

The Significance of Timur in the Construction of Uzbekistan's State

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ABSTRACT

After Uzbekistan's independence, there is an urgent need for new ideological guidance to determine national identity. In this context, strategic choices and the constant repetition and strengthening of symbolic figures in shaping national identity have become an important part of national life. The logic behind choosing Timur as a symbolic figure of national identity is the need for the development of national identity. This article analyzes the significance of Timur in national construction of Uzbekistan from three aspects: architectural features, collection display, and image shaping.

Keywords: *Timur, Museums, National construction.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov once described the relationship between Timur and Uzbekistan as follows: "If anyone wants to understand the power, justice, unlimited resources and capabilities of Uzbekistan, Uzbek, its contribution to world development, and its belief in the future based on this, he must understand the great image represented by Amir Timur." Uzbekistan closely links Timur with its national image, with the most representative being the Timur Museum. In 1996, the history museum named after Timur was opened to the public in the central square of Tashkent. The establishment of this museum was an important measure for Uzbekistan to make Timur a national symbol. "Museums, through their territorial origins, record the scope of the country under political influence, and the architecture represents everything within the national domain. Museums themselves become symbols of power relations, concretizing the expression of the nation state and providing a place for the nation state to place things in a general order." ¹ The Timur Museum embodies the symbolism of national power everywhere,

showcasing Uzbekistan's culture and history in exhibitions with the aim of enhancing national identity. At the same time, it serves as an educational venue to participate in historical education and enhance the sense of national identity of the younger generation.

2. ARCHITECTURAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TIMUR MUSEUM

The Timur History Museum is located in the central area of Tashkent, the capital city of Uzbekistan - Amir Timur Square. The buildings in this area also include the National Government Building, Timur Horse Riding Statue, and Timur History Museum. In the words of Uzbekistan's first president, Islam Karimov, "If Amir Timur Square can be compared to a beautiful ring, then the Timur History Museum is one of its gemstones." ² It can be seen from this that the museum holds a crucial position in Uzbekistan, and the symbolic significance of the country it represents is self-evident.

Unlike other museums in Uzbekistan that have a long construction history or have been directly transformed from archaeological sites, the Timur

1. (U.K.) Sharon Macdonald, (U.K.) Gordon Fyfe, compiled., *Theorizing Museums: Representing Identity and Diversity in a Changing World* [M]. Lu Fangfang, trans., Hangzhou: Zhejiang University Press, 2020, p33.

2. X. T. Fayziev, *Pearls of the state museum of the temurid history*, Toshkent: Mashhur Press, 2017, p.18.

Museum was redesigned and built after the country's independence and opened to the public in 1996. Its style is a fusion of traditional and modern architecture in Uzbekistan, with a height of 31 meters, an outer diameter of 70 meters, and an inner diameter of 50 meters, totaling three floors. The main body of the building is circular and has a huge arch, which is the blue color commonly used in traditional Uzbekistan architecture. The perimeter of the building is decorated with a semi open terrace made of 10 meter white columns. The exterior walls of the museum are decorated with exquisite geometric patterns. The patterns contain preaching words written in Arabic calligraphy: obedience, justice, insight, enlightenment, piety, politeness, kindness, virtue and loyalty, wealth, perseverance, tolerance, and courage.

Entering the museum through the finely carved walnut door on the second floor, the first step is a giant painting resembling an arch. The painting is based on the basic blue color scheme of Uzbekistan's ancient architecture, with Timur sitting on the throne as the center, and traditional Central Asian royal court life scenes as auxiliary, showcasing the richness and prosperity of the imperial court during the imperial period. The interior of the museum is very beautiful. From the inside, the dome is covered with gold foil and 20 kilograms of precious metal were used to complete it. Another decoration of the museum is the 8.5 meter high crystal chandelier produced by the Tashkent factory, with 106,000 crystal pendants on top. The museum exhibition includes clothing and weapons from the Timurid era, jewelry, replicas of Timur paintings, manuscripts, and documentary footage of the opening of the sarcophagus made in June 1941 at the tomb of the Emir of Gul. There is also a room for storing gifts from heads of state and ordinary citizens: gold embroidery by Bukhara, sculptures by American artist Steven Chester Bisley, etc.³

3. CLASSIFICATION AND ARRANGEMENT OF COLLECTIONS IN THE TIMUR MUSEUM

The Timurid period in history was from the 14th to the 16th century, and this period was the main period for the Timur Museum to display a series of exhibits. The exhibits in the Timur

Museum mainly originate from cultural relics excavated or donated within Uzbekistan. Especially the great achievements in architectural art have become the main feature of the country. During the heyday of the Timur Empire, outstanding architects from all over the world were hired to build palaces and tombs in his country. After these material heritages were restored, they became a very important brand in Uzbekistan. All miniature models of these architectural sites are displayed in the exhibition hall of the Timur Museum. The internal exhibits of the Timur Museum are mainly divided into architectural decorations; Porcelain; Metal products; Glass products; Copper products; Military equipment; Woodcarving products; Jewelry and jewelry; Manuscripts and prints; Painting, etc., mainly showcasing the outstanding contributions of the Timur Empire in culture, technology, and military strength.

