

# REVIVAL OF PILGRIM TOURISM ON CROSSROAD OF THE GREAT SILK ROAD (ON THE EXAMPLE OF THE TASHKENT OASIS)

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## Abstract

This article is explored the sacred places of the Tashkent region, defined their role in the development of pilgrimage tourism in the Great Silk Road.

**Keywords:** *Holy place, pilgrimage tourism, ethnographic material, cultural object, classification.*

## INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan is one of the countries in Central Asia with a relatively large tourism potential, high level of competition and potential for further development of tourism, as well as a key link in the Great Silk Road project of the World Tourism Organization (WTO), most of the species offered to tourists pass through the territory of Uzbekistan. In turn, the project explores the opportunities to promote pilgrimage tourism, meet the requirements of cultural tourism in terms of quantity and quality, analyze the competitiveness of our national tourism products compared to tourism products of neighbouring countries and explore opportunities for sustainable development of our cultural tourism resources. This necessitates the development of a new development strategy.

## Materials and Methods

Methods of comparison, systematic analysis, descriptive, historical, historical-comparative analysis were used in the research of the topic.

The statistical basis for solving the research problems is the data of the World Tourism Organization, the State Committee for Tourism Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the State Statistics Committee, as well as materials analyzed on the basis of special research and field research.

The Great Silk Road plays an important role in the development of regional and international relations in Central Asia, as well as in the development of tourism. Especially in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries in modern international relations began to pay great attention to the restoration of the Great Silk Road and, on this basis, the coordination of economic, political, cultural, transport and communication relations between the countries within the Silk Road concept. Therefore, the

study of the history of the Great Silk Road, the stages of development, historiography is a topical issue. Indeed, in the new millennium, the Great Silk Road will play a key role in addressing important issues in the cultural, educational and economic spheres, as well as in developing relations between China, East Asia, Russia and Europe. To date, more than a thousand monographs and articles on the history of the Great Silk Road have been written by researchers, mainly on the functions of the trade route, trade relations in different periods, diplomatic and cultural relations and the cities of the Great Silk Road. These literatures differ from each other with different views and methodological approaches. In the monograph authored by O.P. Kobzeva and O.Z. Djalilov, the literature on the study of the Great Silk Road is divided into four groups [1]:

1. Literature of the colonial period;
2. Soviet-era research;
3. Literature on the period of independence of Uzbekistan;
3. Foreign research.

Russian orientalists and historians such as N.S. Lykoshin, V.A. Obruchaeva, V.V. Bartold and I.V. Mushketov gave a brief historical and geographical information about the Great Silk Road in their works [2].

The history of the Great Silk Road in the Soviet era was studied in detail on the basis of diaries written by travelers, archeological expeditions and linguistic, ethnographic, anthropological research.

B.V. Lunen's scientific researches on tourists and scientists who studied the cities and cultural monuments located along the Central Asian route of the Great Silk Road are given in detail [3].

In the second half of the XIX - early XX centuries, scientists such as N.A. Lebedeva, D.N. Anuchina, N.P. Kochergina conducted effective research on the Great Silk Road [4].

In Tashkent in 1990, under the editorship of academician G.A. Pugachenko, "On the Central Asian route to the Great Shelkovogo route. The publication of the book "Essays on the history and culture" played an important role in the revival of the theme of the Great Silk Road [5]. In the same year in Samarkand, the main goal of scientific research was identified by UNESCO at an international seminar on "The formation and development of the Great Silk Road in Central Asia in ancient and medieval times".

E.V. Rtveladze's monograph "Great Indian Way. From the history of the most important trade routes of Eurasia [Великий Индийский путь. Из истории важнейших торговых дорог Евразии]", was published in Russia, is a fundamental work in the study of the history of the Great Silk Road [6]. Academician Yu.F. Buryakov's scientific works are also one of the main sources in the study of trade routes and cities of Movarounnahr, located on the Great Silk Road [7].

Chinese scholar A. Khodjaev's research and monographs on Chinese written sources on the history of Central Asia, the historical and cultural heritage of the Great Silk Road in China, China's influence on modern processes in Central Asia, the development of historical and cultural tourism in Uzbekistan, its unique opportunities, historical and cultural tourism and the Great Patriotic War. Issues such as the Silk Road have been analyzed [8].

