

THE SHAKHI ZINDA ENSEMBLE: HISTORICAL STRATIGRAPHY AND CONSERVATION CHALLENGES FROM THE PROSPECTS OF ARCHITECTURE, ARCHEOLOGY AND MUSEOLOGY

Raufova Mohina Abdurafiqovna

Silk road International University of tourism and cultural heritage magistrantiman

Abstract: The Shakhi Zinda complex in Samarkand represents a unique synthesis of architectural, archaeological and cultural values. As an exceptional example of Timurid architecture, it embodies sophisticated decorative traditions and a spatial composition. From an archaeological point of view, the whole preserves the layers which reveal the construction phases and the transformations over several centuries. At the same time, Shakhi Zinda acts as an heir to musical importance and raises important questions about preservation, presentation and adaptation to modern cultural tourism. This study examines the intersection of these three perspectives - architecture, archeology and museology - in order to underline both the historical depth and the contemporary challenges of the preservation of the whole as a living monument of the Central Asian civilization.

Keywords: Shakhi Zinda, architecture, archaeology, museology, preservation, stratigraphy, cultural heritage

Introduction

The Shakhi Zinda necropolis in Samarkand is one of the most remarkable architectural sets of medieval central Asia. The place is known for its exquisite decorative tiles, its refined calligraphic inscriptions and its harmonious urban composition and represents the culminating artistic point of the Timurid era. In addition to its architectural importance, Shakhi Zinda is also a precious archaeological and museological resource. The complex construction layer, which gives an overview of the cultural and religious transformations of Samarkand from the 11th to the 15th century. At the same time, its role as cultural heritage emphasizes the challenges of preservation, preservation and musicization in a modern context.

Literature review

Research on the Shakhi Zinda ensemble has drawn the attention of researchers from the fields of architecture, archeology, art history and studies of cultural heritage. The first works by researchers from the Soviet era such as Galina Pugachenkova and L. Répel highlighted the architectural typology of the necropolis and focused on the stylistic development of the Timurid mausoleum and their decorative techniques. These studies have provided a fundamental understanding of the spatial organization and the decoration of the complex.

Archaeological studies, in particular those carried out in the 20th century, contributed to the stratigraphic reconstruction of the site. Excavation reports documented the pre-time layers and underlined the role of Shakhi Zinda in the urban and spiritual development of Samarkand. These results showed that the necropolis has evolved over the centuries instead of being a product of a single construction campaign.

In the field of epigraphy and the decorative arts, important contributions were made by N. B. Nemtsova, whose detailed studies by the plate, calligraphy and decorative reasons of Shakhi

Zinda offer a wide classification of decorative techniques. Nemtsova's research work underlines the synthesis of Iranian, central Asian and Timurid traditions and at the same time highlight the different local characteristics of Samarkand crafts. Likewise, Ahmad Tondi's thesis for the Timid Shakhi Zinda decoration continues in broader Islamic artistic traditions and emphasizes its unique epigraphic programs and symbolic meanings.

Musological perspectives have recently emerged, in particular in the context of the heir's heritage. Studies on the restoration of Zinda Shakhi during Soviet periods and according to periods of independence show tensions between reconstruction and authenticity. UNESCO reports and literature on cultural heritage management highlight the need to reconcile preservation with accessibility for educational and tourist purposes. Despite these contributions, gaps remain in the integration of architectural, archaeological and museological perspectives in a picture. Many studies manage these aspects separately, and less exploring their intersections. This research aims to face this gap by offering a holistic approach that combines architectural analysis, archaeological stratigraphy and museological evaluation to better understand and maintain the ensemble of Shakhi Zinda.

Methodology

Research on the Shakhi Zinda ensemble uses an interdisciplinary methodology which combines architectural analyzes, archaeological studies and a museological assessment.

