



Research on the Development History and Exhibition of the Bukhara Museum

Xiaoyu Ma^(✉)

Shaanxi Normal University, Xi'an, Shaanxi, China
mxy890607@163.com

Abstract. Bukhara is now an important city in Uzbekistan in the Central Asian region, which has a long history and was once the capital of many dynasties in history. Therefore, a large number of historical relics have been preserved in Bukhara, including historical buildings, historical relics, handicrafts, etc. As a result, now Bukhara has developed into a city of museums, attracting the eyes of the world's tourists with its unique historical sites and priceless cultural heritage. Starting from the historical development process of the Bukhara Museum, this paper presents the main types and content of the museum exhibitions based on the literature and analyzes the rich collections and unique charm of the Bukhara Museum.

Keywords: The Bukhara Museum · Development history · Collection exhibition

1 Introduction

The earliest history of the Bukhara oasis includes the Bactrian-Greek Kingdom established by Alexander and early Seleucid kings. Fragments of Greek Bactrian coins in Central Asia are evidence of direct rule. The influence of Greek culture is powerful, affecting many parts of Eurasia, which is also included in the history of Bukhara [1]. And the origin of Bukhara as an important city was around the end of the 5th or 6th century AD, and it was later conquered by the Arabs after the 8th century, giving Islam a major influence on the region. Later, Bukhara was often used as a gathering place for religious scholars and a center of religious culture. In 1865, the Tsarist armed forces defeated the Bukharan army, but the Emir of Bukhara still hoped to resist the Tsarist army. However, the strength of the Emir's army was very vulnerable to the imperial army, and Bukhara was included in the territory of Tsarist Russia as a protectorate. The Tsarist Russian conquest brought modern institutions and culture to Bukhara, including the collection and display of antiquities, which is of great significance to the development of museums in the region [2].

2 Development History of the Bukhara Museum

In the order of the Bukhara Supervisory Committee in September 17, 1920, it said: Old and new books left by the old government officials of all countries of Bukhara

© The Author(s) 2023

Y. Pogrebnyak and R. Hou (Eds.): ICLCCS 2022, ASSEHR 689, pp. 415–421, 2023.

https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-494069-27-5_46

shall be handed over to the educational administration. The Bukhara administration then took steps to collect old books and works handed down from generation to generation to prevent them from being taken out of the country and issued various orders. On December 20, 1920, the education censor said in his report: "If there are fine tools and arts related to Bukharan culture, they should be handed over to them. For doubts about historical relics in educational supervision, educational inspectors pay according to the value of each instrument."

The history of the National Museum of Architecture and Art Reserve began in 1922 when it was known as the National Museum of Bukhara. The official opening ceremony of the museum was held on November 8, attended by Sokolov, head of the Russian representative office in the Republic of Bukhara and representatives of the people. Sokolov said, "It was our first wish to open a museum in Bukhara. We are happy to see that our wish come true today." In 1924, the museum created an exhibition on special subject showing the achievements of the Republic of Bukhara in agriculture. In other words, when the museum didn't establish itself as a protector, it declared itself a promoter of a new social system. The museum closed soon after, two years in preparation for the opening of the new exhibition. This was mainly due to ethnic and national secessions and changes in power structures in the Central Asian republics. The museum was handed over to the Bukhara Council for the Protection of Antiquities and Art (Bukhkomstaris), and the new exhibition opened on June 22, 1927. It is difficult to talk about the continuity of the reconstruction of the museum these days [3].

Since the 1930s, following the First General Meeting of Museum Staff, according to its resolutions, museums have increasingly acted as propagandists of the advantages of the new social system. In this regard, the Commission made its demands during an inspection of the Bukhara Museum in 1935: The museum was criticized for its excessive focus on agronomy and a lack of focus on the political goals of the socialist reconstruction of agriculture. The museum was placed under the protection status in 1941 and its activities were limited to small exhibitions during the war years. In 1947, the ancient fortress, which had been the residence of Bukhara's rulers for centuries, was handed over to the museum. During the period 1945–1951, in the renovated building complex, a new exhibition section was created on the so-called cultural revolution in the Bukhara region. As for the other architectural remains that were transferred to the museum in those years, like the Bukhara Ark, which was transferred to the museum in 1947, they were only used as a venue for completely unrelated exhibitions [4].

