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## Ideology in brick and tile: Timurid architecture of the 21st century

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This study analyses the impact of politics on urban development and, in particular, on Timurid heritage in present-day Uzbekistan. It outlines the problem of landscape manipulation for the advancement of a political ideology. After presenting a brief overview of Tsarist and Soviet restoration practices, the article focuses on the post-Soviet nation-building schemes through public iconography, urban renewal measures and heritage construction. Architectural and epigraphic restorations of Timurid monuments in Samarqand and new constructions in Tashkent provide a valuable illustrative framework. As world heritage sites, the Samarqand monuments are examined both in their historical and current socio-political contexts; the role of UNESCO is also analysed. The study benefits from and contributes to critical heritage studies and urban development as a narrative of power-making and relational space.

**Keywords:** Uzbekistan; cultural heritage; Samarqand; Tashkent; restoration; Amir Timur (Tamerlane)

### Introduction

After 1991, political and cultural elites of independent Uzbekistan adopted the medieval ruler Amir Timur (1336–1405) as the embodiment of Uzbek national identity. The worldwide acclaimed Timurid architecture is being used to promote nationhood and to signify progressive urban development in post-Soviet Central Asia. Timurid heritage, in turn, has become a visual protagonist of a nationalist rhetoric. As a result, in 1996 the surviving Timurid monuments were methodically restored for the celebrations of Timur's 660th birthday, and later on in 2007 for the 2750th anniversary of Timur's capital Samarqand.

Akbarzadeh (1996), Laruelle (2010) and Cummings (2012) have described the symbolic content of post-Soviet ideologies as the formation of state ethno-nationalism. In this process, the political and ideological field is overwhelmed by the titular ethnic group's symbolism and historicism. In Uzbekistan, the Timurid myth offers 'signs of certainty' (Cummings 2010, 1) familiar to the Uzbek nation. With the alluring persona of Timur used as a symbol, meaning is produced through Timurid artefacts, the majority of which are architectural monuments. In this sense, recent architectural and epigraphic restorations reveal the link between politics and symbolism within the ethno-nationalistic discourse. The various architectural sites are being enshrined in speedy urban development projects across Uzbekistan. These projects are widely promoted by the state within the context of large-scale constructive (*sozidatel'nye*) and urban renewal (*blagoustroitel'nye*) measures meant to raise the level and quality of life of all Uzbeks. In this sense Timurid architecture not only elevates national values and concepts but also celebrates the post-independence prosperity efforts and contributes to the ultimate goal of transforming Uzbekistan to a state with a great future (*O'zbekiston kelajagi buyuk davlat*). Timurid architecture, as part of the country's 'golden heritage' (*oltin meros*), is used to boost the Uzbek population's sense of belonging and pride through the construction of an ethno-national identity. This study treats urban

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development, and in particular architectural restoration, as a technique of governance and exercise of power used to influence the social acceptance of history.

Since gaining independence in 1991 the Uzbek government has taken the importance of Timurid architecture to heart and key Timurid monuments have been considerably rebuilt. By providing empirical analysis of several Timurid sites in Samarqand, this article aims to contribute to the international discourse on heritage as a non-static phenomenon, and in particular on the notion of authenticity.<sup>1</sup> I analyse Timurid monuments not only as ‘cultural heritage’ but also through the lens of critical heritage studies. As formulated by Eric Hobsbawm, ‘the national phenomenon cannot be adequately investigated without careful attention to the “invention of tradition”’ (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983, 13–14). Hobsbawm puts forward exactly the construction of the notion of nationhood based on a heroic past. Additionally, Smith (2006) shows how the manifestation of contemporary power is validated through the management of heritage sites. The article engages with the discourse on tangible heritage, particularly the role of architecture as a legitimation tool in post-Soviet Central Asia (Alexander, Buchli, and Humphrey 2007; Diener and Hagen 2013). In this aspect, through its direct involvement with restoration projects, the Uzbek elite uses Timurid heritage as a tactic of state legitimation, and the Uzbek authorities are creating their own heritage (Harrison 2009).

Furthermore, the concept of relational space, as defined by Harvey (2009 [1973], 13) in which the space is formed by objects that exist only in relationship to other objects, can be used to define the new pseudo-Timurid developments in Tashkent, which not only quote the architectural vocabulary of their predecessors but also can be only understood and evaluated in relationship to them. What is more, by elevating the concept of collective memory throughout the revival of the Timurid cult, the Uzbek leadership creates a sense of emotional satisfaction and pride among the Uzbek population as a result of their actual/physical interaction with Timurid heritage (Harrison 2013, 88). Tashkent is conceived as the symbolic centre of new Uzbekistan (Alexander, Buchli, and Humphrey 2007).

In this article, I focus on the different approaches to architectural restoration throughout the Soviet and the post-Soviet period. Timurid monuments are studied here as a landscape of layered restorations, each political regime leaving its own mark based on its own ideology.<sup>2</sup> Analysed as imaginary artefacts, the majority of recently restored sites and their epigraphy are not based on direct material evidence (i.e., photographs, films or textual descriptions). Firstly, the article outlines the importance of the Timurid cult and its role in the construction of collective memory from the mid-19th century until present. Secondly, it provides an overview of recent urban development and regeneration practices in Samarqand and the role of UNESCO in stimulating cultural tourism; special emphasis is placed on the selection of monuments to be restored. Thirdly, the regeneration of the Hazrat Imam Complex in Tashkent is discussed. This section offers a comparative approach revealing the interchangeable significance of Timurid (15th century) and Shaybanid<sup>3</sup> (16th–17th centuries) architectural heritage used by the Uzbek elite to unify national traditions in a modern political context.

### **Timurid discourse on restoration as a construct of collective memory**

In order to understand the profound impact of the Uzbek urban renewal measures and programmes, it is important to evaluate the role of Amir Timur as the pivotal figure of Uzbek collective memory. Timur was a semi-nomadic conqueror whose empire stretched from modern Turkey to India at the beginning of the 15th century. Architectural monuments of the Timurid empire in the modern Uzbek cities of Samarqand and Shahr-i Sabz are known worldwide as masterpieces of Islamic architecture.

The Timurid legacy in ‘golden Samarqand’ had been claimed for political purposes long before the creation of Uzbekistan as a republic within the USSR in 1924 and the 1929 inclusion of the predominantly Tajik-speaking Samarqand region within the borders of Uzbekistan (Adams 2013, 117). While some of the first European expeditions to Samarqand in 1841 by Nikolai Khanikov and Alexander Lehmann (Helmersen 1852; Gorshenina 2014a, 250) directed the eyes of Western connoisseurs to selected Timurid monuments, their travelogues contained very little information on the local population. In 1841, Lehmann notes: ‘Unaffected, the Uzbek walks nowadays past these grandeur monuments, indulging only in the sensual pleasure of the moment; carefree he sees them in dust and debris and no one from the crowd attempts to preserve these venerable walls’ (Helmersen 1852, 146).<sup>4</sup> By the mid-19th century most of the original architectural substance, in particular the *kirpich* brickwork, had been reused for the construction of new buildings. The inhabitants of Samarqand were well aware of the spiritual importance of the sites, however in the eyes of *cultured* Western travellers they had neglected their own heritage and ‘have not succeeded in preserving these places’ (Radlov 1880, 22–23, quoted by Gorshenina 2014a, 252).

The official discourse of preservation started with General Konstantin Petrovich von Kaufman (1818–82) after his capture of Samarqand in May 1868. The ‘civilized’ treatment of Islamic artefacts as introduced by the Turkestan administration was opposed to the presumed indifference of the local population in the preceding centuries. Kaufman’s restoration efforts established the role of the Russian Empire not only as the legitimate heir to Timur’s architectural heritage but also as a profoundly caring colonizer which recognized local religious traditions and values. The refurbishment of the monuments was related to urban development; the sites were cleared of rubble and fences were erected. In 1875, Registan Square in Samarqand was levelled and paved, and the monuments were given a special role in the new imperial urbanization efforts. The purpose of these efforts was to instigate respect for the new ruling power among the Samarqand pious religious elite and the masses.

