HISTORY OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KOKAND MUSEUM OF GREAT SCHOLARS AND ANALYSIS OF ITS EXPOSITION

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Abstract. *The article presents scientific proposals and observations regarding the activities of the Kokand Museum of Great Scholars, its history of establishment, and the study of its exposition, as well as issues related to improving the exposition system. Within the framework of the research, museums are analyzed as centers for the preservation and development of national cultural heritage in the context of the large-scale initiatives currently being implemented in the country along the path of the "Third Renaissance."*

Keywords: *museum, national cultural heritage, national values, monuments of spiritual culture, museum culture, museum fund, exposition.*

INTRODUCTION

The Kokand Museum of Great Scholars is considered one of the key centers of cultural heritage and scientific traditions in Uzbekistan. The establishment of the museum not only ensures the preservation of the scientific legacy of historical figures but also creates opportunities to present this heritage to a wide audience and utilize it in academic research. At the same time, the development and modernization of the exposition in accordance with the requirements of contemporary museology remains one of the important issues. Founded in 2018 in the city of Kokand, the Museum of Great Scholars is the first museum in the country dedicated to reflecting the activities of encyclopedic scholars. The lack of comprehensive research on the history of its establishment, its exposition, and its structural divisions further increases the relevance of this topic. The museum plays an invaluable role in fostering respect for ancestral heritage and in educating the younger generation to become intellectually developed and enlightened individuals.

The building of the museum previously served as the Kokand City Musical Drama Theatre. This theatre was founded in 1915 by Shohid Miroqilov. Over the course of more than a century, numerous outstanding works were staged in this building by prominent artists. However, in recent years, the building had fallen into a condition requiring significant renovation. As a result of large-scale construction and restoration works carried out on the initiative of the President, the building was completely modernized. All necessary conditions were created for actors to work, rest, and prepare for performances. Within this architectural ensemble, the "Museum of Great Scholars" occupies a special place, housing some of the most valuable examples of national values and spiritual heritage. A new scientific concept for the museum was developed, and on its basis, a thematic exposition plan was created and implemented, marking the beginning of the formation of the museum's exposition.

MAIN PART

The museum was named the “Museum of Great Scholars” upon the initiative of the Head of State. The museum collects exhibit, works, and visual materials related to scholars who lived and created during the medieval period, the Timurid era, the Kokand Khanate, and the pre-colonial period. Visitors to the museum are provided with comprehensive information about the lives, life paths, and creative achievements of our great ancestors. Various household items and artifacts also reflect the lifestyle of those historical periods. The museum’s exhibits are arranged across three floors, with halls and corridors decorated in an aesthetically refined manner that harmoniously combines modern and national styles. The museum features original copies of works by prominent thinkers who lived in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan, including Abu Rayhan Beruni, Mirzo Ulughbek, Alisher Navoi, Ibn Sina, Uvaysiy, Nodira, and others. The collection also includes copies of the Holy Qur’an, traditional male and female clothing, jewelry and ornaments, models of madrasas and mosques, and various historical artifacts.

The museum is located in a three-story building, and its exposition is divided into five sections. The first floor includes exhibitions dedicated to the period of ancient civilizations in Central Asia, covering scholars who lived between the 5th and 9th centuries, as well as halls devoted to the Timurid period and the scholars of the Kokand Khanate. The exposition includes brief information about the life and work of Musa al-Khwarizmi, along with a manuscript copy of one of his most famous works, the “Zij.” Another section presents Abu Nasr al-Farabi and his renowned works, including “The Virtuous City.” A copy of Abu Rayhan Beruni’s work “India” is also displayed. In the following section, information about Abu Ali Ibn Sina is provided, along with manuscript excerpts related to medicine.

Another part of the exposition is dedicated to Imam al-Bukhari. In addition to this, the museum displays Hadith collections, considered second only to the Holy Qur’an in Islamic tradition. A manuscript copy of the Qur’an written on Kokand paper is also exhibited, accompanied by traditional items such as a candle holder, writing board, and ink. On the wall of the museum hall, there is a monumental mural created by artist Shavkat Zohidov, depicting all the aforementioned scholars in a unified artistic composition. The second hall reflects the Timurid period and represents the 14th–15th centuries. The exposition includes bronze busts of Amir Temur and Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur, manuscript copies of the “Temurnoma,” and a collection of silver coins used during the Timurid and Shaybanid periods. One side of the wall features a map illustrating the territories conquered by Amir Temur. This hall encompasses the cultural development from the era of Amir Temur to that of Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur. It also includes manuscript excerpts from the “Baburnama” and works related to India.

The third hall is dedicated to scholars who served at the court of Amir Temur. Information is presented about figures such as At-Taftazani and Komil Khujandi, along with excerpts from their works. The exposition includes poetic collections and a divan attributed to Komil Khujandi. Another hall presents information about literary figures such as Uvaysiy, Nodirabegim, Zavqiy, Gulkhaniy, and Amiriy, along with samples of their rare works. The second floor of the museum is divided into two sections, each consisting of separate halls. The first hall is dedicated to representatives of the Jadid movement, while the second presents academics of the 20th–21st centuries. In the Jadidism hall, one of the prominent representatives, Mahmudkhoja Behbudi, is featured. He traveled to European countries, where he gained a deep understanding of educational systems and schools, and was among the first to introduce modern schooling to Turkestan. The exposition includes copies of his journal “Oyna” and educational materials. Another representative of the Jadid movement, Abdurauf Fitrat, is also featured with samples of his early publications.

