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CENTRAL ASIA AND UZBEKISTAN: HISTORY AND PROSPECTS OF CULTURAL RELATIONS

Keywords: Central Asia, Uzbekistan, cultural relations, cultural heritage, integration, scientific cooperation, historical development, cultural exchange, cultural diplomacy, preservation of cultural heritage.

Abstract: This article analyzes the history of cultural relations between Uzbekistan and the Central Asian states, as well as their future prospects. It explores the preservation of cultural heritage, scientific and educational cooperation, cultural diplomacy, and the processes of cultural integration. Additionally, the impact of cultural exchange and joint cultural projects on regional development is examined. The findings of this research contribute to defining prospects for further development of cultural cooperation.

Cultural relations between Central Asia and Uzbekistan have a centuries-old history and have played a significant role in the overall civilizational development of the region's peoples. As one of the cultural centers of Central Asia, Uzbekistan has achieved remarkable success in scientific, literary, architectural, and artistic fields. Today, cultural cooperation is entering a new stage, expanding into areas such as international collaboration, educational exchange, and social integration. This article examines the history, stages of development, and future prospects of cultural relations between Uzbekistan and the Central Asian states.

Following the independence of Uzbekistan and other Central Asian countries, cultural relations have entered a new phase. Countries in the region are focusing on strengthening cooperation through joint cultural events, festivals, and scientific conferences. Additionally, with the support of UNESCO and other international organizations, numerous projects aimed at preserving and promoting cultural heritage are being implemented.

In the early 1990s, researchers proposed various theories and concepts regarding cooperation among Central Asian states. In particular, R. Alimov, analyzing the case of Central Asia, emphasized that historical and cultural commonalities serve as a strong foundation for the development of regional cooperation [1].

F. Tolipov analyzes the theoretical and practical foundations of regional cooperation using the example of Central Asia, focusing on the factors influencing the formation and development of intergovernmental collaboration in the region. He emphasizes that a shared geographical space, ethnic commonality, historical and cultural unity, as well as similarities in traditions and values, serve as the fundamental basis for integration processes among Central Asian states. Furthermore, he highlights that this commonality plays a crucial role in strengthening political, economic, and cultural cooperation within the region [2].

In the early years of independence, the leadership of Uzbekistan recognized the necessity of developing regional cooperation and put forward the principle of "Turkestan – Our Common Home" as its ideological foundation. As Uzbekistan's first President, I. Karimov, emphasized, this initiative

was aimed at continuing historical traditions among the peoples of Central Asia, enriching them under new circumstances, and further strengthening the bonds of brotherhood [3].

This concept primarily focused on the development of spiritual and cultural cooperation. For centuries, the peoples of the region have evolved in moral and cultural harmony, and this commonality has been regarded as one of the key factors in human perfection. Within the framework of this initiative, the "Turkestan – Our Common Home" conference was held in Tashkent on November 21, 1995, leading to the establishment of the Assembly of Central Asian Peoples' Culture. The main objective of this organization was to further strengthen the long-standing cooperation and unity among the peoples of the region [4].

Thanks to the creative efforts of the Republican Scientific-Methodological Center for Folk Art and Cultural-Educational Activities, significant work has been carried out in recent years to study public demand and interests, discover new forms of traditional fine and applied arts, identify new talents among folk oral poets (bakshi), visual artists, and amateur art groups, as well as to study, promote, and disseminate their artistic heritage and experience [5].

The center also signed cooperation agreements between 1993 and 1997 with the Republican Centers for Folk Art and Cultural-Educational Activities of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan to develop international cultural collaboration. This partnership contributed to strengthening traditional cultural ties, preserving, and advancing national creative traditions [6].

To ensure the consistent implementation of cultural and humanitarian cooperation, several joint programs have been developed and put into practice. Within the framework of these programs, representatives of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan regularly participate in various events, concerts, festivals, and competitions held in both countries. For instance, on April 7–12, 2008, the Uzbekistan Soloists chamber orchestra participated in the festival "Turkmenistan: The Spiritual Treasure of Humanity's Musical Art", held in Ashgabat. Later that year, on August 14–20, Turkmen Cinema Days took place in Tashkent region, Tashkent, and Samarkand, where 11 Turkmen films were screened. Moreover, Turkmen artists consistently take part in Uzbekistan's biennial "Sharq Taronalari" (Melodies of the East) International Music Festival. Notably, at the 7th festival in 2009, L. Begnazarova from Turkmenistan won the Grand Prix of Sharq Taronalari [7].

On August 12, 2011, the Republican International Cultural Center and the Republican Turkmen Cultural Centers, in cooperation with the Embassy of Turkmenistan, organized a friendly event dedicated to the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the Republican Turkmen Cultural Center. During the event, it was emphasized that cooperation between the two countries is steadily developing in all areas, with the practical initiatives of both states' leaders playing a crucial role in this process [7].

It is worth noting that during this large-scale cultural and educational event, the Bukhara Regional Turkmen National Cultural Center presented an exhibition dedicated to the life and works of Makhtumkuli, and Uzbek and Turkmen artists performed a concert program. This demonstrates the growing role and significance of national cultural centers in the development of mutual cultural cooperation. It is fair to say that Turkmen compatriots, like representatives of other nationalities, actively participate in every cultural and spiritual event organized in Uzbekistan and achieve significant accomplishments. For example, on December 14, 2013, during the final stage of the 5th Republican Friendship and Culture Festival "Uzbekistan – Our Common Home", Arslon Esenov, a representative of the Republican Turkmen Cultural Center, won the nomination for "Best Performance of National Folk Songs", while Guzal Kurbanova, a folk applied arts master from the Surkhandarya Regional Branch, received an encouragement award[8].

On April 22, 2014, the Musical Drama Theater of Bukhara Region hosted a scientific-practical conference dedicated to the 290th anniversary of the birth of Turkmen poet and thinker Makhtumkuli. The event was organized in cooperation with the Republican International Cultural Center, the

link between culture and culture is solid. This book tells how God created the universe and its inhabitants from the dust of the earth, and how he created the universe from the dust of the earth.

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