

INNOVATION OF MUSEUM EXHIBITION AS A CATALYST OF TOURISM IN
KARAKALPAKSTAN

Dospanov Oktyabr Turganbaevich

Head of the Archaeology Department of the

I.V. Savitskiy

Karakalpak State Art Museum, Candidate of Historical Sciences.

(+99899-535-32-28; oktyabrd@gmail.com)

ORCID ID – 0009-0001-4719-1137

Abstract: The article discusses the issue of developing the tourism industry in the Republic of Karakalpakstan in the context of museum exhibitions of existing resources. New and modern approaches to tourism through the prism of museums, including innovative solutions, museum pedagogy elements, and the application of interactive technologies, are considered. The materials used in practice, obtained from archaeological and ethnographic research, as well as artifacts that can attract the attention of visitors, are analyzed. It is also emphasized that museum pedagogy can effectively solve the issues of ideological education of young people by combining tourist and museum perception.

Keywords: archeology, museum, tourism, innovative approach, ethnography.

Introduction

Tourism is a vital industry for many regions, including the Aral region—an area located near the Aral Sea in Central Asia, home to diverse ethnic groups. Studying the tourism potential of the ethnic cultures of the Aral peoples is a particularly relevant research topic, especially when considered from the perspective of museum pedagogy. In essence, museums are the key catalysts that support the tourism industry. Moreover, it is imperative to create the conditions necessary to implement the latest museum exhibition concepts that meet the demands of modern visitors.

Among the factors involved in studying the sites of ethno-cultural tourism in Karakalpakstan—and the methods of their preservation and popularization—it is essential, alongside field research, to pay attention to certain sources that facilitate the study of historical and cultural monuments related to tourism.

Literature Review

It is evident that, in order to examine the convergence of the tourism industry and museum pedagogy, one must rely on a diverse range of studies that can provide a deeper understanding of the subject matter. Although a wealth of materials and literature is available, our analysis focuses on several key authors whose works are likely to offer a comprehensive grasp of the concept of museum exhibitions within the context of local cultural perception.

In the context of researching the objects of ethno-cultural tourism in Karakalpakstan, one should consider sources that contribute to the study of historical and cultural monuments, in addition to field research. For instance, the collection History and Archaeology of Turan [13] presents the results of archaeological and ethnographic research conducted in the Aral region and adjacent areas. The work spans a broad chronological range—from Paleolithic monuments to medieval times—and covers aspects such as urban planning and topography of ancient settlements, architectural history, craftsmanship and production techniques, as well as issues related to the development of ideological views and the results of anthropological studies combined with the ethnographic roots of the peoples of the Aral region as a whole.

The historical sketch by A.M. Gerasimovsky, *Antiquities of Khiva and the Amudar' in Department. Historical Bulletin* [4], sheds light on the formation of historical centers in the territory of modern Karakalpakstan.

In S.P. Tolstov's book *Ancient Khorezm* [17], the main forms of understanding the ancient Khorezmian civilization and its connections with various cultures are discussed. The author selects ancient Khorezm as the subject of his research, concentrating on the history, ethnography, and archaeology of this unique area of Central Asia—known as the “Egypt of Central Asia.”

Continuing the theme is S.P. Tolstov's work *Along the Ancient Deltas of the Oxus and Yaksart* [19], which is based on research conducted between 1937 and 1958 on the archaeological monuments of ancient Khorezm and the issues of ancient watercourses of the Amu Darya, as well as the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition. The ideological foundations of the Khorezm expedition were not only in the archaeological investigation of the regions but also in their combination with ethnographic research. These ideas are embodied in Tolstov's *Archaeological and Ethnographic Work of the Khorezm Expedition* [16], which examines the studies carried out by the expedition between 1949 and 1953, including research on the ancient irrigated lands of the Amu Darya, the Ustyurt Plateau, and other territories. A continuation of this theme is found in the monograph *In the Tracks of the Ancient Khorezmian Civilization* [18], which consolidates the materials gathered by the Khorezm expedition over a ten-year period (1937–1947) and presents data collected during the field seasons of 1945–1947 for the first time.

For a proper understanding of the spiritual and religious views of the peoples inhabiting the Khorezm state, the work by Yu.A. Rapoport, *From the History of Religion in Ancient Khorezm* [16], is an essential component. This study examines the history of religion and culture in Central Asia during the 1st millennium BC and the 1st millennium AD, including burial rituals and beliefs.