The systematic study of Samarqand’s monuments was initiated in 1895 when the Archaeological Commission sent a group of scholars under the supervision of Nikolai Iv. Veselovskii. Among them were the young talented architect Aleksei V. Shchusev and the artist Samuil M. Dudin who were supposed to carry out the first archaeological survey of Samarqand (Iakubovskii 1940, 292). The expedition resulted in the publication of the only volume of the lavishly decorated catalogue *Mecheti Samarkanda* (The Mosques of Samarqand) in 1905 (Veselovskii 1905), solely dedicated to Timur’s dynastic mausoleum of Gur-i Amir (early 1400s) and financed by Empress Aleksandra Fedorovna (1872–1918). This prototype of an officially politicized edition on Timurid architecture marked a new trend in the study of Timurid heritage: the monuments were not regarded as potential targets for implementing urban renewal measures but as a source of comprehensive academic studies. Gur-i Amir was depicted as an idealized work of art, stripped of any religious or socio-cultural importance (McChesney 2003, 19).

The dichotomy between the cultured and academic Russian-speaking elite and the ill-informed local tourist guides could be clearly seen at the turn of the 20th century. G. A. Pankrat’ev describes the local guides as ‘completely ignorant’, unable to read and understand the Arabic inscriptions; they were simply entertaining storytellers who were unaware of the exact construction dates and mistakenly attributed monuments to different patrons. Pankrat’ev stresses the fact that the local population spoke with deep respect about Amir Timur as a builder of *madrasas* (Islamic religious schools) and mausoleums, although the actual surviving inscriptions confirm that some were built before and others were built after his reign (Pankrat’ev 1910, 1).

In October 1918, Vladimir Lenin personally signed a decree on the importance of conservation of cultural artefacts of scientific importance. This decree set the tone for the creation of museums and organizations dealing with the preservation of architectural heritage. In May

1920 the first commission for the preservation of architectural monuments was created under the regional commissariat for education in Samarqand.<sup>5</sup> The commission stressed the importance and urgency of architectural preservation. As a result, on 22 May 1921 the Turkomstaris was established: the acronym stood for the Turkestan Committee for Museums and Preservation of Ancient Monuments, Art and Nature (*Turkestanskii komitet po delam muzeev i okhrane pamiatnikov stariny, iskusstva, i prirody*). Turkomstaris's leader, D. I. Nechkin, pleaded for extra funding for the upkeep of the monuments by pointing out that 'the loss of the architectural monuments will be a real national sorrow' (Gorshenina 2013a, 55). He insisted that the prestige of the Soviet government was at stake as the destruction of the Timurid heritage would be used by Western scholars and museums to accuse the Soviet leadership of negligence. Nechkin suggested that foreign museums would buy some of the portable artefacts (Gorshenina 2013a, 56). Funding for reconstruction work was being sought through the *waqf* (endowment deeds) of several monuments<sup>6</sup> kept in Bukhara and a special commission was established to bring the documentation back to Samarqand and to relocate any potentially available funds.

The Turkomstaris was renamed Sredazkomstaris (Central Asian Committee) after the creation of the new Soviet Central Asian republics (1924–36).<sup>7</sup> Its main office was situated in Samarqand, the then capital of the Uzbek SSR. The two main duties of the Sredazkomstaris were carrying out necessary repair measures and preventing further destruction (Nechkin 1926, 7, quoted by Kruikov 1990, 35). Sredazkomstaris activities involved architectural conservation and restoration in all Central Asian republics: 64 monuments in Uzbekistan, seven in Turkmenistan, seven in Kyrgyzstan and five in Kazakhstan, with Uzbekistan having by far the largest number of monuments within its newly defined administrative borders. The first comprehensive scientific research on Timurid architecture was carried out by the exclusively Russian members of the Sredazkomstaris, namely the architect Boris N. Zasyppkin (1891–1955), the historiographer Vasilii V. Bartol'd (1869–1930), the art historian Ivan I. Umniakov (1890–1976), the archaeologist Vasilii L. Viatkin (1869–1932) and the palaeographer Aleksandr A. Semenov (Kruikov 1990, 35). This group of scholars not only drew the first architectural plans of the monuments but also studied primary sources on the history of their construction (Bartol'd), translated the epigraphy of key Timurid sites (Semenov) and carried out excavation and restoration work (Viatkin and Zasyppkin). The Sredazkomstaris existed until 1928 when its duties were formally transferred to the Uzkomstaris, established in early 1927 in Samarqand. In 1931, the Uzkomstaris was relocated to the new Uzbek capital of Tashkent and carried out its work until 1946. However, the growing restoration duties and responsibilities were split up among several regional units, dominated by centrally controlled administrators. Within the prevailing ethnocentric discourse, all buildings situated on the territory of the Uzbek SSR were regarded as part of Uzbek national heritage.

In 1937, a specialized restoration school (*masterskaya*) opened in Samarqand teaching traditional building and decoration techniques employed in Timurid architecture. Boris Zasyppkin, together with local craftsmen, developed a manual on the construction methods including the building of vaults and the design of complicated geometrical patterns (*girikh*) containing more than 200 drawings and photographs. The practical training took place under the guidance of master (*usto*) Shirin Muradov, who later became an honorary academician at the Uzbek Academy of Science. Attracting local craftsmen and exploiting their knowledge of traditional building techniques that had been passed down from generation to generation could be also seen as a political move to integrate local collaborators, who were no longer treated as backward or ignorant but as the guardians of centuries' old knowledge and traditions. Yet the Russian architects and archaeologists had a leading role in these collaborative projects. Their activities were regarded as a social obligation, as a contribution to the preservation of rich heritage traditions across Central Asia and their popularization among all Soviet citizens (Kruikov 1990, 1991; Demchenko 2011; Shaw 2011; Gorshenina 2013a,b).

In the 1930s, Joseph Stalin ‘added a marked Russian nationalist character to the concept of Soviet citizenship’ (Keller 2007, 262). In the process of establishing national identities corresponding to the new boundary delimitations, Uzbek cultural achievements were illustriously narrated and heroic figures such as Amir Timur were celebrated. The pioneering scholar of Central Asian national histories was Aleksandr Iu. Iakubovskii (1886–1953), who created the image of Timur as a strong and powerful leader. He emphasized Timur’s contribution to the consolidation of Russia as a result of Timur’s defeat of the Golden Horde in 1395 (Iakubovskii et al. 1950, 356). In 1941, Stalin himself ordered the opening of the Timurid tomb at Gur-i Amir in Samarqand. McChesney suggests that according to ‘Marxist ideology and public discourse, Timur was a reactionary feudal but for Stalin he may have been a role model’; Stalin revered Timur’s military victories (McChesney 2003, 24). As outlined by McChesney, the construction of new Uzbek identity might have also involved the creation of typical Uzbek facial features. The renowned Moscow forensic anthropologist Mikhail M. Gerasimov (1907–70) was sent to Samarqand in May 1941 as part of a controversial expedition to ‘document the authenticity of Timur’s burial’ under the leadership of Tashmukhammad N. Kary-Niazov.<sup>8</sup> This clearly atheist expedition violated the Muslim sanctity of the dead and desecrated Timur’s burial. It can also be regarded as an assault on Islamic practice in Uzbekistan. Based on the exhumed skulls at Gur-i Amir, Gerasimov reconstructed the faces of Amir Timur, his son Shah Rukh and grandsons Ulugh Beg and Muhammad Sultan. Throughout his article *Portret Tamerlana* Gerasimov refers to Timur as a ‘Mongol’ and concludes that Timur had ‘typical Mongoloid features’ (Gerasimov 1947, 18), Shah Rukh belonged to the Europeoid race, while Ulugh Beg and Muhammad Sultan both belonged to the Europeoid race with an admixture of Mongoloid characteristics (Oshanin, quoted by McChesney 2003, 29). In his memoirs Kary-Niazov describes a conversation he had with Oshanin and the celebrated Tajik poet Sadridin Ayni (1878–1954), while trying to identify the skulls of Timur and Ulugh Beg (Kary-Niazov 1967, 241–242). Ayni comments that the one was illiterate and the other was a scholar. In this way the official Soviet discourse differentiating between the uneducated Timur and his cultured grandson Ulugh Beg is legitimized by a respected poet trusted by the local people and the Islamic community at large.