3.1 Architectural Decoration

The museum preserves over 150 pieces of architectural decorations, including sculptures, 14th century enamel columns, blue enamel carved pottery, and fragments of architectural decorations, agate half columns from the 15th century, architectural coverings with inscriptions, carved tiles with eight sided stars, and gilded architectural decorations, among others. The layout of the buildings and the magnificent artistic monuments displayed at the exhibition demonstrate the high level of development in architecture and urban planning during the Timurid dynasty's rule. One characteristic of that time was the use of excerpts from "the Qura'n and Hadith in decorative mosaics, where these inscriptions played a decorative role. During this period, the coverings were all carved from stone, and these architectural arts were not only of great significance to Uzbekistan, but also a significant achievement in the world of architectural art.

3.2 Porcelain

The museum preserves ceramics from the Timurid era, demonstrating the vivid originality of pottery traditions in Central Asia from the 14th to 15th centuries. In the museum exhibition, there are over a hundred enamel coated vessels. An important part of ceramic products is the large clay pots and bowls made on pottery wheels, as well as decorative jars, which are often glazed vessels. Most ceramic samples were made in Samarkand, Bukhara, Shahrisabuz, Tashkent, and other cities

3. <https://www.tashkent-hotels.com/tashkent/museums/muzei-amira-temura.htm>
(Searching date: 2022-12-20)

with highly developed handicrafts in the 14th century. The museum displays various ceramic vessels with decorative or economic purposes. In addition, there are some rare bowls with different images, such as a glazed ceramic bowl from the 13th to 14th century, a glazed ceramic bowl depicting ducks in the 14th century, and a glazed ceramic bowl depicting peacocks in the 14th to 15th century. Through specialized research on these samples, people can gain a deeper understanding of the handicraft history of Uzbekistan and its neighboring countries during the Timur rule. The colors of these bowls are varied shades of blue, with lines, plant leaves and flowers, and birds as the main patterns.

3.3 Metal Products

The museum also includes some metal products, which have been highly valued by humans since ancient times and are used to manufacture household utensils, artworks, weapons, etc. The double doors of the Bibi Hanım Mosque are made of seven different metal alloys and copper candlesticks. The museum preserves exquisite carved bronze artifacts and bronze plates from the 12th century, small jars with handles from the 14th to 15th centuries, 14th to 15th century scales, 14th century bronze pots with inscriptions, and 15th century bronze pots. Due to archaeological excavations in Lequestan Square in Samarkand, fragments of metal products, especially rare bronze artworks, have emerged, which to some extent confirms the full development of the metallurgical industry in the 14th and early 15th centuries. These products decorated with gold and silver have the characteristics of simplicity and elegance, proving the high development of copper embossing art in this era. Although there are not many ancient souvenirs made of metal and minerals stored in museums, their decorative, patterned, and pictorial features indicate a high level of artistic skill.

3.4 Glass Products

The production of glass and the manufacturing of glass products have a profound history. There are approximately 45 exhibits of glass products on display in the museum. For example, these include neck fragments of glassware from the 12th to 14th centuries and a small-sized glassware from the 14th to 16th centuries. Glass production began to develop in the Middle Ages. Valuable glass products are often used to store fragrances and therapeutic liquids obtained from plants, as well as

to manufacture decorations. The colorful glass of the Timurid period was used as windows and grids in palaces, mosques, and tombs, which were generally made into geometric shapes.

3.5 Military Equipment

The ordnance handicrafts industry, as an applied art, even emerged at the dawn of human civilization. In the Timurid era, it experienced rapid development, with various types of weapons being manufactured and the quality improved. Many towns had opened weapon workshops. The Timur Museum houses approximately 55 exhibits on this theme. Among them are military equipment and uniforms, iron plates of 14th century armor, axes with wooden handles in the 14th century, pole axes from the 14th to the 16th century, and 15th century helmets, and a magnificent belt inlaid with gemstones made of gold. According to written materials and archaeological excavations, Samarkand, Bukhara, and Tashkent were mainly the centers of weapon production, with well-developed manufacturing of armor, bows, arrows, blades, swords, axes, spears, horse knives, clubs, pins, and daggers.