To appropriately synthesize archaeological motifs with ethnographic research, one should rely on the monographic work by I.V. Bogoslovskaya, *By the Sea of Dunes, on the Land of Takyr* [3]. The book is dedicated to the 110th anniversary of Tatyana Zhdanko's birth (1909–2007)—a renowned Russian ethnographer, Doctor of Historical Sciences, and a passionate researcher of the history and culture of the Karakalpak people and ancient Khorezm. Notably, this work laid the foundations for modern ethnographic science in Karakalpakstan. It reflects the remarkable career of the scholar, who for a long time was considered the right hand of the head of the famous Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition of the Academy of Sciences of the former USSR. S.P. Tolstov, an author of crucial research on the history and ethnography of Karakalpakstan, also acknowledged this contribution.

The monograph by V.N. Yagodin and T. Khodjayov, *The Necropolis of Ancient Mizdakhkan* [21], is the culmination of a comprehensive archaeological, anthropological, and ethnographic study of the Mizdakhkan necropolis—one of the most significant centers of the ancient Khorezmian civilization. Today, this archaeological complex forms part of the tourist route in the Republic of Karakalpakstan and is a primary attraction for numerous tourists and pilgrims.

Our study draws on numerous sources and scholarly works devoted to issues of ethnographic research. Fundamental works in this field include those by T.A. Zhdanko, A.A. Allamuratov [1], Kh. Yesbergenov [5], I.V. Bogoslovskaya [2], among many other researchers who currently constitute the cornerstone of ethnographic science.

The tourism potential of the Republic of Karakalpakstan cannot be envisioned without biosphere and nature tours. In this context, the analytical collection by O.T. Dospanov, *Report on the Inventory of Cultural and Historical Heritage Sites Located in the Territory of the Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve* [7, p.48], raises the issue of preservation and sustainable use of

cultural and historical monuments located within the Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve. Since a significant portion of Karakalpakstan's territory is occupied by archaeological monuments, these represent the most attractive resource for managing the Lower Amu Darya Biosphere Reserve—especially when combined with the ethnographic culture of local communities. This creates intriguing opportunities for developing tourism infrastructure focused on familiarizing visitors with local ethno-cultural heritage.

The issues of preservation and restoration of the Aral region's heritage have been addressed in the research of several scholars, including S.P. Tolstov [9], N.N. Vaktournaya, M.G. Vorobyeva, V.N. Yagodin [8, p.14], M.Sh. Kydrniyazov [14], O.T. Dospanov [11, p.17], and others.

Research Methodology

Ethno-cultural diversity is one of the key elements that make any region attractive to tourists. Every ethnic group in the Aral region possesses unique traditions, customs, culture, art, cuisine, and music that are undoubtedly of interest to tourists as subjects for study and immersion in a different culture. This diversity can attract tourists from various countries, promote cultural exchange, and foster international cooperation.

The development of tourism in the Aral region can contribute to the economic growth of the area. Tourism is a source of income and employment; it stimulates the development of infrastructure, local entrepreneurship, agriculture, and other sectors of the economy. Given the unfavorable environmental conditions near the Aral Sea, tourism development can serve as an important source of income for the local population.

The Aral region is now widely known throughout the world as an area marked by an ecological (Aral) catastrophe.

It is less well known, however, that these areas are also lands of ancient culture, preserving a large number of monuments of ancient and medieval culture. The peoples inhabiting Southern Aral—Karakalpaks, Khorezm Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Turkmen—possess an extremely rich cultural heritage in the form of traditional crafts, applied arts, abundant folklore, traditions of mass popular celebrations, and more. Here, a significant collection of monuments from ancient and medieval civilizations is preserved, along with a number of unique natural sites.

The ecological catastrophe in the Aral region, which began intensifying in the 1960s, has significantly worsened the situation for the peoples living in this area. The high level of unemployment—especially in rural regions—has led to the development of migratory processes [10, pp.43–47].

It is now generally accepted that the concept of sustainable development represents an ideology of balancing the interests of generations within an ecological paradigm that provides for the fair distribution of limited natural resources. When speaking of rational natural resource management, we must also consider rational cultural resource management.

In our view, when addressing the resource base of cultural heritage, attention should be paid to directions such as immovable historical and cultural monuments; archaeological monuments, historical sites, architectural landmarks—including museums and workshops of artists and master craftsmen; the ethnographic features of the indigenous peoples of the Aral region; folklore and traditional art of the Turkic peoples of the Aral region; and, of course, natural monuments.

Analysis and Discussion of the Results.

The Republic of Karakalpakstan is renowned for its unique archaeological monuments and cultural traditions and is today a unique territory that brings together the largest number of archaeological sites visited by both domestic and foreign tourists.

Among the most popular monuments are Toprak Kala, Kyzyl-Kala, Ayazkala, Bolshoy Guldursun, Mizdakhkan, Janpyk-Kala, and many others.

