

General Description of Historical and Cultural Heritage Sites in The Fergana Valley: Examples of Archaeological Monuments

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Abstract: This article explores the archaeological heritage of the Fergana Valley and its role in cultural tourism development. It provides a detailed overview of the historical and cultural sites in the Fergana, Namangan, and Andijan regions, emphasizing the significance of archaeological monuments such as Axsikent. The study highlights the importance of preserving ancient city ruins as open-air museums, which can contribute to both historical research and tourism industry growth.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, archaeological heritage, cultural tourism, Axsikent, Silk Road, historical monuments, ancient cities, Uzbekistan tourism, archaeological research, heritage preservation.

Introduction: The Fergana Valley is an ancient and culturally significant region, home to numerous archaeological monuments. These archaeological sites not only shed light on the valley's ancient history but also play a crucial role in the economic and social development of the region if considered as cultural tourism destinations.

Currently, a total of 376 cultural heritage sites in the Fergana region are under state protection, including: 117 archaeological sites, 139 architectural monuments, 32 monumental art objects, 88 significant landmarks. In the Namangan region, there are 301 cultural heritage sites, comprising: 24 pilgrimage sites, 242 cultural heritage sites, 152 archaeological monuments, 98 architectural monuments, 22 public parks. In the Andijan region, 422 sites have been registered, including: 221 archaeological sites, 74 architectural monuments, 42 monumental art objects, 85 significant landmarks [2:1].

Today, archaeological monuments, particularly ancient city ruins, are being transformed into open-air museums, playing a significant role in the development of the tourism industry in the Fergana Valley. Some of the most notable sites include: Axsikent (Namangan

Region), dating back to the 3rd-1st centuries BCE, was the capital of the Fergana state and one of the key cities along the Great Silk Road. Historical sources, including the Baburnama, highlight its significance. The city had an underground water system, making it strategically advantageous for defense. In 2024 excavations, archaeologists discovered Italian-style shell decorations, an underground heating system, fine ceramic pipes, and intact hand-washing devices. [4:3]

The Arab historian Tabori mentioned Fergana city in the early 8th century CE. By the first half of the 9th century, the scholar Ibn Khordadbeh identified Axsikent as the location of ancient Fergana. Only in the second half of the 9th century did written sources begin referring to the city as Axsikent. Numismatic evidence suggests that until the mid-11th century, the city was known by both names: Fergana and Axsikent. Cultural and Economic Importance of Axsikent During the 9th-12th centuries, Axsikent's area expanded to over 400 hectares, with a population exceeding 200,000 people. The city produced many prominent scholars, including: Abul Qosim Mahmud ibn Muhammad as-Sufi Axsikatiy Abu Rashod Axsikatiy ("Zul Fazoil" – "Master of Virtues") Abul Vafo Muhammad ibn al-Qosim al-Axsikatiy ("Zul Manaqib" – "Possessor of Praiseworthy Traits") Poet

Laureate Abu al-Hasan Axsikatiy ("Malik al-Shu'ara" – "King of Poets") Axsikent was a center for handicrafts, excelling in ceramics, glassmaking, and blacksmithing. The famous swords crafted by Axsikent's blacksmiths were renowned in medieval Western European literature as "Damascus swords". Tourism Potential of Axsikent Axsikent plays a vital role in enhancing the Fergana Valley's tourism potential. [1:40]

Research on this ancient city is being conducted at both local and international tourism exhibitions, increasing interest among both domestic and foreign tourists. So far, visitors from Belgium, Austria, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and India have explored the site. Currently, essential infrastructure, trade, and service facilities are being developed, transforming Axsikent into a major tourism destination. This translation keeps the details intact while making the text clear and engaging. [1:32]

Quva Shahristan, located in the Quva district of the Fergana region, the Quva Shahristan stands out as a historically valuable archaeological site. Multiple archaeological excavations have been conducted in this area to gain a deeper understanding of its historical significance, uncovering numerous residential structures, artifacts, and historical objects. The first excavations in Quva Shahristan were initiated in 1956 by specialists from the Institute of History and Archaeology under the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. The overall leadership of this archaeological research was entrusted to Y. G'ulomov. Over a period of 15 years, with some interruptions, significant archaeological findings were unearthed. Among these discoveries were the remains of a Buddhist temple, indicating that Buddhist communities once lived in this region. This suggests that Quva is not only a witness to Islamic history but also preserves traces of earlier civilizations. The artifacts found in Quva bear striking similarities to those discovered in India and Eastern Turkestan, highlighting the extensive cultural and economic ties of the region in the Middle Ages. These discoveries confirm the development of culture and art in Quva as well. After 1990, research on this archaeological site intensified. One of the primary reasons was that ancient sites as well-preserved as Quva are quite rare—only a few, such as Aksikent, Munchoqtepa (Pop district), Dalvarzintepa, and Mingtepa, match its historical significance. Secondly, written sources and geographical positioning confirm that Quva was strategically located on the Great Silk Road, serving as a crucial transit point for intercontinental trade from east to west. Thirdly, unlike other cities in the valley, Quva has preserved deep cultural layers, making it an important source for