International conferences play an important role in studying the history of the Great Silk Road and developing tourism through the Great Silk Road project. In particular, taking into

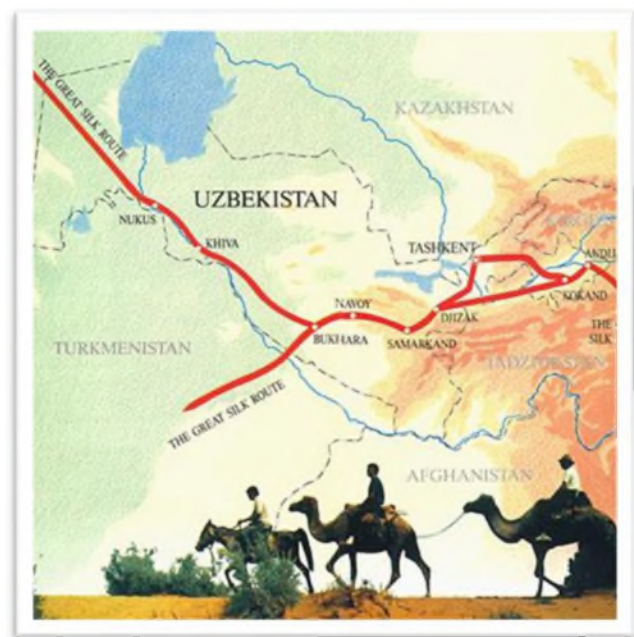
account the special place of the Great Silk Road in the history of civilizations, UNESCO adopted the program “Silk Road - the way of communication” in October 1990 in Samarkand “Development and formation of the Great Silk Road in the past and medieval Central Asia”. “Development of tourism on the Great Silk Road”, “Reconstruction of the Silk Road” in Bukhara on February 21-22, 1996, “On the way to the development and promotion of cultural tourism in the countries of the Great Silk Road”, initiated by UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization (WTO) in March 2013 in Tashkent. “Past and present of the Great Silk Road: socio-cultural, historical, political and economic directions of development”, July 11-13, 2019 in Margilan International Music Festival “Great Silk Road”, May 24-25, 2019 in Samarkand “Great Silk Road” International scientific-practical conferences such as “Renaissance of pilgrimage tourism at the crossroads”. At these international conferences, reports were made on the specifics of the development of cultural tourism, tourism in the sites included in the UNESCO World Heritage List, the development of cultural tourism in Eurasia, the conditions for sustainable cultural tourism in Uzbekistan. The conference materials were published in Russian and English, and experts analyzed the problems of tourism development while preserving the historical and cultural heritage.

## Results and Discussion

Dialogue between nations and civilizations plays an important role in human development. This task has long been performed by caravan routes that unite different peoples and countries and serve for the exchange of science and cultures. The first trade routes began to appear in the Neolithic period and developed on a large scale by the Bronze Age [9]. The Great Silk

Road, one of such ancient caravan routes, has not lost its significance today. In particular, the Europe-Caucasus-Asia transport corridor within the framework of the international cooperation program TRACECA, which connects the regions of the Great Silk Road with each other in economic, transport and communication spheres, has a significant impact on the development of domestic and foreign tourism in Uzbekistan.

**Pic. 1. Map of the Great Silk Road network passing through Uzbekistan**



(source <http://vatandosh.uz/>).

The implementation of the TRACECA program is linked to China's plans to implement the “One Place - One Road” strategy, and the opening of the New Silk Road, a freight and passenger transport route from China to Europe, will play an important role in tourism development between East and West. Today, Uzbekistan pays great attention to radically renewing the country's tourism potential, implementing a unified state policy in the formation of tourism infrastructure, promoting

the rich historical and cultural heritage of our people, ensuring safe tourism in our country, bringing national tourism products to the international tourism market. There are more than 7,300 cultural heritage sites in the country, 209 of which are included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. In addition, Uzbekistan has 11 national parks and 12 nature reserves, 106 museums and many other facilities that can attract tourists. The historical material and spiritual heritage, customs and traditions, ceremonies and holidays of the Uzbek people were formed and perfected in the process of historical development, passed down from ancestors to the present day, and the Great Silk Road was an important factor in intercultural communication.

In the history of the Great Silk Road, the trade network passing through the Tashkent oasis is of great importance. The Tashkent oasis was developed by humans as early as the Paleolithic period. Our ancestors laid the foundation stone of a great civilization in the oasis, which is located in the valley of the river basin Chirchik (Turk, Barak or Parak, Chir), abundantly irrigated by river streams and rivers, fertile land suitable for livestock pastures, agriculture and horticulture. In ancient times, Tashkent (in Turkish-Chach; in Chinese-Yuyni, Chjeshi, Shi, Tashigan; in Arabic-Shosh, Shoshkand) the valleys of the Chirchik and Ahangaron rivers, the vast Dashti Kipchak latitudes and the Movarounnahr agricultural oasis between them occupied mountain and steppe districts. Favorable climate, rich minerals (gold, silver, iron, lead, turquoise) and serum soil have contributed to the economic development of the oasis, as well as the center of mutual economic, political, trade and cultural ties of nomadic pastoralists and settled farmers. At the beginning of the first millennium, the Tashkent oasis became one of the most important centers

of the Great Silk Road. Hundreds of ancient and medieval castles, towns and architectural monuments tell about the ancient and great history of Tashkent. The historical region of Shash was described by Arab, Persian scholars and geographers Al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal and Al-Muqaddas, who traveled throughout the Muslim world. There is no other country like it” [10].