With the advent of socialist ideology, which aimed at culturing the backward nomads in Central Asia, the image of collective memory was strengthened by the cultural potential of the Timurid legacy (Iakubovskii 1933, 1946). It was thus Timur’s grandson, Ulugh Beg (1394–1449), who became the patron of the Soviet state propaganda regarding Central Asian heritage and cultural values (Shaw 2011; Arends 1965). This undoubtedly cultured scholar, astronomer and architectural patron ruled in Samarqand but had, unlike his grandfather, neither extraordinary military achievements nor the ambition for excessive military power (Barthold 1958, 103). The sedentary Ulugh Beg fitted perfectly with the aspirations of the Soviet government to culture and thus modernize the life of Central Asia ‘nomads’ from within their own cultural environment and legacy. Industrial and cultural development of Central Asia was high on the USSR’s political agenda and the importance of local, educated elite and intelligentsia was needed for the promotion of the Soviet model in the 1950s (Stronski 2010; Kalinovsky 2013). Ulugh Beg was thus the ideal knowledgeable predecessor not only to instigate pride in the Uzbek intelligentsia but also to promote its qualities and potential among other Soviet co-patriots. Ulugh Beg was a Timurid heir, but he was not ‘burdened’ by his grandfather’s brutal legacy as Timur died when Ulugh Beg was just 11 years old. Furthermore, Ulugh Beg was portrayed as an atheist and a free-thinker by Soviet propaganda as he was beheaded in a conspiracy plot by the Islamic clergy, presumably murdered for his scientific endeavours (Keller 2007, 274). In this sense the figure of Ulugh Beg was a convenient instrument in what Adeb Khalid has called ‘the displacement of Islam from the public arena’ (Khalid 2014, 522). In his haven city, Samarqand, Ulugh Beg created one of the greatest libraries and one of the finest observatories in the Islamic world,



which produced impressively accurate astronomical tables. The gem of his architectural legacy was the Ulugh Beg Madrasa on Registan Square (1417–20). This *madrasa* was the first Timurid monument to be completely restored. In accordance with Soviet propaganda that aimed to ‘educate’ the Central Asian proletariat, the partially restored new epigraphy contained prophetic sayings related to the importance of knowledge. Soviet leaders including Nikita Khrushchev and Leonid Brezhnev had their photographs taken in front of that building during their state visits to Samarqand. All international guests were paraded across Registan Square as it became the landmark of the Soviet protection of cultural memory in Central Asia.

In 1973, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan took the decision to condemn Amir Timur. As a consequence, the Presidium of the Uzbek Academy of Science issued a ruling stating that all copies of Yazdi’s *Zafarnama*, the celebrated Timurid chronicle from the 15th century, were to be confiscated and burned in the courtyard of the Fan publishing house in Tashkent. Ibrahim Muminov’s *Role and Place of Amir Timur in the History of Central Asia* (1968) was also condemned, as were all publications that showed any positive side of Timur’s deeds (Bababekov 2006). During the Soviet period, Timur was not considered an Uzbek national hero, but a brutal Mongol warlord, an illiterate statesman and a devout Muslim. As a result the philosophy behind the restoration of Timurid monuments did not honour the personality of Timur but celebrated hereditary indigenous craftsmanship within the USSR. The restorations with steel and reinforced concrete after the devastating Tashkent earthquake of 1966 were the climax of socialist technological progress combined with the skills of local craftsmen (Demchenko 2011; Shaw 2011). At home and abroad, Timurid architecture boosted Uzbekistan’s image as the cradle of cultured socialism in Central Asia (Stronski 2010).

After independence in 1991, the most populous post-Soviet Muslim state rejected the Marxist–Leninist communist legacy and replaced it with the Timurid cult. Timur, the ‘Uzbekified’ conqueror of the Turkic steppe, became the national hero. Although not an ethnic Uzbek and born almost two centuries before the Uzbeks settled in Samarqand, Timur has a mass appeal in a predominantly Muslim nation with nomadic roots.

The name of Amir Temur was blacked out from the pages of our history in an attempt to bury him in oblivion. The goal was to remove the national consciousness from the soul of the people so that it might lose its sense of national pride and reconcile itself to its dependence and subordination. Our people, trapped for so many years in the clutches of the colonial vice, are no longer deprived of the opportunity to honour our great compatriot and render to him his historical due. (Karimov 1996, 344)

The powerful personality of Timur and his grandiose architectural ambitions fostering state legitimisation (Woods 1987; Manz 1989, 2002) have made him a popular figure among post-Soviet political elites (Allworth 1990; Adams 2010). They in turn elevated the status of Timur as the father of the Uzbek nation in the post-Soviet period (Karimov 1998, 384). Since Timurid monuments belong to all Uzbeks and their maintenance is solely in the hands of the state as postulated by the Uzbek Constitution (1992),<sup>9</sup> they are not directly related to any political party or platform and can be framed as apolitical. Their proper maintenance and the reverence accorded to them by the Uzbek population are seen in direct relation to religious virtues. As pointed out in the widely manifested work *Ulozhenie Timura* (Azimova 1992), Timur understood well that society cannot live without religion. The fact that although being illiterate, Timur knew the Quran by heart and engaged in theological disputes testifies to his ‘elevated spirituality, the purity and firmness of his faith’ (Karimov 1998, 412). However, the division between the secular state and religion was also understood by Timur and is clearly manifested throughout the independence discourse. In modern Uzbekistan, Timurid cultural heritage is seen as a representation of Timur’s humanistic achievements and intrinsically belonging to Timur. Timurid monuments are no longer described as megalomaniacal buildings erected by a brutal warlord,

an approach that was central to Soviet Timurid discourse (Iakubovskii 1933; Muminov 1968). On the contrary, state policy in independent Uzbekistan is propagated through the collective memory of Timur. As pointed out by Islam Karimov at the opening of Timur's monument in Samarqand on 18 October 1996: 'Glorifying Amir Timur – this means strengthening our faith in the great future of our county based on our deep historical roots, our culture and strength' (Karimov 1998, 394).

Michael Herzfeld argues that 'it is not as though the idea of heritage is unimportant to the anti-intellectual forms of populism; on the contrary, it is the linchpin of some of the most egregiously chauvinistic ideologies in the world today' (Herzfeld 2010, S262). Heritage is often used as an image for the production of cultural authority, but it can also be a tactic of legitimation, as in Uzbekistan. Thus, aside from Timur's rehabilitation as a national hero, the value of the Timurid discourse lies in the attempt to evoke pride in the primacy of the Uzbek nation (Matveeva 2009) and also in strong Uzbek leadership modelled after the Timurid statehood example, as shown by March (2002, 2003a, 2003b). The statehood legacy of Amir Timur (*Ulozhenie Timura*) is the flagship of modern Uzbek government. Timurid architecture is a mechanism used by the Uzbek political elite to provide a tangible interaction with this Timurid legacy and to re-enact the country's collective memory. The sanctity of the Timurid shrines, lost during the Soviet period, has been reinstated throughout the years of independence via numerous restoration campaigns and urban development projects. Apart from their material existence, the monuments also form an inseparable part of Uzbek daily life – they are incorporated into television news bulletins; they are portrayed on massive posters and billboards throughout Uzbekistan; they decorate the covers of textbooks and magazines; and they provide the backdrop to lavish ceremonies and opulent jubilees (Adams 2010). The Timurid legacy is vibrant, colourful and palpable.

