

**The attitude of the Soviet authorities towards the material and cultural monuments of Uzbekistan (1917–1990)**

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**Abstract**

The article analyzes the policies and practical measures taken in relation to monuments of material and cultural heritage in Uzbekistan during the Soviet period. In particular, attention will be paid to the destruction of religious monuments and historical architectural monuments, the change in their function, as well as the ideological purposes that the surviving parts of them served. The study is based on historical sources, archival documents and modern analysis.

**Keywords** Soviet power, cultural heritage, material monuments, religious monuments, preservation of monuments, historical policy

**1. Introduction**

Uzbekistan is known throughout the world for its rich historical and cultural heritage and ancient monuments. However, with the establishment of Soviet power after the October Revolution of 1917, the attitude towards these cultural values changed dramatically. Since Soviet ideology rejected national and religious values, many material monuments that reflected these values were destroyed, ignored or misused. In particular, examples of religious architecture (mosques, mausoleums, madrasah buildings) became the main objects of Soviet ideology.

**2. Methodology**

The study used historical-analytical and documentary-historical methods. Documents of the Central State Archive of the Republic of Uzbekistan, official documents and publications of the Soviet period, as well as scientific articles by modern historians (for example, A. Abdurakhmanov, M. Juraev, Sh. Rakhmanov) were analyzed. The situation in the territories where material and cultural monuments were located was also studied.

**3. Results**

Initial stage (1917–1930):

- A fierce struggle against religious monuments began.
- Mosques, madrasahs and shrines were closed, some were completely destroyed.
- Religious figures and custodians of monuments were subjected to repression.

Economic and ideological use (1930s–1950s):

- Many historical buildings were used as warehouses, theaters, clubs, schools, or hospitals.
- Monuments were reconstructed, changing their original appearance and function.
- Attention to Central Asian architectural examples was limited to tourist attractions or external decoration.

Relative stability and re-evaluation (1950s–1990s):

- Beginning in the 1950s, some monuments began to be taken under state protection.
- Monuments included in the UNESCO list (e.g. Registan, Shakhi-Zinda) were preserved, but their religious function was abolished.
- Towards the end of the Soviet era, a stage of careful attention to historical heritage began.

**4. Discussion**

The attitude of the Soviet authorities to material and cultural monuments was based mainly on ideological aspects. Monuments that were initially considered symbols of religious and national identity were rejected as symbols of the “old regime”. Later, as public discontent grew, some monuments were turned into instruments of tourism and propaganda. This approach reinforced the tendency to distort historical truth and “Sovietize” history.

For example, the Mir Arab Madrasah in Bukhara was closed in the 1940s and survived only as a model after 1956. The Ulugbek Observatory in Samarkand was positioned as a model of scientific achievement, but its religious and spiritual context was ignored.

#### 5. Conclusion

During the Soviet era, the attitude towards material and cultural monuments in Uzbekistan was largely utilitarian, ideological and political. Many priceless monuments were lost, and some were diverted from their original purpose. In the years of independence, serious work is being done to correct this historical injustice. One of the pressing tasks of today is a comprehensive study of historical heritage, its preservation and correct transmission to future generations.

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