

# Political and Organizational-Legal Foundations for Integrating Uzbekistan's Cultural Heritage into Tourism

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## ABSTRACT

This article analyzes the political, organizational, and legal foundations of protecting material and cultural heritage objects in Uzbekistan and integrating them into the tourism sector. The study highlights the policy pursued toward cultural heritage objects during the Soviet period, its negative consequences, and the new approaches formed during the years of independence. In addition, the article examines national legislation related to the preservation and use of cultural heritage, international conventions, and the institutional foundations of the state management system. The research substantiates that integrating historical and cultural heritage objects into tourism is an important factor not only in preserving cultural values, but also in developing regional tourism and increasing economic efficiency.

**Keywords:** Cultural heritage, tourism, historical and cultural monuments, material and cultural heritage, restoration, conservation, Uzbekistan, tourism policy, legal foundations, UNESCO, historical memory, archaeological monuments.

## INTRODUCTION

In the process of studying their history, the peoples of the world turn to historical sources, the activities of historical figures, and tangible as well as intangible monuments. Material and cultural monuments reflect different stages of human history as important historical sources. Therefore, the condition in which they have survived to the present day is significant not only from a historical perspective, but also plays an important role in the development of the tourism industry in every country [1].

During the former Soviet period, state policy toward material and cultural heritage objects was mainly based on the principle of subordinating them to economic needs, while the historical and cultural significance of monuments was not given sufficient attention. Especially by the late 1980s, the general socio-economic crisis that emerged in the former Soviet Union negatively affected the condition

of cultural heritage sites [2].

During this period, the system for protecting cultural heritage objects weakened, and preservation and restoration activities were inadequately funded. As a result, many historical monuments fell into neglect, while some began to lose their original appearance due to various economic activities. At the same time, a utilitarian approach toward cultural heritage objects prevailed, limiting opportunities for the effective use of their scientific, historical, and tourism potential [3].

This situation can clearly be observed in the example of the Oqtepa monument. After the 1966 Tashkent earthquake, part of the territory of this 5th-century archaeological monument was turned into a household waste disposal site, while another part was allocated for construction needs. As a result, the monument's territory sharply decreased,

causing serious damage to its historical and cultural appearance [4].

This situation demonstrates the decline in attention toward cultural heritage during the final stage of the Soviet system and indicates the emergence of a systemic crisis in this sphere. The reduction of archaeological monuments in certain regions also clearly illustrates the negative consequences of this period. In particular, in Andijan region, nearly 690 archaeological mounds had been identified before the 1980s, but according to the results of later studies, their number decreased to 267 [5].

During the years of independence, the protection and rational use of cultural heritage objects became one of the priority directions of state policy in Uzbekistan. In particular, within the framework of reforms aimed at transforming tourism into a strategic sector of the economy, the effective use of historical and cultural objects and their promotion in the international tourism market were identified as important tasks [6].

The legal basis of this political approach is first reflected in Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which establishes citizens' obligation to preserve historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage and states that cultural monuments are under state protection [7].

Legislation concerning historical and cultural monuments was developed in accordance with international legal norms, and many international agreements and conventions related to the sphere were ratified. In particular, Uzbekistan joined the "Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage" in 1993 and the Hague Convention "On the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict" in 1996 [8].

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects" No. 269-II, adopted on August 30, 2001, is considered the main legal document regulating the preservation of historical and cultural heritage in Uzbekistan. This law defines the procedures for registering, protecting, using, and restoring cultural heritage objects, as well as the responsibilities of state bodies and property owners [9].

These legal and normative foundations not only ensure the protection of cultural heritage objects, but also create an

important institutional basis for integrating them into tourism, promoting them internationally, and increasing their economic efficiency.

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During the former Soviet period, state policy toward material and cultural heritage objects was mainly based on the principle of subordinating them to economic needs, while the historical and cultural significance of monuments was not given sufficient attention. Especially by the late 1980s, the general socio-economic crisis that emerged in the former Soviet Union negatively affected the condition of cultural heritage sites.

During this period, the system for protecting cultural heritage objects weakened, and preservation and restoration activities were inadequately funded. As a result, many historical monuments fell into neglect, while some began to lose their original appearance due to various economic activities. At the same time, a utilitarian approach toward cultural heritage objects prevailed, limiting opportunities for the effective use of their scientific, historical, and tourism potential.

This situation can clearly be observed in the example of the Oqtepa monument. After the 1966 Tashkent earthquake, part of the territory of this 5th-century archaeological monument was turned into a household waste disposal site, while another part was allocated for construction needs. As a result, the monument's territory sharply decreased, causing serious damage to its historical and cultural appearance. A certain part of the remaining area was also covered with waste, limiting opportunities to fully demonstrate the monument's scientific and cultural significance.