### **Conservation, political and economic significance of Timurid heritage in Samarqand**

Heritage as a cultural construct is intrinsically linked to the process of selection. Although the Timurid architectural heritage was recognized as an important source for promoting the cultural potential of Central Asia at home and abroad, the majority of the Timurid monuments were sparingly restored during the Soviet period. The early restoration attempts focused mainly on conservation by stabilizing endangered structures such as collapsing vaults, domes and minarets. The choices of what to restore were made by knowledgeable committee members of the Sredazkomstaris (until 1928) and Uzkomstaris (until 1946). New additions to the morphology of the buildings were executed in bare brick with very sparse decoration. In most cases it was obvious that this new fabric did not belong to the original structure. Non-existing domes were indeed rebuilt in reinforced concrete in order to withstand the frequent earthquakes in the region. Initially in the 1950s hand-crafted tiles were used and applied manually to the reconstructed parts. Later on in the 1970s and 1980s manufactured concrete frames were used and polychrome tiling was mass-produced (Demchenko 2011). Even with these innovations, the whole restoration process was still extremely lengthy, carefully planned by interdisciplinary commissions and executed by teams of archaeologists, architects, engineers and local craftsmen (Kruiikov 1990, 1991).

All this changed, however, after 1991 when Timurid architecture was branded as the Renaissance of the East (Askarov 2009) and Timur's legacy was seen as a 'spiritual fundament' of the great future of modern Uzbekistan. The Timurid collective memory started to be propagated both in the public independence discourse and throughout actual architectural restoration and development projects in order to create a sense of pride and belonging among the Uzbek population.

The 1992 Uzbek constitution postulated that all 'cultural monuments should be preserved by the state'. Thus, the state made conscious choices of what to restore and when. State policies also determined the new visual symbolism related to Timur, which involved sumptuous public



celebrations of jubilees – the 660th anniversary of Amir Timur’s birthday in 1996 and the 2750th anniversary of Timur’s capital Samarqand in 2007. Three new statues of Timur were erected in Tashkent (1994), Shahr-i Sabz (1996)<sup>10</sup> and Samarqand (1996), designed by the sculptor Ilhom Dzhabarov (b. 1945).<sup>11</sup> The current officially approved image of Timur is different from Gerasimov’s facial reconstruction from 1941. Prior to the 1996 celebrations the Uzbek artist Malik Nabiyeu (1916–2008) won a competition for a new portrait of Amir Timur in 1994.<sup>12</sup> This new image with Europaeid features and a royal posture depicting Timur seated on his throne and holding a sword (almost copied in the Samarqand monument) is widely propagated by the state. A copy of the portrait is placed at the Gur-i Amir mausoleum and is relentlessly multiplied on blackboards, posters, book covers, textbooks and souvenirs (Figure 1).

The 660th anniversary of Timur’s birth was crowned not only with the new museum of Amir Timur in the centre of Tashkent but also with a series of restoration campaigns that affected the Timurid mausoleum of Gur-i Amir (early 1400) and the Bibi Khanum Mosque (1398–1405) in Samarqand (Paskaleva 2013). These two major Timurid sites had been explored as early as 1895. The study of their epigraphy started in 1898 (Iakubovskii 1940, 298). The plans for their reconstruction had been drawn and partially executed during the Soviet period. However, the new approach after independence included a reconsideration of their epigraphic programme<sup>13</sup> and the subsequent addition of new texts.



Figure 1. Present officially approved image of Timur.

An interesting feature of the epigraphic restorations in Uzbekistan is that sometimes similar texts are repeated on monuments of different ages and with different functions. This is the case with the new epigraphy on the main sanctuary mosque of Bibi Khanum. The Arabic text added in the 1990s reveals Sura 2, verses 127–128, and reads:

And when Abraham, and Ishmael with him, raised up the foundations of the House: 'Our Lord, receive this from us; Thou art the All-hearing, the All-knowing; and, our Lord, make us submissive to Thee, and of our seed *a nation* [emphasis added] submissive to Thee; and show us our holy rites, and turn towards us; surely Thou turnest, and art All-compassionate.<sup>14</sup>

The figure of Abraham combines a spectrum of religious virtues accepted by the followers of Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It might be possible that this text was chosen not only to denote the importance of one nation, one community (*umma*) sharing a common purpose and sense of belonging, but also to stress its multi-ethnic character, given the ethnical and religious diversity in Uzbekistan, in particular in Samarqand. The official state rhetoric is inclusive of all religions and ethnicities.

The same text was also used on the Kök Gunbad Mosque (1435) in Shahr-i Sabz, built by Ulugh Beg<sup>15</sup> and on the main sanctuary of the Kalan Mosque in Bukhara (c. 1514). One possible explanation for this repetition might be multiple usage of analogous calligraphic templates, a process that saves labour and time. It is generally accepted that the period of independence has brought a unique revival of the art of epigraphy. New impetus has been given to the education of young calligraphers in Tashkent and new epigraphic restoration has flourished. The difference compared with previous conservation efforts is that at present the Timurid monuments are entirely covered in tiling, including the Soviet bare-brick additions. An illusion of authenticity has been consciously created and carefully crafted, paired with unprecedented beautification efforts of the surrounding areas. For its urban development and regeneration campaigns Samarqand was awarded with the highest Uzbek distinction, the medal of Amir Timur on 18 October 1996 and this date is celebrated annually as the day of Samarqand.

In 2007 Samarqand celebrated its 2750th jubilee. As early as 2004, the city started preparing on a grand scale for the festivities, initiated by UNESCO and supported by a presidential decree. The Timurid necropolis at Shah-i Zinda (with mausoleums dating from the 1370s to the 1430s) underwent a massive restoration campaign throughout which new mausoleums were built. Original Timurid tile work was substituted by modern mass-produced tiling. The remains of the portal to the 11th-century Qarakhanid Madrasa (1066) were demolished (Nemtseva 2015, 95).<sup>16</sup> Several Quranic texts (Sura 3, verses 169 and 170) were added to the main entrance originally built in 1435. A decree by the Cabinet of Ministers from 16 July 2004, signed by President Islam Karimov, postulated that the status of Shah-i Zinda was to be changed to a public fund under the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan (*O'zbekiston Musulmonlari Idorasi*).<sup>17</sup> In 2004 the Ministry of Finance granted 300 million *soums*<sup>18</sup> 'for the organization of the reconstruction, restoration and regeneration of Shah-i Zinda' and promised enough funds for the continuation of the work to be secured by the state budget in 2005. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan granted 50 million *soums* in 2004 and 100 million *soums* in the following years. Prime Minister Shavkat Mirziyoyev was put in charge of the execution. In 2007 the president paid a pilgrimage to Shah-i Zinda. During his visit he recommended that the text of the *bismilla* be put above the main entrance to the necropolis and a gallery be set up with old photographs of the dilapidated mausoleums prior to independence showing numerous images from the restoration campaigns of 2005–07.<sup>19</sup>

Shah-i Zinda is the only complex in the UNESCO-listed city centre of Samarqand that falls directly under the authority of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan; the imam of Samarqand is its principal guardian. The conservation of Registan Square is governed by the Ministry of Culture. The rest of the monuments including the Bibi Khanum Mosque and Mausoleum, the

Timurid dynastic mausoleum of Gur-i Amir, the Aq Saray, the Hazrat Imam Mosque, etc. fall under the directorate of the Uzbek State Museum of History of Culture (*O'zbekiston madaniyati tarixi davlat muzeyi*).

Although Islamic practice around the monuments is controlled by the state and police are omnipresent, the guardians appear to be genuinely involved and are fairly knowledgeable about the history of the sites. They are perfectly aware of the new additions and are sincerely concerned with the state of preservation. Each guardian could specify the exact location of original tile work or text. All take pride in their work and are eager to collect additional information on the history of the respective site. Showing and selling photographs of the old state of repair and comparing them with new images is being done not only at each listed building but also at all souvenir stalls. Small souvenir shops, sometimes surprisingly selling rare (Soviet) books and recent Uzbek historical novels and posters, are located within mausoleums and mosques across the city.

