

A MONUMENT THAT SURVIVED THE COURSE OF HISTORY

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| ABSTRACT | KEYWORDS |
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| <p>This article analyzes the historical and spiritual heritage associated with the Termez Sayyid dynasty and local architectural traditions, using the example of the Sultan Saodat architectural complex in the Surkhandarya region. The author examines the architectural features of the mausoleums, construction techniques, decorative elements, and how they reflect cultural and religious values. In particular, the complex, which developed gradually between the 11th and 17th centuries, is described as a compact composition comprising several mausoleums, a mosque, and a khanaqah. The article also presents information about Sayyid Hasan al-Amir and his descendants based on genealogical sources. Furthermore, it explores the historical origins of the Termez Sayyids, their possible connections to the Samanids, and the functioning of the local naqib institution. Special attention is given to the fact that the Sultan Saodat complex was preserved through the initiative of the local population during the Soviet era, a time when efforts were made to destroy Islamic monuments. This study holds significant value from the perspective of local history, Islamic architecture, and the restoration of national cultural heritage.</p> | <p>Sultan Saodat, Termez Sayyids, Surkhandarya architecture, Islamic monuments, mausoleums, Samanids, Naqib institution, history of Termez, architectural complex, Hasan al-Amir, national heritage, religious and cultural center.</p> |

Introduction

The region of Central Asia, particularly the territory of present-day Uzbekistan, holds exceptional significance due to its centuries-old historical and cultural heritage, architectural traditions, and substantial contribution to Islamic civilization. The shrines, mausoleums, and architectural complexes constructed on this land have served not only as religious and spiritual centers but also as distinctive reflections of socio-political processes. From this perspective, the Sultan Saodat architectural complex, located in the Surkhandarya region, represents an important source for studying the historical and religious life of the region, the status of the local Sayyid dynasty, and the developmental stages of national architectural art.

The Sultan Saodat complex was constructed gradually between the 9th and 17th centuries. Its composition—including mausoleums, mosques, and khanaqahs—not only embodies Islamic architectural styles but also reflects the local population's religious beliefs and cultural values. This article provides a scholarly analysis of the architecture and historical significance of the complex, genealogical data related to the Sayyid dynasty, and the processes through which this monument has faced threats of destruction and efforts toward its preservation. The aim is to explore the Sultan Saodat complex not merely as a historical monument, but as a crucial source for restoring national identity and cultural memory.

Analysis of the Relevant Literature

In the process of thoroughly examining the topic from a scholarly perspective, a range of historical, archaeological, and architectural sources, as well as modern academic studies, were analyzed. In particular, aspects such as the formation of the Sultan Saodat complex, the religious and political influence of the Sayyid dynasty involved in its construction, and the evolution of architectural styles were given special attention. In Sh. Kamaliddinov's work *"Historical Geography of Southern Sogd and Tokharistan Based on Arabic Sources from the 9th to the Early 13th Centuries"* (1996), valuable evidence is presented on the historical and ethnographic status of the Termez oasis, the activities of the religious elite—the Sayyids—and their religious and administrative roles in the region. The author convincingly connects the Sultan Saodat complex to historical figures through analysis of Arabic historical sources.

The book *"Medieval Monuments of Surkhandarya"* (1982) by Z.A. Arshavskaya, E.V. Rtveladze, and Z.A. Hakimov provides a detailed scholarly commentary on the stages of architectural development, structural features, and the present condition of the complex. Based on archaeological observations, the authors draw precise conclusions about the historical function and compositional structure of the monument. In V.A. Nielsen's article *"Some Adobe Domed Structures in the Southern Surkhandarya Valley"* (1962), domed buildings constructed from raw bricks in southern Surkhandarya are examined, shedding light on the unique construction techniques used in the Sultan Saodat complex. The author's analysis confirms that the architectural elements of the complex were built in a traditional style specific to the region.

V.D. Zhukov's 1941 study *"Ruins of a Complex of Palace Buildings in the Suburbs of Medieval Termez"* describes palatial structures and their ruins around the city of Termez. This research allows for broader conclusions regarding the historical and geopolitical context of the area where the Sultan Saodat complex is located.

A.M. Pribytkova's monograph *"Construction Culture of Central Asia in the 9th–12th Centuries"* provides an opportunity to assess the architectural elements of Sultan Saodat within the general construction traditions of the region. It contains in-depth analysis of medieval Central Asian architecture, decorative elements, domed structures, and columned verandas.

Together, these sources have served as a solid academic foundation for a comprehensive understanding of the historical, religious, and architectural significance of the Sultan Saodat complex, and for interpreting it as an integral part of the cultural heritage of the people.

Research Methodology

This study employs a set of established historical research methods, including the principles of historicism, comparative and logical analysis, chronological sequencing, and scholarly objectivity. The architectural history of the Sultan Saodat complex is analyzed through a diachronic perspective, with particular attention to the evolution of its construction across various historical periods. The research reinterprets the chronological transformation of the monument within the framework of contemporary historiographical approaches, thereby offering a nuanced understanding of its architectural and cultural development.

Analysis and Findings

Unlike other regions of Uzbekistan, the Surkhandarya architectural school is characterized by the simple decorative use of wall bricks on mausoleums. Most of these mausoleums were built over the graves of Muslim saints, which, according to tradition, turned these burial sites into pilgrimage centers. Over time, religious-memorial complexes emerged at the most sacred of these sites, such as Zul Kifl, at-Termizi, and Sultan Saodat. Additionally, in the Termez oasis, there exist several square-plan, single-chamber domed mausoleums constructed of raw bricks dating back to the 11th–12th centuries, some of which have undergone alterations while others have been preserved.

