



Article

# The Langar-I-Ota Mosque in Qashqadaryo – A Unique Example of Central Asian Architectural Traditions

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**Abstract:** This article sheds light on the historical formation process and architectural features of the Langar Ata Mosque in Qashqadaryo Province, one of the most prominent examples of Central Asian architectural traditions. It scientifically analyzes the role of historical monuments in society's spiritual life, the importance of their preservation, and the construction phases of the mosque. Additionally, the structural solutions, interior and exterior decorations, and architectural aspects harmonized with folk craftsmanship of the Langar Ata Mosque are examined.

**Keywords:** Langar-e-Ata Mosque, Architectural Heritage, Historical Monument, Islamic Architecture, Qashqadaryan, Khanqah, Cultural Heritage, Architectural Structure, Folk Craftsmanship, Restoration, Shrine, Medieval Architecture.

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## 1. Introduction

These are architectural historical complexes, skillfully built by our ancestors and preserved to this day, which have immortalized their names through the ages. Hundreds of ancient and medieval architectural gems testify to our people's extraordinary creative potential. All of this inspires us to live with pride. Thus, preserving historical, spiritual, and cultural heritage is the duty of every citizen living in our country [1].

Historical monuments are significant events in the lives of peoples, as well as the development of society and the state, along with their historical culture, buildings, and structures. According to their general characteristics, historical monuments are divided into architectural and monumental art monuments. The types of historical monuments are extremely diverse. The most ancient of these are monuments, such as the ruins of ancient cities, fortresses, settlements, remains of structures, canals, roads, stone statues, inscriptions and paintings, artifacts, are concentrated in the historical and cultural layers of human settlements. Historical monuments are considered a part of the country's and its people's historical and cultural heritage [2]. Also, works of art created to immortalize specific dates, events, and individuals—such as statues, mausoleums, tombstones, pyramids, triumphal arches, and so on—are also considered historical monuments. The preservation of cultural and historical monuments is a matter of national importance and constitutes a fundamental part of moral education. The protection of cultural and historical monuments is a system of international, state, and public measures for the preservation and protection of humanity's cultural heritage. Historical monuments, architectural structures, works of literature, visual and applied arts, artifacts, complexes of national and international importance, and others are protected by the state [3].

Cultural heritage is a factor that strengthens the foundation of society and the spiritual values and traditions that have been passed down from generation to generation. Historical and cultural monuments affect every person, captivating and inspiring pride. Therefore, preserving them must become the duty and goal not only of the state but of every citizen. The restoration and repair of sacred shrines and pilgrimage sites, as well as other notable locations, is being carried out throughout the country.

One of the directions of the state policy of the independent Republic of Uzbekistan is the preservation of our rich historical and cultural heritage, which has come down to us from the depths of history. In our country, based on the laws “On the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects” and “On Museums,” adopted in the early years of independence, On the basis of the laws “On the Protection and Use of Archaeological Heritage Objects,” the ruins of ancient and medieval cities that played an important role in the development of human civilization, monumental art monuments, extensive-scale work is being carried out by our state to preserve, restore, and study the ruins of ancient and medieval cities that played an important role in the development of human civilization, monumental art monuments, and special places of pilgrimage [4].

After gaining independence, the Republic of Uzbekistan entered a new stage of its development. Our people have acquired their rich historical, cultural, and spiritual heritage. Wide opportunities have been created to study and restore architectural monuments of our thousand-year history of architecture and urban planning, and even to visit them in person [5]. Architecture embodies in a tangible form the specific techniques and art of building structures, the nation's history, its socio-political power, its religious and secular views, and its cultural and domestic atmosphere. An architect is a master builder; the chief specialist who designs buildings and structures and oversees their construction [6].

## 2. Methodology

This study employs a qualitative research approach based on the methods of architectural-historical analysis, field observation, and descriptive-comparative analysis. Primary data were gathered through direct on-site examination of the Langar Ata Mosque, located in the village of Langar, Qamashi district, Qashqadaryo Province, at an altitude of approximately one thousand meters above sea level. Secondary data were collected through a systematic review of existing scholarly literature on Central Asian Islamic architecture, Uzbek monumental art, and architectural heritage conservation, including published works by Uzbek architects and art historians, relevant legislative documents of the Republic of Uzbekistan, and verified electronic sources. The architectural features of the mosque – including its structural composition, decorative elements, inscriptions, and spatial organization – were examined and compared against established typological characteristics of medieval Central Asian religious architecture [7]. The historical formation of the monument was traced through oral historical tradition, archival sources, and available restoration records. This combined methodological approach allows for a comprehensive and scientifically grounded analysis of the mosque's architectural identity and its place within the broader tradition of Central Asian Islamic heritage [8].

In our country, historical monuments, architectural structures, and pilgrimage sites have been erected over several millennia. These monuments speak of Uzbekistan's past and history [9]. They are the ancient, rich heritage our ancestors left us. One of the ancient pilgrimage sites is the Langar Ata Mosque and the mausoleum of Sheikh Abulhasan in the village of Langar in the Qamashi district, built at an altitude of one thousand meters above sea level [10].

