UDC 93

IMAM BUKHARI MEMORIAL COMPLEX: PAST AND PRESENT TIMES

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Abstract. *The activities of the complex built in honor of the scholar and the institutions named after him are also of great importance in studying and promoting the scientific heritage of Imam Bukhari. At this point, it is important to provide a brief overview of the history of the institutions named after Imam Bukhari, including the memorial complex. This article discusses the history of the Imam Bukhari memorial complex.*

Keywords: *scholar, Abdullah Khan II, memorial complex, sacred place, scientific center.*

Imam Bukhari passed away at the age of 62 in the village of Khartang, near the city of Samarkand, in the year 256 AH (September 1, 870 CE). The great scholar was buried with great honor in the cemetery of Khartang village, and later a magnificent mausoleum was constructed over his grave. The historian al-Sam'ani (12th century) and the traveler Ibn Battuta (14th century) both wrote that they had personally visited and seen Imam Bukhari's mausoleum [5].

The Imam Bukhari Complex and Jome Mosque (16th century – 1998). In the 16th century, Abdullah Khan II of Bukhara ordered the construction of the Imam Bukhari Complex in the cemetery of Khartang village. The complex included a mausoleum built over Imam Bukhari's grave and a jome (Friday) mosque [1]. According to historical sources, the mosque building stood on four pillars and had nine domes, with an ayvan (arched gallery) on the left and back sides. These galleries were also built with four pillars and seven domes. The entire structure was constructed from rectangular bricks.

For many years, this historical site remained neglected. After 1974, restoration and improvement works began in the area. The complex continued to function until April 29, 1997, when the Government of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution on celebrating the 1225th anniversary of Imam al-Bukhari's birth according to the Hijri lunar calendar [3].

On April 29, 1997, the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution "On celebrating the 1225th anniversary of Imam al-Bukhari's birth according to the Hijri lunar calendar." On the basis of this resolution, a national organizing committee was established to prepare for and conduct the anniversary celebrations. A commission was also formed to oversee the restoration of Imam Bukhari's mausoleum and mosque, as well as to develop architectural proposals for constructing a grand memorial complex at the site. Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the Academy of Sciences, the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan, and the administrations of Samarkand and Bukhara regions, was tasked with compiling a list of pilgrimage sites and monuments associated with the name and era of Imam Bukhari across the country, preparing proposals for their restoration and conservation, and fulfilling other related duties [4].

As a result of the implementation of this resolution, in October 1998, the 1225th anniversary of the birth of the great muhaddith, the "Sultan of Hadith Science," Imam Bukhari, was solemnly celebrated. On this occasion, the Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex was built in the village of Khartang, near Samarkand.

The Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex was completed in a relatively short period of eight months. Its inauguration ceremony took place on Friday, October 23, 1998. The master plan of the complex covered an area of 10 hectares and was constructed in an oriental architectural style by master craftsmen from Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent, Andijan, Kokand, and Shahrisabz.

The complex primarily served as a pilgrimage site, a sacred place of visitation, and later functioned as a venue for daily, Friday, and Eid prayers. It was also intended as a center for the study of the science of hadith. The layout of the memorial was based on traditional national architectural elements – such as portals, arches, domes, and ayvans – and included structures like the mausoleum, mosque, administrative buildings, and other facilities. At the center of the mausoleum stood a sarcophagus made of translucent bluish-white onyx. Through a doorway on the right side of the mausoleum, stairs led to the underground chamber (crypt). Beneath the upper sarcophagus lay the true burial site of Imam Bukhari, covered with a marble gravestone [1].

On the left side of the courtyard was the mosque, with a total area of 786 square meters, while its front ayvan measured 214 square meters. Nearly 1,500 worshippers could pray at the same time in the mosque and ayvan. On the right side of the courtyard stood another building with a portal and central hall. The central hall's dome, identical in shape and size to the others, housed a library, a research room, and various service rooms. These facilities covered a total area of 946 square meters, while the ayvan alone measured 110 square meters. The library contained rare handwritten copies of the Qur'an, various printed editions, Imam Bukhari's works, and other books. Behind the mausoleum, at the far end of the complex, stood a specialized educational institution for the study of hadith sciences – the *Dar al-Hadith* [1].

The main part of the mausoleum – the actual grave of Imam Bukhari was located in the underground chamber. Access to it was through a wooden door leading down a staircase. The crypt measured 4 by 4 meters, with Imam

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Bukhari's grave and gravestone at its center. The gravestone, made of Ghazgan marble (from the quarry in Nurota district, Navoi region), bore an inscription dedicated to Imam Bukhari's life.

The Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex consisted of two main parts: the outer and inner courtyards. In the inner courtyard, on the left side, stood the grand jome mosque. It could accommodate up to 1,000 worshippers at the same time. The mosque hosted daily five-time prayers as well as Eid prayers in congregation. Especially during Eid, nearly 10,000 people would gather. Thus, the Imam Bukhari Jome Mosque came to be considered one of the largest Friday mosques in Uzbekistan.

During the visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to the Samarkand region on April 14-15, 2017, instructions were given to construct an international scientific center in the territory of the Imam Bukhari complex, based on the study of international experience. In this regard, an additional 5.8 hectares of land adjacent to the complex were allocated for the construction of the scientific center and three three-story residential buildings in front of the center.

During the President's subsequent visit to the Samarkand region on March 17-18, 2018, the project proposal for the reconstruction of the Imam Bukhari complex and the master plan of the Khartang village were approved [7].