During the regeneration of Samarqand in 2005–06 the Bibi Khanum Mausoleum, situated opposite Bibi Khanum Mosque, was decorated with a new dome and a grand portal. The old vodka factory *Zarafshan* in the proximity of Gur-i Amir was demolished. The Ruhabad Mausoleum, previously in its shadow, was restored and the meticulously landscaped Amir Timur park that surrounds the mausoleum was created. The Hotel Afrosiyob Palace was built in 1996 on the territory of the citadel opposite Ruhabad Mausoleum.

The beautification of Samarqand continued throughout 2009 when the main building of the Uzbek State Museum of History of Culture, one of the oldest and largest museums in Central Asia situated in the eastern part of Registan Square, was demolished.<sup>20</sup> After 2010, in accordance with a governmental decision, the museum was moved to Mirza Ulugh Beg Street (until 1991, Karl Marx Street). On 1 September 2014 it was officially reopened in a building used for political education during the Soviet period. The majority of tourists are unfortunately unaware of its vast collection, and due to its relocation outside the city centre the number of visitors has remained very limited. The huge and still empty Registan site, on which the museum stood, was transformed into a park and landscaped with the ubiquitous low fir trees and two golden tigers symbolizing Samarqand.

According to the recent regeneration plan, the central urban arteries were widened up to 11 metres and new four-storey housing projects popped up along Mirza Ulugh Beg Street and Al-Beruni Street – the two main roads leading from Samarqand train station into the city centre. Most of the traditional houses along these roads were demolished as they were described as ineffective trading hubs. The new residential projects are deemed as a testament to the profound social and urban regeneration changes that have taken place after independence (Trevisani 2014, 249–250). Financial support for the project along the Ulugh Beg Street was granted by several companies, including the railway company O'zbekiston temir yo'llari and Uztransgas. In turn, these companies received housing for their young employees. Most likely these urban regeneration projects were meant to impress the flocks of international tourists, who pour into the city on the high-speed Afrosiyob train, which runs daily from Tashkent to Samarqand.

Cultural tourism is an increasingly important branch of the Uzbek economy. It is directly linked to the concept of spiritual memory and to the commercialization of architectural heritage. Tourism has a vast potential to contribute to the economic development of Uzbekistan and to generate much needed foreign currency. Unfortunately, it is still not fully exploited. UNESCO has undoubtedly played a major role in the promotion of Uzbekistan as an attractive tourist destination. At present, Uzbekistan has four sites on the World Heritage List: Khiva, the Itchan Kala (1990), the Historic Centre of Bukhara (1993), the Historic Centre of Shahr-i Sabz (2000)<sup>21</sup> and Samarqand – Crossroad of Cultures (2001).<sup>22</sup> The UNESCO Director General Irina Bokova visited Samarqand in August 2013. Her address underlined the global importance of Samarqand's heritage and the personal involvement of the president:

We see this power all around us this evening – in the majestic beauty of Registan Square, this ‘Pearl of the Orient.’ I know these words have special meaning for you, Mr President, as a native of Samarkand.<sup>23</sup> All of this is why Samarkand – Crossroads of Cultures is inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – because it embodies values that are outstanding and universal, because Samarkand is part of the story of all humanity. (Bokova 2013, 2)

UNESCO is the only United Nations agency with a specific mandate in the field of culture. Uzbekistan joined UNESCO in October 1993 and the organization has two main bodies in the country. UNESCO’s Tashkent office, established in 1999, has its own building and office staff; the head is appointed by UNESCO headquarters in Paris. UNESCO collaborates closely with the Uzbek Ministry of Culture and with the Principal Board on Protection of Cultural Monuments of Uzbekistan. The other body is the National Commission of the Republic of Uzbekistan for UNESCO, which falls directly under the office of the prime minister. Lola Karimova-Tillyaeva<sup>24</sup> has been the Permanent Delegate to UNESCO since 2008. The collaboration with local and international heritage experts is coordinated by the UNESCO International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS), established in August 1995 in Samarqand, which has a vast network of international scholars and a record of outstanding publications. According to UNESCO, ‘the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan constitutes a source of national identity and pride and its preservation and promotion enjoys great attention from the government’ (UNESCO 2013, 19).

The legal framework of the collaboration is the Uzbek ratification of UNESCO’s Convention on the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972, para. 4), which entrusts cultural heritage to the state. In 1996 the Uzbek government ratified The Hague Convention (1954) regulating the protection of cultural property.<sup>25</sup> The Hague Convention is important as it acknowledges the connection between cultural heritage and national identity.<sup>26</sup> These conventions have been integrated into the national legislation as well.<sup>27</sup> Only recently with the resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers from 21 July 2014 was a new governmental commission set up for the protection of cultural and archaeological heritage objects.<sup>28</sup> The Deputy Prime Minister Adham I. Ikramov was appointed as its chairman.

UNESCO has actively participated in the development of a management plan for the city of Samarqand, submitted in 2013.<sup>29</sup> The need for this plan was urgent due to the detrimental impact of busy roads and the state of conservation of the urban fabric in the old Timurid city. According to the UNESCO (2011) report, Uzbekistan places considerable emphasis on tourism. This is apparent in a ministerial decree from 7 June 2011 that set the restoration and preservation goals for the city until 2015. The programme envisaged the restoration of 22 historical sites in the Timurid capital. The two major monuments to undergo reconstruction are the Mausoleum Ishrat Khana (1464) with a budget of 1.48 billion *soums* (US\$628,260) and the Bibi Khanum complex with a budget of 1 billion *soums* (US\$424,500). Here it should be pointed out that these two monuments were deemed to be destroyed beyond repair in an inventory carried out by the Sredazkomstaris members Vasilii Viatkin and Boris Zasyupkin. These renovations are anticipated to create new tourist routes (in particular in the south-west of Samarqand) and infrastructure services with a 1.5% growth rate with a revenue of 1.7 billion *soums* (US\$721,650) expected in the state budget within five years. In addition, approximately 3000 jobs in research and restoration works would be created, complemented by a geographical information system (GIS) database to monitor the tangible and intangible cultural heritage (UNESCO 2011).

On 16 February 2015, Uzbekistan submitted an updated report<sup>30</sup> on the state of conservation of Samarqand’s heritage to the World Heritage Centre, examined by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session in Bonn, Germany (28 June–8 July 2015). Although the report confirms that the management plan was presented to the *khokim* (mayor) of Samarqand region in 2014 and was to be included in the annual budget of the cabinet of ministers, it does not mention any allocated funds or actual costs incurred during the planned restoration of Bibi Khanum and Ishrat Khana;

the latter is still in a ruined state. In response, the World Heritage Commission noted ‘the progress made with the implementation of the Management Plan and efforts of the State Party to strengthen the protection of the property’ and reiterated the request that the ‘World Heritage Committee shall be notified prior to any major restorations or new constructions which may affect the Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) of the property before making any decisions that would be difficult to reverse’ (UNESCO 2015, 133). Subsequently, the World Heritage Centre asked Uzbekistan to submit yet another updated report by 1 December 2016.<sup>31</sup> One wonders what is the added value of such reports that list the frequency of official meetings and provide no usable information on the latest measures and state of preservation?<sup>32</sup> In the majority of cases the actual urban development projects have taken place prior to the report submission deadline.

All these monitoring activities demonstrate that UNESCO would like to be actively involved and informed about the restoration and regeneration efforts in Uzbekistan. However, in practice the organization has an advisory function and one of its major tasks is to create awareness of the cultural heritage and to stimulate collaboration between NGOs. The actual decisions are taken, as explained above, by state authorities and the project commissions are divided among local privately owned companies. International collaboration projects related to architectural heritage have dwindled in recent years. Foreign investment seems to have been relegated, in the majority of cases, to the construction of new roads and is used to a lesser extent for the preservation of architectural heritage.