This situation demonstrates the decline in attention toward cultural heritage during the final stage of the Soviet system and indicates the emergence of a systemic crisis in this sphere.

The reduction of archaeological monuments in certain regions also clearly illustrates the negative consequences of this period. In particular, in Andijan region, nearly 690 archaeological mounds had been identified before the 1980s, but according to the results of later studies, their number decreased to 267. Of these, 45 were completely destroyed, and only 222 monuments have survived to the present day.

These data indicate that a large portion of the archaeological monuments in the region disappeared over the last 35–40 years. Moreover, the establishment of cemeteries on some of the remaining sites damaged their scientific and historical value. This confirms that the system for protecting material and cultural heritage objects was not sufficiently effective and that comprehensive measures for their preservation were necessary.

These processes later created the need during the independence period to restore cultural heritage sites and develop them as national values. During the Soviet era, certain scientific and practical work was also carried out in the field of studying and protecting material and cultural heritage objects. In particular, archaeological research was conducted, some historical monuments were included in the state register, and scientific institutions were established. Specifically, between 1920 and 1980, conservation and restoration works were carried out on a total of 240 architectural monuments across the republic.

However, these activities were mainly implemented within the framework of a centralized administrative system, and their scale and effectiveness were insufficient to cover all cultural heritage sites. Therefore, although some monuments were restored, many others remained neglected or gradually lost their historical appearance as a result of economic activities. Especially by the end of the 1980s, under conditions of socio-economic crisis, the weaknesses of this system became even more evident.

The shortcomings that existed in the system of protecting material and cultural heritage objects during the final stage of the Soviet period, as well as the losses caused by them, created the need for a fundamentally new approach toward this sphere during the years of independence.

Therefore, after the Republic of Uzbekistan gained state independence in 1991, attitudes toward cultural heritage objects changed dramatically, and they began to be recognized as symbols of national values and historical

memory.

During the years of independence, the protection and rational use of cultural heritage objects became one of the priority directions of state policy in Uzbekistan. During this period, the approach toward cultural heritage shifted from a utilitarian character to viewing it as a national value and strategic resource. In particular, within the framework of reforms aimed at transforming tourism into a strategic sector of the economy, the effective use of historical and cultural objects and their promotion in the international tourism market were identified as important tasks. As a result, cultural heritage began to be valued not only as a historical treasure, but also as an economic resource.

The legal basis of this political approach is first reflected in Article 61 of the Constitution of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which establishes citizens' obligation to preserve historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage and states that cultural monuments are under state protection. This norm forms the constitutional foundation for the preservation and use of cultural heritage. On the basis of this article, numerous normative legal acts were adopted. The normative and legal documents related to the scientific study, preservation, restoration, and use of historical and cultural monuments can be divided into several main groups according to their content and scope.

First, laws adopted by the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which constitute the legal basis of this sphere, occupy an important place. Second, there are resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan regulating the protection and use of cultural heritage objects. Third, decrees and resolutions adopted by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which define state policy and determine priority directions in the sphere, are of special significance. Fourth, regulations and normative documents developed by ministries and agencies directly responsible for the sector ensure the practical and effective functioning of this system.

Legislation concerning historical and cultural monuments was developed in accordance with international legal norms, and many international agreements and conventions related to the sphere were ratified by the Oliy Majlis. In particular, Uzbekistan joined the “Madaniy va tabiiy merosni muhofaza qilish umumjahon Konvensiyasi” (Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage) in 1993 and “G‘arbiy mojarolar vaqtida madaniy boyliklarni muhofaza qilish

haqida”gi Gaaga konvensiyasi (the Hague Convention “On the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict”) in 1996.

According to the Resolution of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan dated August 31, 1996, “On Certain Issues of Privatization and Denationalization of Individual Enterprises and Property,” historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage objects were included among the properties that could not be privatized, sold, or removed from state ownership. This resolution served as the legal basis for placing historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage objects under permanent state control.

The Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan “Madaniy meros obyektlarini muhofaza qilish va ulardan foydalanish to’g’risida” No. 269-II, adopted on August 30, 2001, is considered the main legal document regulating the preservation of historical and cultural heritage in Uzbekistan. This law defines the procedures for registering, protecting, using, and restoring cultural heritage objects, as well as the responsibilities of state bodies and property owners.

The main normative and legal documents in the sphere of protecting material and cultural heritage objects define the composition of these objects, their forms of ownership, and the procedures for their use. According to these legal foundations, material and cultural heritage objects include immovable property objects possessing historical, artistic, scientific, or other cultural significance, including archaeological and architectural monuments.

According to this law, state administration in the sphere of protecting and using material and cultural heritage objects is carried out by the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the O’zarxiv Agency, and local executive authorities. This system forms the institutional basis for the protection and effective use of cultural heritage objects.

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