Nevertheless, given the development of the republic's tourism potential, museum pedagogy also plays an important role in the tourism industry. It integrates these objects into educational processes, offering unique opportunities for both local residents and tourists to become acquainted with the region's cultural heritage.

Undoubtedly, archaeological monuments, as sources of educational resources, are closely linked to the upbringing and pedagogical orientation of today's youth. These monuments serve not only as tourist attractions but also as important educational resources. They are tangible witnesses to the region's history and culture, providing invaluable data for studying territorial settlement, social structures, and the traditions of ancient civilizations. Visiting such sites allows tourists and locals to interact directly with history, which is a key aspect of museum pedagogy.

Under modern conditions, the Republic of Uzbekistan is implementing a program of museumification and integration with museum collections [14]. This is a necessity for the widespread popularization and synthesis of archaeological monuments with the artifacts discovered at these sites, and for their exhibition.

Museumification of archaeological monuments means creating an educational and cultural context in which these objects can be presented not only as historical artifacts but also as part of a broader cultural history. It is important to integrate the artifacts related to these monuments into museum exhibitions—among them, the Karakalpak State Art Museum named after I.V. Savitskiy and the State Museum of History and Culture of the Republic of Karakalpakstan—which together house over 40,000 archaeological and ethnographic artifacts that testify to the high level of ancient and medieval culture of the Khorezmian civilization, as well as to the unique culture of the peoples of Southern Aral.

The archaeological and ethnographic discoveries were first brought to light in the 1930s–1940s by the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition under the leadership of the legendary Professor S.P. Tolstov and T.A. Zhdanko [20, pp.5–8]. Later, significant contributions were made by researchers from the local Karakalpak school of ancient culture studies.

This integration creates a tangible link not only with specific time periods but also between the objects and the places of their discovery, deepening the understanding of the historical and cultural context.

It is important to understand that the modern tourism industry, in conjunction with museum pedagogy, must be closely aligned with interactive and innovative technologies in museum education.

Modern methods of exhibition—including interactive technologies—greatly expand the opportunities of museum pedagogy. Virtual tours, augmented reality (AR), and multimedia installations become vital tools that connect artifacts with archaeological monuments. For example, virtual technologies can recreate ancient cities or the contextual settings in which certain objects were used. This allows tourists and students not only to study history but also to “immerse” themselves in it, creating new levels of information perception.

How, then, can interactive technologies impact the tourism industry? Admittedly, the current stage and practical methods under our modern conditions may not be perfect. However, it is essential to embrace these methods—drawing on the advanced practices already established in countries with developed tourism sectors abroad.

Modern interactive technologies are significantly transforming the tourism industry by creating new opportunities for both museums and tourists. They make the process of planning, organizing trips, and obtaining information much more convenient, engaging, and informative.

First, interactive technologies such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR) open up new horizons for tourists. With VR devices, users can “preview” attractions before visiting them in person, thereby creating a more deliberate desire to visit those sites. For example, tourists can virtually traverse the distance to a famous museum from their own homes and, after witnessing the quality of the exhibits and features, decide to make a real trip.

Second, mobile applications have become indispensable companions for travelers. Interactive maps, guides, platforms for sharing impressions and reviews significantly simplify the travel experience and make it more personalized. Cutting-edge developments in artificial intelligence, such as virtual assistants, can offer personalized recommendations based on users’ preferences and past experiences.

It is also important to note that although the integration of interactive technologies in the tourism industry is progressing rapidly, it sometimes encounters certain difficulties. For example, not all countries—especially developing ones—possess the necessary infrastructure and resources for the full-scale implementation and use of these technologies at an adequate level [6].

Nevertheless, it is crucial to perceive this stage as part of a global process, one that must be followed and adapted to in order not to fall behind global trends. European and Asian countries serve as examples of how the integration of innovative technologies can enhance tourist attractiveness.

Conclusions

Thus, interactive technologies have become an important tool that fosters innovation in tourism. They not only make travel more engaging but also open up new prospects for the growth and sustainable development of the tourism industry. By applying international experience, countries can significantly improve the quality of service for tourists, strengthen their competitiveness, and promote their own cultural and historical potential on the global stage.

The integration of museum pedagogy with tourist attractions contributes to the development of the tourism industry.

With each passing year, interest in both the tangible and intangible culture of Karakalpakstan grows, attracting both local and foreign tourists. The closer the connection between museum exhibitions and archaeological monuments, the more attractive they become to visitors. This can lead to an increase in the number of tourists and a deeper understanding of the region’s cultural heritage.