### **Redesigning the holiest site in Tashkent: the Hazrat Imam complex**

In Tashkent, modern constructions are planned and executed with a meticulous programme that could be related to the political significance of Timurid heritage. Their architectural epigraphy can be analysed as a tool to attest importance to certain, carefully chosen urban sites and at the same time to relate the monuments to the larger context of Timurid (15th century) and Shaybanid (16th–17th centuries) material heritage.

In January 2007, the International Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO)<sup>33</sup> declared Tashkent one of the four capitals of Islamic culture. The oldest and the holiest place in Tashkent was chosen to commemorate the occasion. The Hazrat Imam Complex (locally known as Hast Imam) was turned into the largest and most prestigious construction site in Tashkent. The new building activity transformed the image of the Old City and created a large-scale pilgrimage site on what used to be a remote area off the beaten track amidst narrow streets of traditional Uzbek mud-brick housing – one of the oldest areas in Tashkent. The most important construction within the complex was the new Hazrat Imam Mosque (Figure 2).

With the Hazrat Imam Complex, the Old City acquired a new modern centre. Ever since the Russian colonial period, Tashkent has been divided by the Ankhor canal in the rapidly developing New City to the east and the more traditional Old City to the west. The New City was designed by the Russian settlers as a showpiece of progressive Western civilization (Kosmarski 2011, 40–41). By drastically modernizing the Old City in 2007, especially its most religious and sacred nucleus, a new state-controlled tolerance towards Islam was demonstrated that would have been unthinkable during the early years of Uzbek independence. Furthermore, the building project was characterized by directly quoting Timurid and Shaybanid iconography, epigraphy and urban planning. Through the use of architectural elements pertaining to key monuments of the Timurid and Shaybanid dynasty, the modern Uzbek political elite aspires to the status of powerful leaders, creating artefacts on the same grand scale as their predecessors.

Several important architectural approaches can be observed in the Hazrat Imam Complex. Firstly, the project was executed on the holiest site in Tashkent. Secondly, the created architectural ensemble (a *kosh*)<sup>34</sup> consisting of a congregational mosque opposite a *madrasa* has been used by





Figure 2. Hazrat Imam Mosque, 2013. Photo: author.

powerful dynasties such as the Timurids in Samarqand and Herat, and the Shaybanids in Bukhara. Thirdly, the concept of architectural palimpsest and utilization of Timurid and Shaybanid architectural morphology reinforces the legitimacy of the project. Fourthly, the positioning of the Uthman Quran – one of the earliest written versions of the Quran, kept in a museum in the centre of the complex – gave a flair of Islamic superiority to ‘Hast Imam’ which reaches beyond Central Asia. These four approaches are discussed below.

The Hazrat Imam Complex had evolved around the *mazar* (holy shrine) of Abu Bakr Muhammad Kaffel Shashi (d. 976), one of the first imams of the Shafii *madhab* (school of jurisprudence) of Sunni Islam. The graveyard that grew around the mausoleum of Kaffel Shashi has always been the most popular pilgrimage site in the Sibzar district of the Old City (Bulatova and Mankovskaya 1983, 106). During the 16th century, Tashkent gained cultural and commercial importance across Mavarannahr under the Shaybanid dynasty. The mausoleum of Suyunidz Khan (d. 1525), the first ruler of the Shaybanid dynasty in Tashkent, was erected in the burial ground to the south of the Kaffel Shashi shrine. The Barak Khan Madrasa was built around the mausoleum<sup>35</sup> of Suyunidz Khan between 1530 and 1550. The *mufti* (the highest religious leader) and chairman of the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) was housed in the Barak Khan Madrasa after 1950. This was the only functioning *mufti* on the territory of Central Asia, which had the support of 75 per cent of all Soviet Muslims (Peyrouse 2007, 42).

Other important buildings within the Hazrat Imam Complex include the 16th-century Muyi Muborak Madrasa, or the ‘Sacred Hair’ Madrasa, which supposedly houses a rarely seen hair of the Prophet Muhammad. The Library of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan constitutes an important part of the complex. It possesses approximately 20,000 books and 3000 manuscripts on Islamic history, astronomy and medicine, including the Uthman Quran. With the refurbishment of the site, the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan acquired new administrative buildings within the complex.



The new Hazrat Imam Mosque, designed by the architect A. S. Turmatov, was built in a *kosh* opposite the Barak Khan Madrasa. The *kosh* has two main characteristics: location and scale. On the one hand, the location is of primary importance as it represents the significance of the building defined by its position within the urban fabric. Since most of the *kosh* complexes developed over the course of several centuries, a key factor was to build across an already existing compound erected by a famous ruler or dynasty. The location of the *kosh* legitimized the patron, his power and financial means, as he rivalled with the manifestation of power by a previous, established and celebrated ruler. In Tashkent, the Hazrat Imam Mosque was erected exactly on the main axis of the 16th-century royal Shaybanid *madrasa*. In the case of the Hazrat Imam Complex, not only was a new grander mosque created but also the original Shaybanid monument was redesigned.

The site of the Barak Khan Madrasa was redeveloped in a process best described as an architectural palimpsest. By reusing architectural details such as tiled domes, high drums, minarets and monumental portals, the modern Uzbek political elite seeks fame and recognition similar to the Timurid and Shaybanid dynasties. What is more, by placing the same epigraphy from the front facade of the Barak Khan Madrasa onto the main entrance to the Timurid dynastic mausoleum of Gur-i Amir in 2008–09, the symbolism of the site was intensified.

When I first visited the Barak Khan Madrasa in September 2006, the main facade was characterized by two low domes covered with tin sheets; there was no dome above the main mausoleum.<sup>36</sup> Within the remarkably short period of four months in 2007, the front facade was drastically changed. The *madrasa* was adorned with three turquoise pseudo-Timurid cupolas on high cylindrical drums. Two identical cupolas without any structural function were erected above the vestibule simply to keep the symmetry of the main facade. The third largest dome was erected above the mausoleum of Suyunidz Khan.

The Barak Khan Madrasa has been redesigned according to the greatest surviving Timurid model. The only building in present-day Uzbekistan with three cupolas forming one ensemble is the Bibi Khanum Mosque (1398–1405), which Timur erected in Samarqand as the greatest architectural achievement of his reign. The mosque was conceived as the capstone of Timurid craftsmanship and architectural ingenuity, remaining one of the largest mosques in Central Asia. The compound is based on the open courtyard plan with four majestic portals; it is the first mosque in Islamic architecture to display domes behind the side chambers. The main mosque is situated along the east–west longitudinal axis with the two side mosques forming the north–south axis. The side mosques are covered by turquoise ribbed domes resting on high drums (newly built in the 1980s); the main sanctuary is adorned with a tiled blue dome with the largest span in Central Asia. The Bibi Khanum Mosque also forms a *kosh* with the Bibi Khanum Madrasa, built by Timur’s chief wife, who secured him the Mongol title of a ‘son-in-law’ which legitimized Timur’s rule. In my opinion, the addition of the three domes to the Barak Khan Madrasa (Figure 3) makes a very clear architectural reference to the Bibi Khanum Mosque. Furthermore, the two domes above the vestibule also refer iconographically to the Shaybanid Mir-i Arab Madrasa (1535–36) that forms a *kosh* ensemble with the Kalan Mosque in Bukhara. The two domes, characteristic of the Mir-i Arab Madrasa, are repeated on the main facade of the Barak Khan Madrasa and on the main facade of the new Hazrat Imam Mosque.