By the early 1960s, the Bukhara Regional Museum finally filled all the "gaps" in its collection and became a local history museum. During the 1960s and early 1980s, the Bukhara Regional Museum slowly began to develop towards a centralized system, extending its activities to the entire region. New branches of the museum appeared, especially in the Ibn Sina museum (1981–1982) in the village of Avshona. The process of overcoming stagnation and bringing the Bukhara Museum back to nature began, marked by granting it the status of a historical and architectural reserve. However, the process of change was very slow, although the governing body of Uzbekistan adopted a resolution on May 16, 1983 on the establishment of a museum reserve. The Bukhara Museum only operated in its new identity since 1985.

The Bukhara Museum was a state museum introducing history and economy in 1940; from 1945, it became a history museum of local legends; from 1969, it became a state museum of local legends; from 1983, it served as the historical buildings museum reserve, and only opened to the public from 1985. From 1988, the museum was renamed. The museum's exhibitions were actually placed on all the outstanding monuments and civic building monuments in the city and its region. Its headquarters and collections were located in Akon Castle—the former residence of the kings of the Bukhara Khanate. The structure of the museum reserve also included 12 museums and 14 permanent exhibitions: the Water Museum (history of water supply in Bukhara), the Carpet Museum, the Museum of Restoration History, the Museum of Modern Craftsmen Exhibition, the Wood Museum of Art Carving, the Museum of the Copper Embossing Art, the Varakhsha Ancient Settlement Museum, the Blacksmith Museum, the Bakhouddin Nakshbanda Museum, and the Abdurauf Fitrat Museum.

The heritage inherited by the museum reserve was in a sad state, affecting both museum collections and immovable monuments. There were no funds available for restoration work at the time. In the previous form of management, the inability to resolve urgent problems became apparent. This conclusion led to a plan to bring the museum out of the crisis. In March 1988, the Uzbekistan management organization adopted a resolution named “On Improving the Performance of the Bukhara Museum of Architecture and Art”. This resolution allowed the museum to become self-sufficient on an experimental basis from January 1, 1989. Already in 1989, the museum fully paid for itself without budget subsidies, and from the following year, it was transferred to new economic conditions. The museum was quite active both in the conservation and use of relics and in organizing tours of the region. The museum reserve was faced with the problem of having to advance the level of development of large projects in both areas of its activity, which led to major new relationships with ministries, departments and project organizations. The museum gradually began to become a serious subject of regional socio-economic and cultural policy. Since 1991, museums in Uzbekistan have real freedom to choose their programs and plans of activities. Their administrations and staff are finally free to independently determine the goals, tasks and forms of museum work. By the end of 1993, it had 21 exhibitions, 7 of which were newly created exhibitions.

3 Types and Content of Exhibits in the Bukhara Museum

The museum exhibits consist of more than 400 archaeological and architectural historical sites, including 11 architectural palace complexes, 8 mausoleums, 47 mosques, 14 caravanserais, 39 Islamic schools, 8 archaeological monuments, 250 residential houses and 32 monumental works of art carefully protected by the state. In December 1993, the city was listed on the World Heritage List by a resolution of the General Assembly of UNESCO, along with the cemetery of Memphis, the Pharaoh's Pyramid in Egypt, the historic center of Rome, the Acropolis of Athens, the Moscow Kremlin, and Khiva. And in 1997, under the auspices of UNESCO, a grand celebration was held for the 2500th anniversary of Bukhara.

A museum is a cultural treasure that can tell the history of any nation or country to generations. It is a huge school and classroom for imagining the past and present of this

country. A museum is the source of the magical science of history and the cultural relics in it are the bonds that bind ancestors and generations together.