3.6 Gold, Silver, and Copper Coinage

The museum has a rich collection of gold, silver, and copper coins. These coins bear the names of the rulers. Studying these coins can reveal the history of trade and economic relations with other countries during the reign of the Timur dynasty. Most coins indicate their place of deposit, with silver coins being the main display in the museum collection. In addition, some copper coins were minted for daily use. Gold coins are mainly minted in Khwarazmian and Samarkand, with approximately 12 types. The coat of arms on coins from the Timurid period is decorated with geometric and non-geometric patterns.

3.7 Woodcarving Products

There are 39 rare samples of wood carvings and handicrafts on display in the museum. In the Timurid era, wooden products had reached an excellent level of craftsmanship. The wood used for carving is usually solid and precious species, such as walnut and elm. Wooden pillars, doors, plaques, and other items with carved decorations are an integral part of palaces, mosques, and Islamic schools. During this period, pillars with large patterns were widely used. Living examples of this

are the pillars of mosques and madrasas, which have survived to this day. For example, in the mausoleum of Chashma-i-Ayyub, wood carvings by Bukhara masters can be seen. This is evidenced by the doors of the mausoleum of Khwaja Ahmad Yassawi, the complex of Shasi Zinda and the mausoleum of Amir Timur.

The tradition of combining technology and art in the art of woodcarving began in the Timurid era. Thus, in Samarkand and Shahri Sabz, the masters made extensive use of traditional artistic methods and technical innovations. Until the second half of the 16th century, the creation of new types of wood carving was studied, which marked the beginning of a new phase in the development of architecture in the 17th century. People can see samples of wood carving in the decoration of household items, such as pencil cases, bookcases, low chairs, chests and thrones from the 14th to 16th centuries, as well as in the production of music stands, musical instruments, etc. The carved wooden door at the entrance to the museum was made by modern masters, but in the tradition of Timurid wood carving.

3.8 Jewelry

During the Timurid period, the art of jewelry was also greatly developed. Rare samples of the art of jewelry are reflected in the miniature paintings of the time. To this day, samples of these jewels are kept in the world's museums and personal collections. In the museum's collection there are 132 unique pieces of jewelry. Some of them were made in the traditions of the Timurid era, although they date back to the 19th century. In this catalogue, there are photographs and descriptions of the best jewelry samples of that period, in particular two 19th-century jewelry molds in the shape of pepper, some 19th-century jewelry collections with a heart-shaped pattern, some 19th-century women's hair ornaments with turquoise and beads, and much more. These samples of manual work were constantly being improved. These pieces of jewelry are generally set with precious metals and gemstones. Precious stones such as pearls, processed turquoise, agate, etc., are set in jewelry. The jewelry of the Timurid era was distinguished by its variety of colors, beauty, and elegance, and sometimes these precious metals and gemstones were sewn onto belts and clothes.

3.9 Manuscripts and Lithographs

The manuscripts and lithographs stored in the museum are considered the best collections of the Timurid era. They were created in Samarkand, Bukhara, etc., and were the result of the joint work of calligraphers, decorative artists, goldsmiths, and booksellers. Fine lines, as well as blue, red, bronze, and gilt, were mainly used in the artistic design of manuscripts and lithographs. In manuscripts, there are calligraphy, miniature paintings, pattern decorations. The design of the binding is a special kind of handwriting art. First of all, this refers to particularly valuable books, the covers of which are either made of leather and decorated with embossed gilding, or cardboard with patterns and sometimes storytelling. The museum's collection contains the most valuable copies of this type of manuscript. Upon entering the museum, the attention of visitors is drawn to a unique exhibit of copies of the Ottoman Quran. It is mounted on a marble stand in the central hall of the museum. This copy of the Quran is a simulated version made in St. Petersburg in 1905. The book consists of 353 folios, each with a width of 68 centimeters and a length of 53 centimeters. Each page of the book has 12 lines of verse from the Quran, which is printed according to graphics. There are several manuscripts in the museum's collection that are related to samples of handwritten letters. These manuscripts focus primarily on the period of the Timurid Empire and include Timur's Codex, the poetry collections of Jami and Alisha Navai.

3.10 Paintings

Copies of rare miniatures and modern paintings, created on its basis, occupy a special place in the exhibition. After independence, Uzbekistan reshaped the image of Timur, and skilled painters were invited to paint paintings specifically with the image of Timur. These miniatures focus on Timur and the themes of the era, and other important symbolic figures and architectural monuments are included in the paintings, such as, "The Reception of Amir Timur", "Battle Scenes", "The Construction of the Mosque", "The Battle in the Mountains", "The Reception of Baisongur", "Alisher Navai in the Circle of Poets", "The Divination of the Sultan of Iskandhar", "The School" and "The Bazaar of Samarkand". They reproduce the history, culture, art, and images of historical figures of the Timurid era. These paintings are all modern painters, and the patterns and colors of these exhibits are related to the

shaping of modern Uzbekistan national culture, and are the embodiment of traditional cultural elements.