The Uzbek ‘Ideology of Independence’ stresses the notion of a unified Muslim community, freed from Soviet-imposed atheism. Islamic cultural heritage and values are constantly celebrated by the state in an attempt ‘to define Islam as properly national’ (Khalid 2014, 525). At present, Quranic verses evoking the creation of a unified Muslim nation are being inscribed onto Timurid monuments throughout numerous restoration campaigns after the UNESCO listing as a World Heritage site. An important example of recent epigraphic restoration is the portal to the dynastic Timurid Mausoleum Gur-i Amir, which was retiled and adorned with Quranic



Figure 3. Barak Khan Madrasa in Tashkent, 2013, after restoration in 2007. Photo: author.

verses in 2008–09 (Paskaleva 2013). The Arabic text is from Sura 3, verse 104: ‘Let there be *one nation* [emphasis added] of you, calling to good, and bidding to honour, and forbidding dishonour; Those are the prosperers.’ It is interesting to note that the same text, but in an earlier calligraphic rendition, is used on the main portal of the Barak Khan Madrasa (Rtveladze 2011, 419).<sup>37</sup> I suggest that the choice of the verse on the portal of Gur-i Amir is an attempt to create the image of the nation based on shared values such as piety and religious devotion. The original text on the Barak Khan Madrasa added in the 1950s can be explained by the function of the *madrasa* as the seat of the *mufiti* and as the only institution propagating Islamic religious values across Central Asia during the Soviet period. The fact that the text was copied from the Barak Khan Madrasa onto Gur-i Amir might also suggest an attempt to increase the ‘proto-Timurid’ importance of the new Hazrat Imam Complex in Tashkent, completed by September 2007.

The novelty used in the urban development of the Hazrat Imam Complex is the presentation of the Uthman Quran (also known as the Samarqand codex). This approach may have been adopted in order to attach not only regional but also world importance to the complex. The Quran was compiled in Medina under the third Sunni caliph Uthman (r. 644–56). It was completed in 651, only 19 years after Muhammad’s death. Its remarkable story cannot be dealt here at length, however it is important to note that the Uthman Quran was one of Timur’s treasures that he acquired after the campaign in Syria and Iraq. The Quran is believed to have been kept in the main sanctuary of the Bibi Khanum Mosque in Samarqand; hence, the name Samarqand codex. In 1869, Konstantin von Kaufman, Governor-General of Turkestan, sent it to the Imperial Library in St Petersburg. It attracted the attention of Tsarist orientalists and eventually a facsimile edition was published in St Petersburg in 1905. After repeated appeals by the people of Turkestan, the Quran was returned to Tashkent in 1923, where it has remained ever since. Prior to 2007, the Uthman Quran was kept in a safe at the Library of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan,<sup>38</sup> which few tourists visited. Nowadays, the Uthman Quran is the highlight of the Hazrat Imam Complex. It has

a special place in a glass case in the new museum of the Muslim Board at the Muiy Muborak Madrasa, situated in the middle of the square between the Barak Khan Madrasa and the Hazrat Imam Mosque.

The Hazrat Imam Complex was the key architectural achievement of modern Uzbek architecture in 2007. The new orthogonal landscape was created with wide lanes and flowerbeds; the low vegetation allows for vast, unobstructed views that have become ubiquitous across Uzbekistan (Kosmarski 2011, 46). The outcome is a mix of Shaybanid and modern pro-Timurid iconography (blue domes, high drums, ochre brickwork with tile decoration) meant to unify old architectural traditions in a modern context. The construction was finished ahead of schedule, 1.5 months before the celebration of Uzbek Independence Day on 1 September 2007. The progress was regularly monitored by the president, who was re-elected on 23 December 2007. The popular Hazrat Imam Mosque is visited both by local people on Friday prayers and by governmental officials during state visits.

## **Conclusions**

In this article I have discussed recent building activities and urban development measures in Samarqand and Tashkent. The continuous renovation and renewal projects initiated in Uzbekistan are changing the urban fabric of the cities on a large, unprecedented scale. The new constructions range from mosques to secular public buildings; their style is eclectic. The importance of Timurid heritage is evoked by integrating its intrinsic morphology into the development of the new architectural landscape of independent Uzbekistan. Timurid heritage is used as the ‘symbolic embodiment of their greatest political ideals and national aspirations’ (Abashin 2012, 155).

Sally Cummings summarizes that ‘symbolic legitimization is crucial to power maintenance and to imbuing a sense of belonging into citizens of newly independent states’ (Cummings 2012, 174). In the case of Uzbekistan, the sense of belonging is created by uplifting the status of the Uzbek people as heirs to Amir Timur and upholders of Timurid values such as ‘spiritual might’, ‘justice’ and the ‘renaissance of science and culture’. The years of independence are described as a ‘return to the sources of spirituality, national roots, historical memory’ (Karimov 1998, 380). Symbolic legitimization is thus carefully structured around the elevation of the Timurid monuments not only as commemorative religious sites but also as core icons for the formation of new Uzbek identity based on re-evoked Timurid values.

The presented restorations disclose the fact that conscious choices are being made regarding the promotion of certain sites directly related to Timur. Since the monuments are owned by the state, public funds are used for their restoration. These campaigns involve both conservation and new morphological and epigraphic additions. In particular, the epigraphic restorations constitute a medium used to propagate the national ideology. By selecting texts underlining the importance of a unified Muslim nation (Gur-i Amir, Bibi Khanum) and by acknowledging the spiritual and religious diversity of the nation (Bibi Khanum), the new epigraphy seems to serve as a political tool.

Although all five Central Asian republics have underlined the strict separation between state and religion, Quranic texts in Arabic are being used as a legitimization device in present-day Uzbekistan. However, very few people can read Arabic and the message cannot be strictly targeted at the local population. My assumption is that the new texts reach out to other Muslim nations in an attempt to secure a global recognition of Uzbekistan and to denote its Timurid heritage as belonging to the wider Islamic cultural heritage. As Beatrice Manz points out ‘Uzbekistan did not have to fight for its independence, but it does have to struggle for recognition as a power in its own right’ (Manz 2002, 22).

These local urban development practices raise the more general question of authenticity of architectural heritage and the role of UNESCO in preserving it. The fact that major restoration projects in Uzbekistan have taken place after the UNESCO listing as World Heritage Sites points to the fact that the role of international organizations is restricted by the imposing power of the political elite. International representatives and most scholars are constantly monitored and accompanied by state officials throughout their visit to Uzbekistan (Adams 2013, 117).

Furthermore, heritage (claimed as such by UNESCO) and its use as a marketable commodity for the sake of tourism leads to the commercialization of the historical past (Herzfeld 1991), which has a detrimental and irreversible impact on the architectural artefacts. Using the ‘rhetoric of modernization’ and urban development, state authorities make conscious choices between large-scale regeneration projects and speedy restoration campaigns elevating Timurid sites within the ‘rhetoric of heritage and high culture’ (Herzfeld 2010, S266). Although the number of tourists has been growing in recent years, one wonders what percentage of the rapidly dwindling original tile work and decoration will remain intact in the years to come.

### **Methodology**

The empirical research presented in this paper was carried out during several visits to Samarqand and Tashkent between 2006 and 2015. The analysis is founded on photographs taken throughout these visits. Further historical insights are based on pre-Soviet and Soviet publications and photographic archival material kept at Cambridge University Library and the Harvard collection of the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture. Another source for empirical data is administrative decrees and legislation, the majority of which are available online.