The role of the tourist sites of the Republic of Karakalpakstan in museum pedagogy is multifaceted and significant. Archaeological monuments such as Toprak Kala, Kyzyl-Kala, Janpyk-Kala, Ayazkala, Mizdakhkan, and others serve not only as historical witnesses but also form the basis for educational programs and projects [20, pp.5–23]. The integration of artifacts into museum exhibitions and the use of modern technologies open up new horizons for exploring the region’s culture and history. In this way, museum pedagogy and the tourism industry mutually enrich each other, fostering a deeper understanding and respect for the unique history and culture of this region.

References:

1. Archival Materials of Central Asia. Volume VI. / Allamuratov A. Karakalpak Decorative and Applied Art. Questions of Artistic Identity. – Samarkand: MICAi, 2019. – 220 p.
2. Bogoslovskaya I.V. Karakalpak Ornament: Image and Meaning. Almaty, 2019, – 220 p. illus.
3. Bogoslovskaya I. By the Sea of Dunes, on the Land of Takyr: A Collection of Memories about T.A. Zhdanko. – Tashkent: Sanat Magazine Publishing, 2021. – p.191.
4. Gerasimovsky A.M. Antiquities of Khiva and the Amudar’in Department. // Historical Bulletin. – St. Petersburg, 1909 (Issue XVII, September). – pp.971–973.

5. Yesbergenov Kh. Atamuratov T. Traditions and Their Transformation in the Daily Life of the Karakalpaks. Nukus, 1975, – 212 p.
6. Gorshenina S.M. The Invention of the Concept of Central/Central Asia: Between Science and Geopolitics. Translated from French by M.R. Maizulsa. – Washington: George Washington University Central Asia Program, 2019. – VIII, 119 p.: 16 ill.
7. Dospanov O.T. Report on the Inventory of Cultural and Historical Heritage Sites Located in the Territory of the Lower Amu Darya State Biosphere Reserve. Nukus–Tashkent, 2013, – 48 p.
8. Dospanov O.T. Development of the Tourism Potential in Southern Aral. // Current Issues of Archaeology, Ethnography, History, and Historiography of Southern Aral. Nukus 2016, – 86 (p.14).
9. Dospanov O.T. The Role of S.P. Tolstov and the Khorezm Archaeological and Ethnographic Expedition in the Formation of the Archaeological Collection of the Karakalpak State Art Museum Named after I.V. Savitskiy. // Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, History Museum of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, April 1, 2024. – 445 p.
10. Dospanov O.T. Perspectives for the Development of the Aral Region in Dialogue with Culture and Tourism. // Collection of Materials of the Republican Scientific and Practical Conference “Ecological Problems and the Development of Tourism in the Aral.” Nukus, 2023. – 225 p.
11. Dospanov O.T., Skenderov P.M., Serzhanova M.B., Kutybaev K.M. Innovative Approaches to Solving Museum Studies Issues (Based on the Work of the Archaeology Department of the Karakalpak State Art Museum Named after I.V. Savitskiy). // Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, History Museum of Uzbekistan. Tashkent, April 1, 2024. – 445 p.
12. Historical Bulletin. Issue XVII. St. Petersburg: Suvarina. 1909. – 1292 p.
13. History and Archaeology of Turan. No.1. Collection of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Karakalpak Scientific Research Institute, Berdakh State University. 2013. – 220 p.
14. Kydrniyazov M.Sh. “Material Culture of the Cities of Khorezm in the 13th–14th Centuries.” Nukus: Karakalpakstan, 1989. – 176 p.
15. Decree of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan “On Measures to Develop the Service Sector in Museums” // (National Legal Database, May 27, 2022, No. 07/22/261/0456). Published at <https://lex.uz/uz/docs/6040019>.
16. Rapoport Yu.A. From the History of Religion in Ancient Khorezm. Moscow: Nauka, 1971.
17. Tolstov S.P. Ancient Khorezm. Moscow: GMINV, 1948. – 352 p. illus.
18. Tolstov S.P. “In the Tracks of the Ancient Khorezmian Civilization.” Moscow-Leningrad: Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1948. – 338 p. illus.
19. Tolstov S.P. Along the Ancient Deltas of the Oxus and Yaksart. Moscow: Eastern Literature Publishing, 1962. – 333 p. illus.
20. Yusupova A.I., Dospanov O.T. The State Museum of History and Culture of the Republic of Karakalpakstan on the Occasion of its 95th Anniversary. Nukus, 2024. – 110 p. illus.
21. Yagodin V.N., Khodjayov T. The Necropolis of Ancient Mizdakhkan. Tashkent: Fan, 1970. – 266 p. illus.