The Sultan Saodat complex, built over the course of several centuries from the 11th to the 17th centuries, is notable as the burial place of the esteemed clerical dynasty of the Termez Sayyids. This architectural ensemble consists of mausoleums, mosques, and khanaqahs arranged along a long courtyard, forming a unified and compact composition. The southwestern part of the complex, constructed in the 10th–11th centuries, features two large square mausoleums with domes at their centers, considered the oldest structures in the ensemble. During renovations in the 14th–15th centuries, the deep domed iwan located between these mausoleums was raised higher and decorated with multicolored tiles; adjacent to it are two chambers and a corridor.

Subsequently, many buildings within the complex repeated the architectural scheme of the ancient mausoleums, featuring a three-part arched composition with a central open iwan. Throughout the 10th–17th centuries, the Sultan Saodat mausoleums, comprising about twenty mausoleums, formed a funerary complex serving as the family necropolis for the Sayyid elite, the high-ranking Muslim clerical families of the region. This architectural ensemble consists of family mausoleums and ceremonial halls that developed into a unified complex over centuries. The oldest part of the ensemble is located in the southwest and includes two mausoleums with high domed iwans built in the 11th century, containing graves beneath the iwans. The first mausoleum measures 10 by 10 meters, the second 9 by 9 meters, and the spacious area beneath the domes served as a mosque. The brickwork of this mosque is skillfully executed in various styles, exhibiting remarkable craftsmanship.

The first mausoleum houses the remains of Hasan al-Amir, a prominent local landowner and respected family patriarch who died in the latter half of the 9th century. The interior of this mausoleum is richly decorated with bricks laid in diverse patterns and styles, while the adjoining mausoleum's interior is comparatively simpler. Both mausoleum entrances feature latticed doors opening onto the courtyard, a stylistic element that guided the subsequent architectural development of the complex.

A natural question arises: "How did the descendants of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) come to Termez?" According to tradition, Husayn, the son of Ali ibn Abi Talib and Fatimah, married the daughter of the last Sassanian king Yazdegerd. Their son, Husayn al-Akbar, fathered Ubaydullah.

During Caliph al-Mansur's reign (754–775 CE), Amir Ubaydullah was proclaimed caliph. His son Ja'far al-Hujjat governed Medina. The founder of the Termez Sayyids' lineage, Hasan al-Amir, was Ja'far al-Hujjat's son. This genealogy is widely recognized across the Muslim world and is documented in numerous sources.

Hasan al-Amir arrived in Samarkand in 850 CE, residing there for eleven years before relocating to Balkh in 865 CE. Around that time, Hasan al-Amir settled in Termez. His arrival coincided with the rise of the Samanid dynasty in Mawarannahr (Transoxiana). Although scholarly consensus on the origin of the Samanids has not yet been reached, some sources connect them to Termez. The Termez Sayyids' genealogy includes a tradition reporting the annual visit of Ismail Samanid to Termez. Sayyid Amir Abdullah married Mahsuma (or Mohisymo), the daughter of Ismail Samanid. Their descendants began to bear the title "Khudawandzada" (noble-born) among the Termez Sayyids. It is believed that the construction of the Sultan Saodat mausoleum began during the Samanid period. Concurrently, the Sayyid community acquired its own leader — the naqib. In every region inhabited by the Prophet's descendants, there was a naqib (representative) who oversaw religious and legal matters. Until the 10th century, all naqibs were appointed by the Abbasids, and even the descendants of Ali acknowledged their authority. Termez had its own naqib among the Sayyids, whose duties included resolving legal issues and distributing stipends. Among Termez's naqibs, the most renowned was Ali ibn Ja'far al-Mosawi. The works of the famous Muslim scholar Abu'l-Fath Muhammad al-Shahrastani were dedicated to the Termez naqib.

It is important to emphasize that numerous architectural monuments, whose names remain known only from historical records, have yet to be fully studied archaeologically. Many of these structures were destroyed under Soviet policies during the 1930s, justified by the ideological campaign against Islamic religious institutions such as mosques and madrasahs. In the 1950s and 1960s, many sites were further demolished or repurposed under the pretext of land reclamation. Despite these challenges, the Sultan Saodat complex was spared demolition in 1932–1933 due to the efforts of local elders. However, other significant historical sites such as the Chor-ustun Mosque, Termez Minaret, Termez Shahs' Palace, and Afghan Mosque were destroyed, their sites turned into cotton fields.

The Sultan Saodat architectural complex holds a significant place in the history of Islam, the activities of local Sayyid dynasties, and national architectural traditions. It serves not only as a historical monument but also as a spiritual center of great importance in contemporary Islamic culture. Studying such sites contributes critically to the restoration of national identity and historical memory.

Conclusion

The Sultan Saodat monument is not only a medieval architectural heritage site but also a sacred place whose history, formation process, and cultural functions remain highly relevant today. Over the centuries, this complex has played a significant role not only in religion but also in culture, history, architecture, and social life.

From a contemporary historical perspective, the Sultan Saodat complex represents a multidisciplinary research object that embodies the spiritual heritage of society, the religious needs of the people, and the traditions of urban planning and architecture. Its restoration, preservation, and development of tourism potential in the 21st century hold a vital place in national identity and cultural heritage preservation policies.

The dynasties involved in the formation of the complex, the architectural styles employed in its construction, information recorded in historical sources, and modern research collectively reveal not only the religious but also the socio-political significance of this monument. Today, Sultan Saodat is valued not only as a pilgrimage site but also as an important subject of scholarly investigation.

Therefore, the protection, promotion, and deeper academic study of the Sultan Saodat complex remain integral parts of the policy on historical memory and national cultural development in our country.

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