

Makhfuza Fakhruddinovna Alimova,

Candidate of Historical Sciences (PhD),

Professor at the UNESCO Chair

for the Comparative Study of World Religions and Religious Studies,

International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan.

Abstract: At present, the tourism industry has become one of the key sectors contributing to the socio-cultural life of our country, its economic progress, and its reputation on a global scale. In today's world, tourism is developing through a variety of forms such as *ecotourism*, *sports tourism*, *excursion tourism*, *extreme tourism*, *gastronomic tourism*, *cultural tourism*, and *pilgrimage tourism*. In this regard, the Republic of Uzbekistan is also undertaking a range of initiatives and large-scale reforms in the field of pilgrimage tourism.

Keywords: ecotourism, sports tourism, excursion tourism, extreme tourism, gastronomic tourism, cultural tourism.

In particular, Presidential Decree No. PQ-135, issued on April 26, 2023, outlines that “it is necessary to study the tourism potential of regions, create multilingual content about the history of a region, its tourist sites and specific features, promote them, and provide assistance in the development of tour packages.” According to Clause 48 of Annex 4a of this decree, special attention is given to supporting initiatives aimed at the creation of interactive digital platforms (mobile applications) for identifying new territories.

In order to generate such content, it is crucial to conduct scholarly research—based on reliable sources—on the history of cultural heritage sites, and on the biographies and legacies of individuals associated with sacred places. The resulting materials, grounded in scientific findings, will contribute substantially to the development of pilgrimage tourism.

It is known that during the 44th session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee held in Fuzhou, China, from July 15 to 31, 2021, seven cultural heritage sites from the Bukhara region were proposed for inclusion in the World Heritage List. These included: the sites of Paykent, Varakhsha, Vardana, the Chor Bakr and Bahauddin Naqshband Complexes, the Vobkent Minaret, and the Chashmai Ayyub Ensemble. Furthermore, a positive resolution was reached regarding the preservation status of the “Historic Centre of Bukhara.”

In the same year, seven cultural heritage sites in Bukhara—including the mausoleum of Ismail Samani, the Chor Bakr and Bahauddin Naqshband complexes, the Magoki Attori Mosque, the Poi-Kalon ensemble, the ruins of ancient Paykent city, and the Tosh Saroy Madrasa—were added to the Islamic World Heritage List by ICESCO (Islamic World Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization). The inclusion of the Chor Bakr

complex in both lists is no coincidence, as the site stands out for its exceptional memorial architecture and deep historical significance.

The inclusion of the Chor Bakr Complex in both the UNESCO World Heritage Tentative List and the Islamic World Heritage List is far from accidental. This complex is distinguished by its unique memorial architecture and rich historical background.

The Chor Bakr pilgrimage site is located 6 kilometers west of the city of Bukhara, in an area formerly known as Sumitan—translated as “a place where wool weavers lived.” In ancient times, access to this area from Bukhara was through the Khodsharun Gate, which, during the 15th–16th centuries, was also referred to as Talipoch or “Khan’s Hill.”

The name “Chor Bakr,” meaning “Four Bakrs,” refers to four prominent sheikhs and saints buried here: Hazrat Abu Bakr Sa’d Yamani (d. 970), Hazrat Abu Bakr Hamid (d. 937), Hazrat Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Fazl (d. 991), and Hazrat Abu Bakr Tarkhan (d. 945). These figures were highly revered and played significant spiritual roles in the Islamic tradition.

According to the renowned historian Muhammad Narshakhi in his *History of Bukhara*, in the year 889, Ali ibn al-Husayn traveled from Khorasan along the Amu Darya and arrived in Bukhara. Amir Ismail Samani received him with great respect. Accompanying him were the four famed saints—later known as the Chor Bakr—who remained and settled in Bukhara. They became key spiritual figures surrounding the rulers of Bukhara and greatly contributed to the spread of religious knowledge and enlightenment.

Amir Ismail Samani allocated extensive waqf (endowment) lands to the sheikhs. The income from these lands was distributed among the people and used to improve the region. Shelters were constructed for the homeless; seekers of knowledge were taught; those who had strayed were guided back to the righteous path; and aid was extended to the sick, the poor, and orphans. In essence, their service to the people was an act of devotion in pursuit of divine pleasure.

The magnificent Chor Bakr architectural ensemble, consisting of a mosque, a madrasa, and a khanaqah, is situated near the Khorasan road, in the Sumitan district. The construction of the complex took place between 1559 and 1570, under the guidance of Hazrat Khwaja Fakhriddin Muhammad Islam Juybari (1493–1563), the spiritual mentor of Abdullah Khan II.

The construction of the ensemble was carried out between the years 1559 and 1570 through the dedicated efforts of Hazrat Khwaja Fakhruddin Muhammad Islam Juybari (1493–1563), the spiritual guide of Abdullah Khan II. Pilgrims enter the complex through the magnificent Eastern Gate, commissioned by Abdullah Khan II (1556–1598) of the Shaybanid dynasty during the latter half of the 16th century.

The **khanaqah** (a sacred place for divine remembrance and learning) served as a gathering space for scholars and spiritual leaders to conduct sessions of dhikr (remembrance of God) and scholarly discussions. The portal of the khanaqah reaches 20 meters in height. Its foundation lies 12 meters underground, and the structure spans 2

meters in width. The dome itself stands 22 meters tall, with a circumference of 17 meters. Around the inner surface of the dome, the **Kalima Tayyiba** is inscribed in intricate mosaic calligraphy.