The collections of the Bukhara Museum Reserve are the state depository, exhibiting monuments of the material and spiritual culture of the people who lived on the territory of Bukhara from ancient times to the present day. It preserves more than 100,000 exhibits covering more than 5,000 years of history. The material and spiritual culture of Bukhara, and the original traditions of the Bukharan people, have been carefully inherited from generation to generation, which are not only used for museum activities, but also for scientific researches. For the entire history of existence of museum funding, members such as science librarians have contributed enormously to the study, systematization, and popularization of collections. The museum reserve has a rich collection of decorative applied art works, triggering great artistic interest, among which the hand embroidery collection numbered with 700 motifs is very brilliant [4].

3.1 Coin Exhibition

The currency collection has over 19,000 items. The basis of the collection is the treasure coins of the last Bukharan King, Saeed Alim Khan (1911–1920). The collection is regularly increased by acquiring and receiving archaeological excavations on the territory of the Bukhara oasis. The main collections were formed nearly 20 years after the establishment of the storehouse in 1986, and can be divided into 9 categories according to the age. The first group is the more unique currency of the pre-Muslim period, the second group is the currency of the Muslim period, and the currency of the pre-Muslim period has more than 400 units. Among them, there is a unique treasure of Greek Bactrian currency (3 century BC).

3.2 Inscription Exhibition

The museum has more than 700 inscriptions of collections. These inscriptions of collections cover the 9th century to early 20th century in chronological order. The architectural and decorative applied arts of inscriptions decorated with Arabic figures are the most common monuments and a form of self-expression for the master craftsmen of Bukhara. Inscriptions commemorating cultural heritage have religious content, citing verses from the Koran. Inscriptions of worldly content, such as quotations of poems, prominent figures, famous poets, and philosophers, are used on items such as textiles, fabrics, household items, artistic embroideries and jewelry. In people's imaginations, inscriptions not only have literal meanings, but also function as magical talismans to protect and exorcise evil spirits, and to eliminate harm and evil.

3.3 Historical Document

The Bukhara Museum Reserve has a unique collection of historical documents from the day of its establishment. The museum collection consists of documents found in different periods of the Bukhara Ark (which was the residence of the rulers). Many documents were discovered by accident in 1921. The anthology is very diverse in appearance and

chronicle. Its total number exceeds 70,000 sets. And necessary measures have been taken to evaluate the found literature to ensure its safety. The Competent Committee from Tashkent consists of high authority experts on Central Asian text monuments, such as A.E. Schmid (a famous Petersburg school orientalist). He was sent to Tashkent in the early 1920s, and soon after was selected as a professor at the Oriental Academy of Turkestan, and was invited to Bukhara. The head of the Committee was Academician V. V. Bartold who was on a business trip in Tashkent at the time. Most of these documents and books were sent to Tashkent and later the “Fund of Kushbegi of Bukhara Emir” was established, belonging to the modern republic of the Republic of Uzbekistan, which was absorbed into Tashkent documentary studies together with the archives of the Bukharan government that were later discovered.

3.4 Carpet Exhibition

Among the various forms of applied arts, the most developed and the richest is carpet weaving, which has won glory since ancient times, and the tradition of carpet art comes from the distant past. The Thalia traveler Marco Polo left the first carpet with written references to the people of Central Asia in the 12th century. The tradition of carpet weaving in the Bukhara region has been passed down from generation to generation and has been polished and improved over the centuries. The foundation of the museum collection is the property of Bukhara Said Alimkhan, the last ruler of Bukhara. The carpet collection includes 107 kinds of carpets, loose carpets, prayer carpets and other household items. These articles represent the carpet genre of the peoples of all ethnic groups living on the territory of the Emirate of Bukhara.

3.5 Porcelain Exhibition

The National Museum of Bukhara has a collection of more than 730 pieces of porcelains, porcelain surfaces and glasses from the 17th to 20th century, including gift, imported, festive and general potteries. The production of pottery from kaolin has become ingrained in daily life in Bukhara. Pottery for the festival includes vases and small plates. Everyday pottery includes teapots and tea canisters from Japan, China, Russia, and Iran. It also includes traditional Chinese paintings depicting landscapes, nature, figures, birds, flowers, and animals. The museum collection includes Chinese vases, feathers, fruits, scrolls, books, etc.