The ancient mosque, located in the village of Langar in the Hisor mountain range, 25-30 kilometers from the village of Qiziltepa, was founded by Sheikh Abulhasan at the

end of the 14th century. The Sheikh's spiritual guide told him, "Build a mosque where your camel kneels for the third time." His camel knelt for the last time at the site of the present-day village of Langar, the very spot for the mosque, and Sheikh Abulhasan laid the foundation for it there. The local people helped with the construction of the mosque. This mosque houses a facsimile copy of the Great Langar Qur'an, one of the most revered copies of the Qur'an on Earth, inscribed in Kufic script [11].

### 3. Results and Discussion

The mosque consists of two prayer halls, one iwan, four mihrabs, 19 columns, and 7 doors. The two prayer halls are called the large mosque and the small mosque. The small mosque was built first; the large mosque and its iwan were built later as the number of worshippers increased. The Langar Ota Mosque was built in a harmony of Islamic architectural art with local folk craftsmanship styles. The architectural monument stands out in Central Asia for its ornamentation and elegance [12].

In particular, the height of the mosque's roof, the size of the stones laid in its foundation, and the bulk of its columns and wooden beams make the structure appear exceptionally majestic. The pillar at the head of the mosque's large prayer hall was repaired in 1362 AH (1905 AD) by master Muhammadiyor. The Langar Ota Mosque is 11 meters high and measures 32 meters in length and width. Its ceiling is adorned with tassajuft, and the mihrab section is decorated with exquisite taste and high skill. Inscriptions in Sulus script are located around the mihrab. Additionally, a stunning mosaic made of colorful tiles with white inscriptions on a blue background catches the eye. In addition, two types of inscriptions—Arabic and an unknown, pattern-like script—are inscribed along the gilded wall [13].

Designing and constructing the space necessary for human life and activity constitutes the essence of the art of architecture. Residential buildings, roads, avenues and squares, large water structures, and architectural complexes designed for cultural recreation are all different manifestations of this art. They are designed and executed under the direction of the chief builder—the architect-mason. A building is a type of structure erected by humans for a specific purpose, providing a material environment for carrying out various social, political, economic, and production processes. That is, their function is defined, and properly addressing it is considered one of the main factors in creating a work of architecture.

The aforementioned types of buildings differ in their architectural and structural designs and external appearances. Architecture, like other art forms, reflects a state's history and its cultural and spiritual standing, and showcases the people's way of life and aesthetic views. For this reason, this art is truly recognized as a chronicle of historical events and a window into an era [14].

The art of peoples, nations, and eras intertwines and evolves, creating its own unique examples. This is why new movements, trends, and styles are emerging in art. As a result of cultural development and the growing cultural and spiritual ties between peoples, the demand for art is increasing day by day. It is self-evident that as general spirituality increases, the desire to consume art intensifies. As a simple example, let us consider how the goods and items in markets and retail stores are adorned with a wide variety of colorful images. Folk applied decorative art exists in every nation, and, as noted above, they differ from one another in terms of the genres of applied art, the materials used to make the items, their shape, structure, color, ornamentation, and dimensions.

Folk applied art has long been a means of adorning people's lives. In ancient times, houses, mosques, and madrasas were decorated using this art form, with special paints, ceramics, tiles, and embroidery on colorful silks. Examples of these decorations have been preserved to this day. Contemporary folk masters and artisans are continuing these

traditions. In Uzbekistan's applied decorative art, the use of various natural forms as decorative elements, thanks to their simplicity and artistry, holds a special symbolic meaning. For example, the use of the cotton motif in a pattern signifies the celebration of the harvest as a matter of national pride [15].

The works created by Uzbek masters are rooted in the ideas of deeply feeling the world in all its delicacy, understanding the inner world of man, and enjoying the fruits of the people's multifaceted talent. Only a true master of art can create such works, and only such works can nurture new masters of art. For two thousand years, the Uzbek people have created and continue to create such magnificent examples of applied art that their execution with high artistic skill and delicacy still amazes people today.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the above information, the national and spiritual heritage of our great ancestors has been of great importance to personal development throughout the centuries. It is necessary to make proper use of the spiritual treasures our ancestors left us and to introduce and teach them more to the younger generation. In this sense, oriental decorations are invaluable in shaping young people's aesthetic abilities and in raising them to be spiritually elevated, beautiful, and refined. The intended goal is to further increase students' and young people's interest in national architectural monuments and to develop their aesthetic abilities.

The Langar Ata Mosque was built in harmony with Islamic architectural art and the local people's artisanal styles. It would not be an exaggeration to call this architectural monument the only one of its kind in Central Asia. The mosque's roof stands out for its height and the elegance of its ornamentation. The interior surface of the mosque's wall is decorated in a medieval style; it has twelve windows, and the mihrab and the top of the minbar are inscribed with the pillars of prayer, verses, and Surah Al-Fatihah. In addition, two types of inscriptions are sealed along the gilded wall: Arabic and an unknown script resembling a simple pattern. The Langar Ata Mosque was built using modern materials and structures, embodying national identity and harmonizing with the universal. While preserving the buildings erected by our great ancestors, we must carefully safeguard the rich cultural heritage they left us. Indeed, the structure is crafted with great elegance and refined taste. Each pattern is executed individually, reflecting the meaning and essence of human life. The variety and uniqueness of the colors reveal a distinctive beauty. In particular, the striking feature of the great mausoleum's ornamentation lies in the flowers of its mosaic decorations. The patterns on the mihrab and walls have been well preserved. Blue-green and white borders are set with yellow and turquoise mosaic pieces. You will see that these borders have lent great elegance to the mihrab.

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