4. RESHAPING TIMUR'S MEANING IN NATIONAL IDENTITY

In the book "The Fabrication of Louis XIV", the British writer Peter Burke studied the official image of "Louis XIV", and believed that the king holding the orb and the scepter symbolized the right to command, and the indifference and immobility were also a symbol of power, and the image of power was recognized and worshiped by the public.⁴ Timur's appearance as a representative of the state was a reflection of the collective needs of Uzbekistan's history, culture, education, and all aspects of daily life, and became part of the Uzbek national identity. Stories, slogans, pamphlets, and books about Timur appeared as if they had been orchestrated, and Timur was no longer a tyrant or a conqueror, but an enlightened, just, scheming, and wise ruler who "prevented the barbarian tribes from entering the heart of Europe, the Mongol threat to China, and the expansion of the Ottoman Empire, so that they remained in Europe only". He sought justice through war, and as a true Muslim he did not approve of war, but to prevent those who spoiled and those who wanted to provoke it, and his main purpose was to keep the peace, especially by opening trade routes, opening hotels on trade routes. Timur was portrayed as a great military strategist, but he was also a patriot who consolidated his power through laws and regulations, improved economic and cultural life, paid attention to culture and education, built many amazing buildings, and left valuable material and spiritual wealth for future generations.

The architecture of the Timur period also became a symbolic element in post-independence Uzbekistan. In the 9th and 10th centuries, the basic shapes of Islamic architecture were formed in Central Asia, and these shapes determined the new appearance of the towns in later centuries: mosques, minarets, mausoleums, and so on. Central Asian architecture of the 13th and 14th centuries underwent a radical change in the material of the surface layer: the methods of glazing, caulking and tiling terracotta began to be used, and then the technique of decorating walls with faience and mosaic on a silicate basis was developed. Timur used architecture to assert his power, and

architecture demonstrated the power, prosperity, and affluence of the nation he created. The ambition of the rulers was embodied in the famous phrase: "If you doubt our strength, look at our architecture", which determined the emergence and development of the imperial architectural style of the Timurid era. Samarkand and Shahri Sabz were the two main towns of Timur, and the portals of their main buildings represented monumental gates with a span of about 20 meters. The Timurid style is characterized by magnificent proportions and particularly fine architectural decorations. The best architects and craftsmen from the conquered countries (Khorezm, Khorasan, Iran, Azerbaijan, India, and other countries) were hired to build palaces for Timur. By Timurid era, the color range of most buildings, mostly made in sapphire and turquoise tones, began to dominate architecture, with the use of composite colors and brick inlays becoming the main methods of decoration. Decorating the outer surface of the dome with blue tiles was also an important symbol of Timurid architecture, which made the dome a symbol of the sky, and the special reverence for blue-green was associated with the worship of the sky by the Turkic and Mongol peoples.⁵ This blue-green architectural style is known as the national tradition of Uzbekistan. This Timurid architecture was used in post-independence Uzbekistan as a national symbol as an important way to construct a national identity. Although the interior exhibits of the Museum of Victims of Political Repression are themed on the painful memories of political repression during the tsarist Russia and Soviet periods, the museum building was rebuilt with traditional Timurid architectural elements, and the blue and green architecture is an important feature of Timur architecture. At the same time, wooden pillars of slender shapes were carved with delicate patterns, which can be found in many mosques and mausoleums in the Uzbek region. The blue and green architecture of the Timur Museum building itself is also a kind of replication and imitation of traditional Timur architecture, indicating that the newly established Uzbek state has inherited the excellent culture of its ancestors and inspires a sense of pride among the people.

4. (U.K.) Peter Burke, *The Fabrication of Louis XIV* [M]. Beijing: The Commercial Press, 2015, p45.

5. B. Gludinov, B. Amanbaeva, R. Mukimov, *The Artistic Culture of Central Asia and Azerbaijan in the 9th–15th Centuries*, Samarkand-Tashkent: IICAS, 2013, p.207-208.

5. CONCLUSION

The construction of the Timur Museum itself is in line with the country's demand to shape Timur as the father of the country, and its series of exhibits also reflect the artistic achievements of Timur's era. Uzbekistan has made the image of Timur more positive, fully reflecting the values, achievements, and goals of the newly independent country, and enhancing the confidence and pride of the people. The reshaped image of Timur and the glorious legacy of the Timurid era are used to strengthen Timur's symbolic position in the country. Throughout the historical narrative of Uzbekistan, the Timur Empire was the most powerful and conquered the widest range of territories. No ancient regime can be as vast as the Timur Empire, encompassing all cities and regions of Uzbekistan from political and historical dimensions within its national territory. Shaping the Timur Empire as the most glorious part of Uzbekistan's historical narrative is an important link in building national identity after independence.

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