3.6 Embroidery Exhibition

Bukharan embroidery during the 19th century is one of the most beautiful embroidery in Central Asia. For centuries, Bukhara has been a leader in Central Asian arts and handicrafts fashion, and it is here that the true masterpieces of hand-embroidered art are made. The National Museum of Architecture and Art in Bukhara collects and preserves more than 800 pieces of Uzbekistan decorative embroideries from the 19th to 20th century.

3.7 Metal Product Exhibition

The collection of copper embossing artworks and metal products in the Bukhara Museum holds an important place. The museum has more than 3,000 collections from the 17th to 19th century. Part of the collection consists of copper embossing products left over from former Bukharan rulers. The other part is represented by artworks privately gifted to the museum and collected by museum researchers. In addition to the Bukhara school, the museum's collections represent Samarqand, Khiva, Kokand, Fergana, Shashirisabz and 17th to 20th century Indian, Russian and Iranian schools of embossing art. According to the researchers, there are more than 600 skilled engravers, 50 of them from Bukhara at the beginning of the 20th century, working on advanced works of art.

3.8 Jewelry Exhibition

The Bukhara National Museum of Architecture and Art Reserve has a history of 80 years and has a large collection of jewelry objects from the 19th to the early 20th century. It has over 100 exhibits. These collections are the items left by the Bukharan rulers of the Mangit Dynasty. Among them, there are men's, women's, and children's jewelry, as well as gold and silver coins, medals, stamps, horse clothes, weapons and potteries. Bukhara is the oldest handicraft center in Central Asia and the most important trade and cultural center in Central Asia. The items of Bukharan craftsmen are exported to many countries in the East and West through the many caravan routes of the Silk Road [5].

3.9 Wood Carving Exhibition

The flourishing period of Bukharan wood carving art was in the 16th and first half of the 17th century BC. The political and historical conditions at the time Bukhara became the capital provided for a flourishing period of religious and civic character building. Wood carving is widely used in the artistic design of mosques, Islamic schools, gates and tombstones. Its unique paintings in the form of vegetables and geometric ornaments highlight the decorative designs of Bukhara's ceilings, columns, and architectural monuments. The art of wood carving is popular and used in the design of architectural details and the decoration of small objects. It was used on polishing utensils, painted thrones for rulers, and furniture for nobles. The National Museum of Bukhara-Reserve has interesting collections of wooden objects collected by the staff of the museum between 1924 and 2000, and the museum displays more than 1,000 main exhibits.

4 Conclusion

The Bukhara Museum has now become an important carrier for understanding ancient history, culture and architectural features in Uzbekistan and even Central Asia. Even though the development history of the Bukhara Museum is not very long, which gradually emerged after the establishment of the Soviet Union, it has also experienced its own development process: From the initial simple row to gradually taking the residence of the last Emir as the main body, the collection of its exhibits has also undergone a long

process, and it also reflects the rarity of the Bukhara Museum in terms of the variety and value of the collection in modern times. From coins, inscriptions, and historical documents that record culture, to carpets, embroideries, wood carvings, jewelry, etc. [6]with traditional cultural significance, the museum presents the splendid features of the Bukharan culture in history and also presents this culture to tourists from all over the world in the form of a museum.

Authors' Contributions. This paper is independently completed by Xiaoyu Ma.

References

1. Edward Allworth, *Central Asia, One Hundred Thirty Years of Russian Dominance: A Historical Overview*, Duke University Press, 1995.
2. Richard N. Frye, *Bukhara: Medieval Achievement*, University of Oklahoma Press, 1965.
3. Scott C. Levi, *The Bukharan Orisis: A Connected History of 18th Century Central Asia*, University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020.
4. A. Khakimov, *The Bukhara state architectural artistic museum preserve*, Toshkent, 2004.
5. Ergashovich R. K., Jeweler's art of sacred Bukhara emirate: At the second half of the 19th century and at the beginning of the 20th century, *International Journal of History*, Vol. 2, No. 2, 2020.
6. Zhou Jingjing: Museums' Information Dissemination Through "Objects": Limitation, Dilemma and Solutions, *Southeast Culture*, No. 2, 2021. (in Chinese)

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