The total project cost of constructing the international scientific center amounted to 122 billion soums. At the same time, according to the plan, three three-story residential buildings with 18 apartments each were built in front of the center, as well as 62 two-story cottages in national style along the road leading to the complex [7].

The master plan of Khartang village was initially prepared by the "ToshboshplanLITI" state unitary enterprise project organization. In order to accelerate the project works, the preparation of the master plan and detailed design plan was assigned to "UzshaharsizlikLITI" SUE.

According to the developed master plan and project proposal, the total allocated land area of the complex was set at 60.4 hectares, and it was determined that the entire complex would undergo complete reconstruction. In particular, the existing one-story buildings at the entrance of the complex were to be rebuilt as two-story structures.

In addition, the project included the construction of one large four-story hotel, six medium-sized three-story hotels, and twenty small two-story hotels, along with a supermarket, a large shopping center, an amphitheater building, a farmers' market, a bathhouse, two ablution facilities, 16 shops selling national handicrafts and souvenirs, a teahouse, a restaurant, a children's playground, three parking areas, and a minibank. Landscaping and other improvement works were also planned. Moreover, the Oqdaryo–Qulbosti automobile road passing through the Imam Bukhari complex was to be expanded into a six-lane highway, fully bypassing Khartang village along a 5 km route.

In connection with the reconstruction of the complex, 164 residential and 30 non-residential buildings—a total of 194 structures – in the area were subject to demolition [7].

At the same time, the construction of the Imam Bukhari Innovative Museum within the Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex was launched. This museum is being established following the visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to Saudi Arabia on August 17–18, 2022, where he closely familiarized himself with the Museum of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and Islamic Civilization. Based on the instructions given during his visit to the construction site of the Imam Bukhari Complex on August 24, 2022, the implementation of this project began.

Regarding this initiative, our President stated: *"This will raise the honor of our ancestor Imam Bukhari and create a foundation for announcing it proudly to the world,"* as well as, *"Presenting the life, scholarly path, and history of that era of Imam Bukhari through innovative information technologies will become another spiritual treasure for our people"* [2]. Drawing from these words, large-scale works have been launched in this direction.

First of all, it was determined that the innovative museum will consist of nine pavilions. Initially, documentary films will be shown in chronological order, starting with information about the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) and other prophets, then continuing with the life of Imam Bukhari, his scholarly journey, his exceptional memory, his virtues, and information about the descendants of Imam Bukhari. In addition, ancient artifacts, manuscripts, and sources related to the history of our sacred religion will be displayed with the help of modern information technologies. Rare manuscripts of *"Sahih al-Bukhari"*, the second most important written source of Islam, will also be exhibited in the museum.

Furthermore, the innovative museum will feature an attraction where children can embark on a 5D "flying carpet" journey into ancient eras, while visitors will gain insights into the significance of Imam Bukhari's legacy today, the religious and educational reforms in New Uzbekistan, and the great attention being paid to Imam Bukhari's heritage.

In this regard, a number of initiatives were also carried out at the Imam Bukhari International Research Center. In particular, in August 2024, an internal meeting dedicated to the development of the museum's content was held, during which the main focus was placed on creating an exhibition related to the history of the Imam Bukhari Memorial Complex. Shortly afterwards, in order to coordinate the ongoing work in this direction, a field study was conducted on the premises of the Imam Bukhari Innovative Museum.

Later, as a logical continuation of these efforts, a discussion was held at the Center on the organizational and architectural solutions of the museum. The meeting was attended by the management and researchers of the Center, representatives of the Center for Islamic Civilization in Uzbekistan, as well as representatives of the Turkish company *Outdoor Factory*. During the discussion, the conceptual and general architectural ideas of the museum were reviewed. Attention was given to the interconnection of the pavilions, visitor movement routes, open and closed spaces, and project solutions concerning both technical and practical aspects [6]. These and other activities being implemented are playing a significant role in ensuring the comprehensive creation of the Imam Bukhari Innovative Museum.

In conclusion, it can be noted that the Imam Bukhari Juma Mosque, built in the 16th century, served for many years as a place of worship for local residents and for visitors who came to pay their respects at the scholar's grave. Based on a Government resolution adopted in 1997, restoration works of the Imam Bukhari Mausoleum and Mosque began, along with the construction of a majestic memorial complex in this area. Within a short period, this memorial complex was built, providing numerous facilities for pilgrims and visitors. Furthermore, during the visit of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, to Samarkand region on March 17–18, 2018, the project proposal for the reconstruction of the Imam Bukhari Complex and the master plan of Hartang village were approved, and large-scale works were initiated. Such measures being implemented are of great importance in studying the scholarly heritage of the great scholar and in promoting his name throughout the world.

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МЕМОРИАЛЬНЫЙ КОМПЛЕКС ИМАМА БУХАРИ: ПРОШЛОЕ И НАСТОЯЩЕЕ ВРЕМЯ

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Аннотация. *Большое значение в изучении и пропаганде научного наследия имама Бухари имеет также деятельность комплекса, построенного в честь ученого, и учреждений, названных его именем. На этом этапе важно дать краткий обзор истории учреждений, названных в честь имама Бухари, включая мемориальный комплекс. В этой статье обсуждается история мемориального комплекса имама Бухари.*

Ключевые слова: *ученый, Абдулла-хан II, мемориальный комплекс, священное место, научный центр.*