**Pic. 2. General view of the shrine of Masjid Ali**



(photo Sh. B. Jumaeva).

The Tashkent oasis is world-famous not only for its high economic and political status, but also for the great scholars, saints and shrines who were born and raised in this land. Along with trade, cultural and scientific exchanges, pilgrimage ceremonies were held on the Great Silk Road. In particular, caravan traders visited the shrines before and after the long journey. One of the shrines located on such a trade route is located in the village of Kumushkon, Parkent district, Tashkent region, where in the IX-XI centuries there were famous silver mines. Therefore, this corner of Parkent district is one of the historical and natural zones of the Tashkent oasis. The shrine of Masjid Ali was named after Hazrat Ali, the son-in-law of the

Prophet Muhammad (s.a.v). It is known that the descendants of the Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him), who were glorified as “Ahl al-Bayt” for the Muslim community, are the successors of the “Sayyids” after the Noble Messenger.

Pilgrimages to Hazrat Ali and his descendants are common in Muslim lands. The shrines of Khalifa Ali in the villages of Najaf (Iraq), Mazar-i-Sharif (Afghanistan) and Shahimardon in the Fergana Valley have long been revered.

It is narrated that Hazrat Ali came here on the horse of Duldul. He wanted to rest under a plane tree and pray. When he could not find water for ablution, he prayed to Allah. By the grace of Allah, a spring appeared. For this reason, the spring was called Saint-spring by the local people. Hazrat Ali watered the legendary Duldul horse with spring water. Today the shrine is famous for its 750-800-year-old giant maple tree and medicinal spring, which are visited not only by pilgrims and tourists from Uzbekistan, but also from neighboring countries.

In 2010, the shrine was rebuilt on the basis of oriental architecture. A mosque with a blue dome, a mausoleum, a minaret, a corridor leading to the shrine, a kitchen for pilgrims, a birdhouse for sacrifice and rest rooms were built and turned into a unique shrine. The mosque at the mosque Ali Shrine is the tallest mosque in Uzbekistan. The village of Kumushkon is clearly visible from the shrine. Pilgrims pray for Hazrat Ali and offer sacrifices. They tied a piece of cloth to a maple tree (shirk is not allowed at this time). Muqaddas Bulak water is a cure for various wounds with its minerals. Pilgrims visit a lot, mainly in spring and autumn. The mosque has all the conditions for women and men to pray.

Several copies of the Qur'an are placed in the mosque.

**Fig. 3. Entrance to the shrine of Masjid Ali**



(photo by Sh.B. Jumaeva).

Further development of tourism potential of Tashkent region, creation of favorable conditions for tourist tourism by ensuring the interconnectedness of areas with high tourism potential, creation of new tourist routes in specific natural areas of the region, further increase of tourist flow, rapid development of modern tourism infrastructure, as well as tourism In accordance with the decision of the Cabinet of Ministers “On the accelerated development of tourism in Tashkent region in 2019-2021”, the “Kumushkon tourism village” was established in the village of Kumushkon, where the shrine of Masjid Ali is located. According to the decision:

- To hold the annual festival of gastronomic tourism “Sogok cuisine” in the village Sogok of Parkent district in May;
- Holding a “Wine Festival” in August each year in Zarkent area of Parkent district;
- Establishment of 50 family guest houses in the “Tourism Village” in Kumushkon mahalla of Parkent district;

- Establishment of tourist bus and taxi services on the route Parkent-Kumushkon-Parkent;
- Establishment of sanitary-hygienic stations for tourists in the territory of “Kumushkon tourist village” in Parkent district;
- Installation of tourist guides on the sections of A-373 and 4R-12 from Angren to Parkent district;

On the 28-hectare vineyard in Parkent district, tasks such as the implementation of the “Winners' Housing” project dedicated to wine tourism are being identified and implemented.

The number of tourists is growing in Tashkent region due to the consistent implementation of systematic work to improve tourism infrastructure. In particular, in 2019, 900,000 foreign tourists visited the region. The number of visitors in the field of domestic tourism has exceeded 3 million. At the same time, there are currently 46 tour operators and 86 hotels in the region.