studying not only southern Fergana's but the entire valley's ancient history. Tourism Development Projects in Quva to transform this historic site into a tourist destination, several projects have been developed by the Fergana Regional Cultural Heritage Administration and the Fergana Regional Tourism Administration. One of the key initiatives is the establishment of a "Museum of Religions of the Fergana Valley" in the northern-western part of Quva Shahristan, specifically in the Toshkent MFY area. Additionally, several major construction projects are planned, including: The "Qorakhoniy Ark" entrance complex, attached to the defensive wall the symbolic mausoleum of Ahmad al-Farg'oni a mint (coin production workshop). The total planned investment for these projects is 7 billion UZS, with additional funding allocated for infrastructure development: 848.8 million UZS for the construction of a 3.3 km circular road around Quva Shahristan 600 million UZS for electrification and street lighting 584 million UZS for the supply of drinking water, sewage, and irrigation systems the total projected budget is 9.0328 billion UZS. [5:2]. The implementation of this project will not only transform Quva Shahristan into a major tourist hub but also have a positive impact on the local population's standard of living. The large-scale development is expected to create over 100 new jobs. Furthermore, local entrepreneurs will have the opportunity to expand and develop their businesses in tourism-related industries. With its ancient history, rich cultural heritage, and emerging tourism potential, Quva is an ideal destination for history enthusiasts and cultural explorers. By further developing infrastructure and expanding eco-tourism opportunities, Quva can be turned into an even more attractive tourist destination in the future.

Mingtepa Archaeological Site (Andijan Region)

The Mingtepa archaeological site is located 38 km from the center of Andijan city, in the heart of the present-day Markhamat district. According to historical sources, Mingtepa was the capital of the ancient Davan state (also known as Parkana or Dayuan). The earliest information about the history of the Davan state can be found in Chinese sources. This grand city, situated along the Great Silk Road, was famous worldwide for its craftsmanship, agriculture, and its legendary "heavenly horses." The ruins of Mingtepa were extensively studied by renowned archaeologists such as A. N. Bernshtam, Y. A. Zadneprovskiy, and B. Kh. Matboboyev. Based on their research findings, they concluded that Mingtepa was in fact the capital city of the ancient Davan state, known as Ershi. The archaeological sites of Aksikent, Quva, and Mingtepa in the Fergana Valley have been attracting a significant number of tourists due to their historical importance.

National and regional authorities have been implementing various measures to increase tourist flow, which has led to a rise in visitors to these sites. However, it remains a pressing issue to conduct extensive research on archaeological sites of similar historical significance, improve infrastructure, and explore tourism opportunities in these locations. The Fergana Valley is home to many other archaeological sites with great potential for transformation into tourist destinations. These include: In Andijan Region: Sarvontepa (8th–6th centuries BCE), Mozortepa (4th–2nd centuries BCE), Sortepa (4th–2nd centuries BCE), Uzunchoqtepa (3rd century BCE–4th century CE), Zarg'aldoqtepa (12th–8th centuries BCE), Dalvarzin (12th–7th centuries BCE), Eylaton city (6th–2nd centuries BCE), Qo'rg'ontepa (3rd century BCE), Sultonobod (4th century BCE). In Fergana Region: Sufon burial sites (1st century BCE), Mundalit Ota (12th century BCE), Gulobodtepa (1st–7th centuries CE), Oq Ota Buva mound (12th–1st centuries BCE), Xushyor (1st century BCE), Sariqo'rg'on (1st century BCE), Xo'jam Podshohtepa (6th–8th centuries BCE). In Namangan Region: Kultepa (Antiquity period), Balandtepa (Bronze Age), Oqtepa (Antiquity period), Qo'shtepa 1 (Antiquity period)[2:2]. Investing in these historically significant locations through well-designed projects could significantly increase the number of tourist destinations in the region. Through research, preservation, protection, and promotion of cultural heritage sites, it is possible to transform the Fergana Valley into one of the most attractive historical tourism centers in Central Asia.

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