- Architectural analysis includes the examination of structural elements, decorative models and spatial organization. Archive drawings, historical photographs and comparative examinations of Timid monuments are examined to pursue the stylistic and structural characteristics of the whole.
- Archaeological examination focuses on stratigraphic evidence, construction phases and the culture of materials. Published excavation reports and on -site surveys are verified to identify chronological strata and understand the development of the necropolis in the Samarkand urban landscape.
- Museological evaluation is based on theories of cultural heritage production, nature conservation practices and the investigation into the recovery policy carried out during the Soviet and Soviet Union. Particular attention is paid to questions of authenticity, interpretation and the role of Shakhi Zinda as an outdoor museum and religious site. Thanks to the integration of these three approaches, the study tries to transmit a holistic understanding of Shakhi Zinda as a historic monument and a cultural heritage and at the same time to determine the challenges of their maintenance in modern times.

Results and Discussion

The interdisciplinary analysis of the Shakhi Zinda ensemble leads to several important information. Architectural perspective. The study confirms that Shakhi Zinda is one of the best achievements in the design of Timid architecture. The axial arrangement of mausoleums and the complicated use of glass tiles, calligraphy and ornamental geometry show a carefully planned visual story of the sacred space. Comparative analysis with contemporary monuments in Herat and Isfahan shows both common stylistic characteristics and the unique local identity of Samarkand craftsmanship. Archaeological perspective. Stratigraphic tests show that the necropolis was not built in a single phase but was previously developed over the centuries. The pre-timurid foundations suggest a rather religious and funeral use of the site, while subsequent interventions underline the shift of dynastic and cultural influences. These results underline the need to maintain archaeological integrity during restoration projects, because Stratigraphy

offers a critical chronology to understand Samarkand's urban and spiritual history. Museological perspective. Analysis of recovery and cat practices shows both positive results and continuous challenges. The interventions of the Soviet period have managed to stabilize many structures, but have often prioritized visual reconstruction against authenticity. In the period which followed independence, the renewed emphasis was on the presentation of Shakhi Zinda as part of the national identity and cultural tourism of Uzbekistan. However, the balance of accessibility with the preservation of authenticity remains an urgent problem. The management of visitors, the participation of the community and the digital documentation are identified as areas of improvement. Discussion. These results emphasize the interconnected nature of architecture, archiology and museology in Shakhi Zinda's study. Although the architectural beauty of the ensemble makes it an icon of the Timuride culture, archaeological depth offers the essential historical context and the mutual role guarantees public involvement in the heritage. A sustainable conservation strategy requires the integration of these three prospects to protect Shakhi Zinda, as well as a holy site and an open museum.

Conclusion

Shakhi Zinda's hay is an example of the intersection of architecture, architeology and museology in the study of cultural heritage. The architectural beauty reflects the artistic performance of the Timuride period; Archaeological stratigraphy offers essential evidence of the historical evolution of Samarkand; And the museological dimension raises vital questions about conservation and presentation in the modern era. Approaching Shakhi Zinda through these three perspectives, scientists and practitioners can develop more holistic strategies to protect the ensemble both as a historical

monument and as a living cultural space.

References

- NEMTSEVA, N. B. (1984). Arkhitektura I Dekor Shakhi-Zinda. Tashke: Fan.
- Golombek, L. & Wilber, D. (1988). The Timuride architecture of Iran and the Turan. Princeton University Press.
- N.B. Nemseva Ansambl SHAXIZINDA: istoriya– arxeologiya – arxitektura XI–XXI vv. Samarkand 2019
- Babur. Babur-Nama. Memoirs of Babur / Translated by M. Salie. Second, revised edition. Tashkent, 1992.
- Buryakov, Yu.F. & Fedorov, M.N. A New Kairak from the Afrasiab Site // Ev, Issue 23. Leningrad, 1985. pp. 57–59.
- Buryakova, E.Yu. Archaeological Excavations and Observations in the Rabat of Samarkand (9th–10th centuries) // IMKU, Issue 13. Tashkent: Fan, 1977. pp. 119–130.