The **madrassa** is a striking three-story structure with multiple chambers. Its majestic facade and thoughtful architectural design place it among the elite madrasas of Bukhara. At its peak, it was considered one of the most esteemed centers of Islamic learning. In order to provide comfortable conditions for the students, the inner rooms were equipped with fire pits, heating systems such as **sandal**, and built-in niches for storing books.

The **mosque**, with its beautiful dome and elegant iwan (portal), is a masterpiece of religious architecture. On its facade, the first four verses of *Surah Al-Isra* are inscribed in **thuluth script**. The height of the mosque's main portal reaches between 20 to 30 meters, with a base elevation of 12 meters above ground level.

Opposite these three majestic buildings stands a modest minaret, built in 1896 by Mirzo Hoji Juybari. The ensemble as a whole comprises interconnected **family mausoleums and tombs**, all unified behind a single decorative wall adorned with iwans and hujras (cells), providing aesthetic harmony to the complex.

This site is one of the finest examples of Central Asian architecture. It embodies the stylistic features of the Bukhara School of architecture from the 16th and 17th centuries. Within it are the eternal resting places of the Juybari sheikhs, including their domed tombs and mausoleums. Some notable examples are: the mausoleum of Sa'dullo Khwaja (early 19th century), Akobir Khwaja (19th century), Nasriddin Khwaja (late 18th century), Abdulaziz Khwaja (19th century), and Atoulloh Khwaja. Others include the burial sites of Zaynab Bonu Sultan Khanum (late 17th century), Obid Khwaja, and Poshshoyim (second half of the 17th century).

Additional mausoleums within the complex include the resting places of Imomat, Masturabonu Sultonim (late 17th century), Jonkeldibiy (18th century), and Mirza Muhammad Bilgun Juybari (late 17th to early 18th century). The complex also houses a **saqokhona** (public water station), an 18th-century **garmoba** (ablution bath), and **chillahonas** (meditative retreat cells), all constructed in authentic medieval architectural styles.

The tombs and mausoleums are exquisitely built, enclosed within finely decorated tile walls. Numerous entrances are designed in the form of **mihrab-shaped doorways**, leading inward. Both sides of the central **miyansaray** (main corridor) are lined with hujras (cells) for students and spiritual practitioners.

The surrounding land of the Chor Bakr Complex was cultivated and transformed into **waqf property**. The revenue from these endowments funded the restoration and upkeep of the mosque, madrasa, khanaqah, tombs, and mausoleums. Even the students studying at the madrasa were supported through the income of the waqf. In essence, Chor Bakr became a sanctuary for Muslim devotion—an abode of knowledge, prayer, and compassion for orphans, widows, and the needy.

However, during the Soviet era, the Chor Bakr Complex fell into partial ruin. The mosque, madrasa, khanaqah, and hujras were severely damaged. Reservoirs, springs, and wells were filled in, and visiting this sacred site was strictly prohibited. Prayers in the mosque were banned.

Following the country's independence, national cultural and religious values were restored. In 2017, a modern ablution facility—designed in the style of the 16th-century Bukhara School of Architecture—was constructed and opened to the right of the main entrance gate.

Currently, in order to enhance the touristic potential of the Chor Bakr Complex, it is recommended to collect and systematize historical data on its main structures, notable scholars buried there, respected Juybari women, and the generous Oyposhsa Bibi. From these, educational brochures can first be prepared, followed by the development of a mobile application. Distributing these products to tourism agencies would serve both informational and promotional purposes.

By enriching the infrastructure of the complex with innovative ideas and providing guides with detailed information, it is possible to significantly increase the tourist flow to this sacred site.

The Chor Bakr Complex in Bukhara stands not merely as an architectural marvel, but as a living testimony to the spiritual, intellectual, and charitable legacy of Central Asian Islamic culture. From its origins rooted in the revered lineage of four saints connected to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), to its role as a center for religious scholarship, communal service, and architectural excellence, the site encapsulates a profound historical narrative.

Throughout centuries, the complex served as a beacon of knowledge and faith, sustaining itself through the waqf system and offering sanctuary to scholars, pilgrims, orphans, and the destitute. Despite periods of neglect and repression—particularly during the Soviet era—the site has experienced significant revival since Uzbekistan's independence, symbolizing the nation's commitment to restoring its cultural and religious heritage.

Today, the Chor Bakr Complex holds immense potential within the domain of pilgrimage tourism. Strategically integrating historical research, digital innovation, and tourism infrastructure development can transform this sacred site into a dynamic spiritual and cultural destination for international visitors. By bridging historical authenticity with modern accessibility, Uzbekistan has an opportunity to present Chor Bakr not only as a sacred place for Muslims but also as a cultural heritage site of global significance.

References:

1. Khodjaev, N. (2019). *Cultural heritage and pilgrimage tourism in Bukhara region*. Journal of Tourism Research, 6(2), 45–58.
2. UNESCO World Heritage Centre. (1993). *Historic Centre of Bukhara*. Retrieved from <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/602>

3. Safarov, B. (2020). *The role of Islamic architecture in developing pilgrimage tourism in Uzbekistan*. Central Asian Journal of Tourism and Culture, 2(1), 60–71.
4. Zohidov, H. (2021). *Pilgrimage and spiritual heritage in Bukhara: Cultural identity and sustainable tourism*. Journal of Islamic Civilization Studies, 3(2), 85–100.
5. State Committee for Tourism Development of the Republic of Uzbekistan. (2023). *Bukhara: Sacred sites and pilgrimage routes*. Retrieved from <https://uzbektourism.uz/en/new/page/20>