

THE ROLE OF ART IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOURISM IN BUKHARA

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Annotation: The article provides a comprehensive study of the role, historical development, and current state of the arts in the growth of tourism in Bukhara. Based on scientific observations, the author presents conclusions and recommendations related to the further development of the sector.

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At the end of the 20th and the beginning of the 21st century, the tourism industry became a strategic sector that occupies an important place in the national economies of many countries around the world. Serious progress has also been made in Uzbekistan, and the implementation of the measures outlined in state programs has served as a driving force for positive changes. In order to attract more tourists to Bukhara and ensure they have an enjoyable stay, representatives of folk and applied arts, along with other sectors, have made valuable contributions to both the tourism industry and the regional economy through their creative activities.

Bukhara, known as one of the most ancient centers of Eastern civilization, a cradle and crossroads of values along the Great Silk Road, was inscribed by UNESCO in 1993 as one of four architectural ensembles in Uzbekistan (together with Samarkand, Bukhara, Tashkent, and Khiva) for its invaluable contribution to world civilization. For centuries, Bukhara's distinctive forms of art have been passed down from generation to generation and continue to flourish today. Local crafts such as miniature painting, gold embroidery, jewelry-making, silk carpet weaving, and pottery have become prominent fields of national handicraft. These arts play a significant role in promoting the “Bukhara” brand internationally and in fostering the region's tourism development.

During the early years of independence, the revival of tourism in Bukhara was closely linked to the revival of folk and applied arts. The leading branches of these arts — gold embroidery, jewelry-making, metal engraving, copperwork, pottery, traditional clothing, skullcap making, and embroidery — developed thanks to the efforts of master craftsmen such as Bakhshillo Jumayev, Alisher Narzulayev, Shokir Kamolov, Mahfuza Salimova, Usto Samad, Safo Atamuradov, and Davron Toshev.

After independence, many branches of handicraft fell into difficult conditions, since their raw materials (such as velvet, gold threads, and cardboard) had previously been supplied from various regions of the former Soviet Union. However, Bukhara craftsmen quickly found solutions by establishing their own shops and workshops. The first private handicraft workshop in Bukhara was opened by the gold embroidery master Bakhshillo Jumayev. In the early years, participation in foreign exhibitions was very limited, but in 1994 Jumayev represented Bukhara

at an international festival in Islamabad, Pakistan, attended by craftsmen from 70 countries, where he won first place and established long-term cooperation.

In 1995, the “Eternal Heritage” Handicrafts Association was founded in Bukhara — the first of its kind in Uzbekistan — to address issues in the sector and organize craftsmen’s participation in exhibitions and festivals. As a result, the importance of handicrafts in employment grew considerably. According to Bakhshillo Jumayev, who headed the Bukhara branch of the Republican “Hunarmand” Association in 1997–1998, the association at that time had about 700 members. With the growth of handicrafts, many traditional art forms were restored, and the city’s historical center was revitalized as artisans took over spaces previously occupied by grocery stores, liquor shops, and pharmacies. Their workshops not only beautified the area but also made it safer and more attractive for tourists to stroll at night. The production of souvenirs and miniature artworks expanded, improving both the quality and variety of products offered to tourists. Notably, Bakhshillo Jumayev, who founded one of the first private gold embroidery workshops in the 1990s, continues to develop this craft through his family enterprise “Sovg’a Ustozoda Zardo‘zon,” which produces exquisite artworks for visitors.

In accordance with the Presidential Decree of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures for Further Development and State Support of Folk Applied Arts” (PF-1741, March 31, 1997) and the subsequent Decree (PF-3588, March 28, 2005), new opportunities were created for artisans, including the establishment of the Bukhara Silk Carpet Weaving Center. Founded between 1997 and 1999 and supported by the regional government, the center developed into a large production and trade complex located in the very heart of Bukhara, near the Mir Arab Madrasa on Khoja Nurobod Street. The history of silk carpet weaving in Bukhara dates back to the 10th–12th centuries, when carpet making in Central Asia, including Uzbekistan, was highly developed. In the 18th–19th centuries, carpet weaving in the Bukhara Khanate acquired a distinctive style characterized by intricate designs, high-quality weaving, and sophisticated dyeing techniques. The modern Bukhara Silk Carpet Weaving Center continues this ancient tradition, combining national identity with contemporary production standards.

At the center, about 40 women are engaged in carpet weaving and another 10 in adras (silk fabric) weaving. Based on the “master-apprentice” tradition, young learners are trained and supported in starting their own independent businesses. By 2015–2016, including its branches in tourism areas, the center employed a total of 258 people. The artisans of the Bukhara Silk Carpet Center produce 100–150 silk carpets annually, including patterns such as “Anorgul,” “Chorbog’,” “Kashkoi,” and “Salogul.” The center also includes sections for weaving, dyeing, and a bar that serves refreshing drinks to tourists, accommodating up to 27 visitors at a time. A 24-hour currency exchange service and an ATM of Kapitalbank are available for tourists. The center attracts over 100,000 visitors annually and contributes \$200,000–450,000 in export revenue each year, significantly boosting the regional economy. The uniqueness of the center lies in its warm hospitality — visitors are served the rejuvenating and refreshing “Avicenna tea,” and many tourists find it impossible to leave without purchasing one of Bukhara’s magnificent handmade artworks.

In addition, to further develop Bukhara’s miniature art, craftsman Davron Toshev established the “Bukhara Silk Paper” Handicraft Center in May 2019. Similarly, artist Davlat Toshev opened the “Usto-Shogird” (Master–Apprentice) Miniature Center in the historical “Arabon” neighborhood, based in a 16th-century architectural monument. According to surveys, 45 percent of tourists

expressed particular interest in participating in or observing folk music, dance, traditional clothing, and customs. Among these, the folklore genres “Buxorcha” and “Mavrigi,” which combine songs and dances in bilingual (zullisonayn) performances, hold a special place in the city’s cultural life. Outdoor stages for these performances have been established in Bukhara’s historical sites, offering visitors unforgettable moments and enriching their cultural experience while enhancing the attractiveness of ancient Bukhara as a tourist destination.

In conclusion, the sectors of folk and applied arts — including visual and decorative arts, architecture, theater, music, and traditional folklore — play a crucial role in the development of tourism in Bukhara. Particularly in the post-pandemic period, these fields have become powerful drivers for sustainable tourism recovery and for strengthening the region’s image as a prominent cultural and tourist center. Therefore, preserving and developing the traditional crafts of gold embroidery, jewelry-making, metalwork, engraving, and ornamental art — deeply rooted in the region’s rich heritage — will not only protect cultural identity but also further enhance Bukhara’s tourism potential and attract even more visitors to this ancient land of artistry and civilization.

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