoration, repair, and conservation of cultural heritage sites. For these purposes, a total of 59.9 billion UZS was allocated for 73 objects in 2019, 63.6 billion UZS for 75 objects in 2020, 45.7 billion UZS for 56 objects in 2021, and 164.9 billion UZS for 69 objects in 2022.

These efforts continued in 2023, with over 100 billion UZS allocated for the restoration of 57 unique cultural heritage sites across the country. Furthermore, scientific research and museumification work are planned for major archaeological monuments such as Dalvarzintepa, Mingtepa, Chilanzar Oktepa, Sherozkala, and Koyqirilgankala. Community inspectors have been assigned to protect 4,599 of the 8,210 cultural heritage objects.

Additionally, the Ministry reported that preliminary agreements have been reached with countries such as Korea, Japan, France, Italy, Turkey, Iran, and Russia in the field of preserving cultural heritage objects.

In conclusion, systematic work is being carried out in this area in our country. Every citizen of the Republic of Uzbekistan must deeply understand the responsibilities outlined in our renewed Constitution and recognize that preserving historical and cultural heritage is our sacred duty.

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