The exposition also includes a model demonstrating the process of Kokand paper production, showing the tools and stages involved. Although this production facility no longer exists today, its historical significance is preserved through this display. Samples of calligraphy written on Kokand paper are also exhibited. Another section presents traditional clothing and jewelry of the Kokand Khanate period. The handicraft section displays wooden objects and furniture created by Kokand's master artisans, as well as ceramic items such as jugs, dishes, and household utensils.

The second section on this floor is dedicated to academics of Uzbekistan from the 20th–21st centuries. The entrance to this hall is decorated with intricately carved wooden panels created by Kokand craftsmen. Among the scholars represented are Qori Niyoziy, who made significant contributions to the development of physics and mathematics education and introduced these subjects into school curricula. His portrait and related materials are displayed. Muhammadjon Orozboyev, a prominent educator and professor of mechanics who studied at Moscow State University, is also featured with his textbooks and portrait. Another notable figure is Professor Dilshod Ahmedov, who contributed to the development of zoology and biology.

The third floor of the museum houses a library. This library is spacious, well-lit, and equipped with modern facilities. It includes both a digital (electronic) library and a traditional collection of scientific literature. Although the number of books is relatively limited, the collection mainly consists of materials related to the history of Kokand, the Fergana Valley, and the legacy of great scholars. The museum also operates an educational and information center called "Successors of Scholars," which serves as a training platform for young people interested in science and creative activities.

Upon entering the museum, visitors encounter a modern and aesthetically appealing environment. The three-story building features a well-organized layout where interior design and exposition placement are harmoniously integrated. However, it should be noted that several challenges still exist. One of the main issues concerns the quality of guided tours. Since visitors primarily focus on the guide during excursions, the effectiveness of the visit depends largely on the guide's ability to provide engaging and comprehensive information. A lack of professionalism may lead to a loss of interest among visitors. Therefore, guides must possess thorough knowledge of the museum and its exhibits.

Excursions also serve as a primary form of museum promotion. Attracting young people, elderly visitors, tourists, and the general public largely depends on effective communication and outreach. It is important to eliminate the perception that museums are merely places where old objects are stored and are therefore uninteresting. To address these issues, it is necessary to strengthen promotional activities, create official websites, regularly update content, and develop informative brochures featuring key exhibits, contact information, and museum details. Another important recommendation is the application of museum pedagogy.

The concept of museum pedagogy emerged in early 20th-century Germany and is associated with scholars such as A. Lichtwark, A. Reichwein, and R. Frotsdental. It emphasizes the educational and formative potential of museums by using them as environments for transmitting historical, cultural, and spiritual values to future generations through pedagogical methods. The application of interactive educational approaches can significantly increase visitor engagement, particularly among young audiences. In this regard, organizing performances, thematic events, and interactive programs in each exhibition hall would enhance interest and contribute positively to intellectual development. Another important recommendation is the

effective use of the internet. Creating and regularly updating an official website, providing multimedia content, and engaging audiences online are essential steps in modern museum management.

It is also advisable to introduce uniforms for museum staff that reflect the identity of the institution, including visual elements related to great scholars. Excursions should be conducted not only in Uzbek but also in foreign languages to accommodate international visitors. Additionally, selecting a representative exhibit to serve as a visual symbol or logo of the museum would strengthen its identity. Given that Uzbekistan is increasingly becoming a tourist destination, it is essential for museums to be accessible online, with multilingual information available to facilitate easy access for visitors. However, the external appearance of the museum building does not fully correspond to typical expectations of a museum. Since it is located within a former theatre complex, its visibility is limited, and the entrance is relatively small and not easily recognizable, which may cause inconvenience for visitors.

Currently, several legal documents regulate the classification and development of museums in Uzbekistan. According to the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers dated April 12, 2010 (No. 68), museums are categorized based on criteria such as the size and condition of collections, infrastructure, compliance with international standards, and visitor statistics. As a newly established institution, the Kokand Museum of Great Scholars has been assigned a third-category status. This classification reflects factors such as the number of exhibits (up to 20,000), visitor attendance, level of infrastructure, and degree of compliance with modern standards.

CONCLUSION

The Kokand Museum of Great Scholars is one of the significant cultural and educational institutions in the Republic of Uzbekistan, aimed at preserving and promoting scientific, cultural, and spiritual heritage. The museum was established based on the directives given by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, during his visit to the Fergana region on June 22, 2017, and within a short period, it has developed into a center representing the country’s scientific and historical legacy. This museum stands out for its uniqueness within the Central Asian region. Its distinctiveness lies in the fact that it functions as a specialized institution directly dedicated to the lives and works of great scholars. Through its expositions, the museum comprehensively presents the scientific heritage, philosophical views, creative activities, and historical context of scholars who made a significant contribution to the development of Uzbek and, more broadly, Eastern civilization.

The exhibits preserved in the museum fund possess substantial scientific value. These include manuscripts, historical documents, copies of rare works, archaeological findings, and cultural monuments. Such materials serve as important sources for studying the scholarly activities of great thinkers, their dedicated efforts in the pursuit of knowledge, and their contributions to the progress of society. Furthermore, the museum plays an important role not only in preserving historical heritage but also in conducting scientific research, transmitting knowledge to younger generations, and strengthening national identity. Through scientific-practical conferences, exhibitions, and educational events organized within the museum, the legacy of great scholars is reinterpreted from a contemporary perspective, ensuring its relevance and continuity for future generations.

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