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### **Notes**

1. The UNESCO debate on heritage values and their importance was initiated during the Conference of Nara (1994), which questioned the notion of authenticity. The full text of the convention can be accessed at <http://whc.unesco.org/archive/nara94.htm/>.
2. The socio-political importance of Timurid monuments remains largely unstudied. The last two major Western publications on Timurid architecture – the ground-breaking and still most comprehensive study by Golombek and Wilber (1988) as well as O’Kane (1987) – are from the late 1980s. The recent politicized Uzbek study by Askarov (2009) claims Uzbekistan as the cradle of Renaissance across Eurasia. The most relevant publication for this research has been McChesney (2003). Tsarist and Soviet restoration policies towards Timurid architecture have been discussed by Shaw (2011), Demchenko (2011) and Gorshenina (2013a, 2013b, 2014a), but they do not cover the post-Soviet period and,

- in particular, the newly created epigraphy. Gorshenina's ground-breaking works (Gorshenina 2012, 2014b) have been removed from the library of the Institute of Archaeology in Samarqand and are not currently accessible to scholars in Uzbekistan.
3. The Shaybanids were a powerful dynasty throughout the 16th–17th centuries. Monuments of the Shaybanid dynasty in Uzbekistan are situated in Bukhara and Samarqand.
  4. Author's translation from German.
  5. The commission examined 19 monuments in and around Samarqand. One of the first projects was the strengthening of the north-eastern minaret of the Ulugh Beg Madrasa; the commission was led by Viatkin (1869–1932) and the engineers Kastal'skii (1868–1943) and Mauer (1866–1932). The minaret was finally restored in its vertical position in 1932.
  6. Endowments of the Ulugh Beg Madrasa and the Abdu Darun complex. I have not been able to find any information on the endowments of the Bibi Khanum Mosque or the Gur-i Amir Mausoleum. The keepers of the monuments in Samarqand also could not provide any details. Robert McChesney quotes Emel'yanov and explains that the Russians surveyed the endowments in Turkestan and 'identified 297 waqfs in Samarqand' (McChesney 2003, 19).
  7. The most comprehensive study on the Turkomstaris, Sredazkomstaris, Uzkomstaris was carried out by Gorshenina (2013a). Her article was also published in English (Gorshenina 2013b).
  8. Kary-Niazov was the ideal representative of the indigenization (*korenizatsiia*) in which educated titular nationals were encouraged to take leadership positions or participate actively in the social cultural transformations. In 1940 he became a member of the central committee of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. The other members of the expedition were the anthropologist Professor Lev V. Oshanin, the palaeographer Aleksandr A. Semenov, the architect Boris N. Zasyplin, the archaeologist Vasilii A. Shishkin, and V. N. Koronov from the Hermitage Museum. The widely celebrated Tajik poet Ayni, who lived in Samarqand close to Gur-i Amir, was also involved.
  9. Chapter 11, para. 49.
  10. The statue in Shahr-i Sabz in front of Aq Saray palace was replaced in 2003 as the crown of Timur was considered to be associated with a Russian tsar and thus deemed inappropriate.
  11. Also spelled Ilhom Jabborov. More information on his oeuvre can be found on the website of the Uzbek Art Academy.
  12. The original portrait is kept by the family. Several copies were created by Malik Nabiyev'son Husan Nabiyev. In August 2013 one of them was up for sale at the art gallery of the Zarqaynar shopping mall in Tashkent.
  13. All exterior and interior texts are conceived as an inseparable part of the decoration in Islamic architecture.
  14. All Quranic translations are by Arthur J. Arberry, Oxford (Koran 2008).
  15. The calligraphy was designed by Habbibula Solih and the band was added during the restoration campaign in 1992–95 (Olim et al. 2012).
  16. Nina B. Nemtseva points out that this entrance to the *madrasa* had survived all conquests of Samarqand and all political regimes, but it did not survive the recent building campaign in 2004. Nemtseva surveyed the whole necropolis as early as 1959; she has created the most comprehensive study on Shah-i Zinda. Her latest book on Shah-i Zinda was published in 2015. Due to lack of funding, only 30 copies were printed.
  17. The Muslim Board of Uzbekistan was established in 1993. The organization succeeded the Spiritual Board of Muslims of Central Asia and Kazakhstan (SADUM) that existed between 1943 and 1991. SADUM was the official governing body for Islamic activities in the five Central Asian republics within the Soviet Union, whereby each republic had a *qaziyat* (Muslim directorate). The chairman of SADUM held office in Tashkent and was appointed as a supreme *mufti*.
  18. I am unable to provide the respective amount in US dollars in 2004; the present official exchange rate is US\$1 = 2560 *soums*.
  19. The museum contains a copy of the decree from 2004 and a model of the whole complex.
  20. Established in 1896, a new purpose built museum building was designed in 1978 by the famous architect and scholar of Central Asian architecture Mithat S. Bulatov (1907–2004). At present the museum houses around 200,000 artefacts, including the archaeological collections of Vasilii Viatkin.
  21. At present (May 2015) Shahr-i Sabz is undergoing a massive regeneration ahead of Timur's 680th birthday celebration in 2016.
  22. The historical centres of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarqand were proclaimed by the Uzbek government as state architectural reserves (UNESCO 2004, 25).
  23. Islam Karimov was born in Samarqand in 1938.



24. Lola Tillyaeva is the youngest daughter of the Uzbek president Islam Karimov.
25. For the full text of the Hague Convention, see [http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=13637&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html/](http://portal.unesco.org/en/ev.php-URL_ID=13637&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html/).
26. The other two conventions ratified by Uzbekistan are the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property (1970); and the Convention on Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003).
27. Law on the Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Heritage Properties (No. 269-II 20 August 2001) and Law on the Preservation and Utilisation of Archaeological Heritage Properties (No. 42 16 June 2009). In 2014, the government of Uzbekistan adopted two more Decrees of the Cabinet of Ministers in addition to the existing legislative acts: No. 53 from 6 March 2014 On Additional Measures for the Further Improvement of Protection and Use of Tangible Cultural and Archaeological Objects; and No. 200 from 21 July 2014 On Additional Measures for the Further Improvement of Protection and Use of Tangible Cultural and Archaeological Objects.
28. Postanovlenie Kabineta Ministrov Respubliki Uzbekistan, 21 July 2014, No. 200. Accessed August 20, 2015. [http://www.norma.uz/novoe\\_v\\_zakonodatelstve/ohrana\\_obektov\\_kultury/](http://www.norma.uz/novoe_v_zakonodatelstve/ohrana_obektov_kultury/).
29. In September 2014, a meeting was held to discuss the management plans for the three other World Heritage-listed sites in the territory of Uzbekistan.
30. The report is available on the UNESCO website *Samarkand – Crossroad of Cultures*. Accessed August 24, 2015. <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list/603/documents/>.
31. Decisions adopted by the World Heritage Committee at its 39th session, in Bonn, 2015 (UNESCO 2015, 133).
32. In August 2013, the UNESCO's director general was shown around the Bibi Khanum Mosque, but did not visit the Ishrat Khana.
33. The Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) was established by the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) in May 1979. ISESCO is one of the largest international Islamic organizations and specializes in the fields of education, science and culture. Its headquarters are in Rabat, Morocco.
34. The *kosh* is an architectural ensemble of two or three buildings oriented towards each other with their main facades along the same axis. The *kosh* is formed by the buildings and the square between them. Examples of *kosh* ensembles are the Bibi Khanum Mosque and Mausoleum in Samarqand and the Kalan Mosque and Mir-i Arab Madrasa in Bukhara. The Mir-i Arab was the only functioning *madrasa* during the Soviet period; it was reopened in 1945 and is still operating today.
35. An earlier second mausoleum of the Unknown was incorporated into the south-western corner of the *madrasa*.
36. The original dome was destroyed during an earthquake in 1868 (Bulatova and Mankovskaya 1983, 114). A picture of the dome published by Ratiia and Voronin (1936, 69) reveals a *muqarnas* frieze and an epigraphic band above the high drum covered in tile mosaic. It is probable that the decoration on the 2007 domes was inspired by the original tile patterns.
37. The Barak Khan Madrasa was studied for the first time by the Uzkomstaris in 1935 (Ratiia and Voronin 1936, 68). The explorations were led by the key scholars of Uzbek architectural heritage: Masson, Zhukov, Ratiia and Voronin. The text was most likely added during the Soviet restoration campaign in 1956 based on the new design by A. N. Vinogradov. In 1979, a new restoration campaign was initiated but it was not fully executed.
38. The building of the library dating back to the 1880s was demolished in late 2006–early 2007. The location was integrated into Hazrat Imam square.

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