From the first years of independence, Uzbekistan has been a major initiator and supporter of the restoration and development of the Silk Road and Silk Road traditions. While the ancient architectural monuments, sacred places and shrines in the territory of our country serve the development of pilgrimage tourism, the rich historical and spiritual heritage, manuscripts, museums are the basis for the development of cultural tourism. Today, a total of 721 cultural heritage sites are registered in Tashkent region by the Interregional State Inspectorate for Tashkent, Tashkent and Syrdarya regions of the Main Department for Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Shrines such as Zangi ota, Sheikh Umar Vali Bogistani, Machit Ali, Zarkent ota, Shodmalik ota, Paygambar ota, Parpi ota,

located in the region, are important objects of cultural heritage not only in the Tashkent region, but also in the development of pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan.

Despite the fact that pilgrimage tourism is one of the new destinations in our country, mainly for Muslim travelers, the services offered in this direction are also attractive for non-Muslim travelers due to its moderate price, safety, cleanliness, convenience for family travel.

#### **Pic. 4. Zangiota Shrine.**



(From the archive fund of the Tashkent regional branch of the international charity foundation “Oltin meros”)

The shrines of Zangiota, Hazrati Ali, Shoabdumalik ota, Buzruk ota, Zarkent ota, Paygambar ota, Shamirqori avliyo, Parpi ota, Sheikh Umar Vali, Buzruk ota, Qirq qiz, located in the Tashkent oasis, are famous not only in our republic, but also in neighboring republics and Russia. Visitors from Turkey, Indonesia, Malaysia, Iran, Pakistan and other countries.

## Conclusion

In addition to the ongoing creative work, there are objective and subjective problems that negatively affect the development of pilgrimage tourism in the region:

- low level of advertising, promotion and propaganda of tourist resources of the region;
- low internet speed. This situation limits the ability for tourists to send their videos and photos online with relatives and loved ones;
- Problems in the infrastructure of the area where the shrines are located: the main part of the roads leading to the shrines need to be repaired, drinking water and natural gas problems;
- It is necessary to reconsider the number of hotels and the quality and cost of services for visitors and tourists;
- In order not to lose the historical and architectural appearance of the shrines and shrines and their harmony with nature, it is necessary to carry out reconstruction and beautification work in collaboration with specialized scientists.

In the long-term plan for the development of pilgrimage tourism in Tashkent region, it would be expedient to put into practice the following:

- It is necessary to strengthen advocacy through the development of sites and mobile applications on tourist resources;
- To further increase the tourist potential, it is necessary to develop virtual tourism programs in 3D format for all tourist facilities in the country. Through the program, tourists will have the opportunity to get acquainted with the historical monuments and get information about the object they want to travel.

- Increasing the number of investment projects in the tourism industry in Tashkent region;

- Increasing the flow of tourists through regional cooperation. For example, in the section of the Great Silk Road project: as a joint species of Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.

- It is necessary to develop and implement programs to support small and medium-sized businesses in the field of tourism. Bureaucratic barriers need to be removed for effective organization;

- Enrichment of the direction of pilgrimage tourism with additional directions, coordination with ecotourism, gastronomic tourism, agritourism, shopping and others. For example, a tourist visiting a health resort in Tashkent region also directly visits the shrines located in the area. We can offer our national products to tourists by developing the sale of national handicrafts and souvenirs in the area of the shrine. The uniqueness of our unique national dishes and sweet fruits and vegetables contributes to the development of gastronomic tourism. In particular, according to the experience of developed countries, the links between gastronomy and tourism can help increase the flow of tourists. However, this type of tourism will prolong the journey of incoming visitors. Today, the share of gastronomic tourism in the revenues of the tourism industry exceeds 30%.

In conclusion, Tashkent region is a region with great potential for the development of not only pilgrimage tourism, but also ecotourism, travel tourism, sports tourism, medical tourism. The Great Silk Road project will promote tourism in the region, provide employment, increase foreign exchange earnings, increase GDP and increase the country's export potential, ensure the stability of foreign exchange earnings and foreign trade balance. Indeed, according to the

international organization Trip Advisor, more than 80 percent of tourists have information about the Great Silk Road. Forbes magazine recognized it as the most well-known brand. Uzbekistan is an active participant in the international project of the United Nations, UNESCO and the World Tourism Organization to revive the ancient Great Silk Road tourism. Therefore, it is necessary to mobilize all efforts to create a tourism hub of Uzbekistan, effectively using the existing opportunities.

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**PDF**

**DOI:**  
https://doi.org/10.17762/sfs.v1.0i2S.1530

**Keywords:**  
Holy place, pilgrimage tourism, ethnographic material, cultural object, classification

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**Issue**  
Vol. 10 No. 2S (2023): Special Issue 2


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Jumaeva Shoira Berdiyarovna, Jaynarov Obidjon Khamid ugli

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