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THE CENTER OF ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION AS THE VISITING CARD OF CENTRAL ASIAN CIVILIZATION



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Abstract: this study examines the Center of Islamic Civilization as a multidimensional institution operating at the intersection of heritage preservation, national identity construction, and cultural diplomacy. The article evaluates the Center's role in reconstructing historical memory, promoting Uzbekistan's civilizational legacy, and strengthening the country's soft power in international relations. The findings suggest that the Center functions not merely as a museum or academic institution but as a strategic state instrument for redefining Uzbekistan's domestic identity and international image. The study concludes that the cultural institution has emerged as an important mechanism through which Uzbekistan projects itself as a modern inheritor of Islamic intellectual heritage and a leading force in regional cultural diplomacy.

Keywords: *Central Asia, Islamic civilization, Cultural diplomacy, Soft power; National identity; Historical memory; Cultural heritage.*

Islom sivilizatsiyasi markazi – Markaziy Osiyo tamaddunining "tashrif qog'ozi"

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Annotatsiya: ushbu maqolada Islom sivilizatsiyasi markazi madaniy merosni saqlash, milliy o'zlikni shakllantirish va madaniy diplomatiyaning kesishmasida faoliyat yurituvchi ko'p qirrali institut sifatida tadqiq etilgan. Maqolada Markazning tarixiy xotirani qayta tiklash, O'zbekistonning sivilizatsiya merosini targ'ib qilish hamda mamlakatning xalqaro munosabatlardagi "yumshoq kuchi"ni mustahkamlashdagi o'rni tahlil qilingan. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, qayd etilgan madaniy markaz nafaqat muzey yoki akademik muassasa, balki O'zbekistonning ichki milliy o'zligini va xalqaro imijini belgilashga xizmat qiluvchi mamlakatning strategik vositasi.

sifatida faoliyat yuritadi. Markaz O‘zbekistonning Islom intellektual merosining zamonaviy vorisi sifatida namoyon etishi va mintaqaviy madaniy diplomatiyada yetakchi kuch sifatida shakllanishi uchun muhim mexanizmdir.

Kalit so‘zlar: *Markaziy Osiyo, Islom sivilizatsiyasi, madaniy diplomatiya, yumshoq kuch, milliy o‘zlik, tarixiy xotira, madaniy meros.*

модернизации, углубления переработки, повышения экспортной конкурентоспособности и усиления координации внутри отрасли.

Ключевые слова: *Центральная Азия, Исламская цивилизация, культурная дипломатия, «мягкая сила», национальная идентичность, историческая память, культурное наследие.*

Центр исламской цивилизации как «визитная карточка» Центральной Азии

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Аннотация: в статье рассматривается развитие текстильной и швейной промышленности Узбекистана через призму её организационно-экономического механизма и определяются основные направления его совершенствования в современных условиях. Анализ охватывает динамику отрасли за 2016-2025 гг., с акцентом на производственные тенденции, структурные изменения и роль отрасли в промышленном развитии страны. Результаты показывают, что в последние годы рост отрасли обеспечивался преимущественно реальным расширением выпуска, а не ценовыми факторами, тогда как модель ARIMA (0,2,1) указывает на сохранение положительной динамики до 2028 года. На этой основе в статье обоснованы практические направления

In recent years, Uzbekistan has undertaken substantial efforts to redefine its national identity and historical narrative through the revival of cultural heritage. One of the most ambitious manifestations of this policy has been the establishment of the Center of Islamic Civilization in Tashkent, initiated in 2017 and officially inaugurated in 2026 under the leadership of President Shavkat Mirziyoyev.

Situated in Tashkent, the complex covers 10 hectares and features a main building 161 meters long and 118 meters wide, with a dome reaching 65 meters. It has rapidly become one of the most symbolically important cultural institutions in the country [1].

Historically, Central Asia occupied a prominent position within the intellectual geography of the Islamic world, producing scholars such as **Muhammad al-Khwarizmi, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina,** and **Imam al-Bukhari**, whose works shaped global developments in science, medicine, mathematics, theology, and philosophy [2]. Despite this historical legacy, much of the region’s Islamic and intellectual heritage was marginalized during the Soviet period, when official historiography often excluded religious and civilizational narratives from public

discourse [3].

Within this context, the present article argues that the Center of Islamic Civilization should be understood not solely as a museum or educational institution but as a strategic instrument of state-led identity formation and international cultural diplomacy. Specifically, the article investigates how the Center contributes to (1) restoring historical memory, (2) strengthening national identity, and (3) enhancing Uzbekistan's soft power internationally.

This study employs a qualitative research methodology based on historical-institutional analysis and interpretive policy evaluation. The research relies upon three principal methodological approaches.

First, historical analysis is used to examine the role of Central Asia in the formation of Islamic civilization and global intellectual history, drawing upon primary and secondary historiographical scholarship.

Second, institutional analysis is applied to assess the structure, objectives, and operational functions of the Center as a state-sponsored cultural institution. Official institutional reports, government publications, and policy statements from 2025–2026 are incorporated to evaluate the Center's organizational significance.

Third, conceptual analysis of soft power and cultural diplomacy theory is employed, drawing primarily upon Nye's framework of soft power in order to interpret the Center's contribution to Uzbekistan's international image-building strategy [4].

The findings demonstrate that the Center serves as a significant mechanism for the restoration of historical memory in modern Uzbekistan. During the Soviet era, Islamic intellectual heritage was systematically underrepresented in state historiography, creating a rupture in historical consciousness. The Center directly addresses this legacy by reintroducing historical narratives centered upon Central Asia's role in Islamic and scientific civilization.

Its exhibitions prominently feature manuscripts, scholarly biographies, and historical artifacts connected to the Islamic Golden Age, thereby reconstructing public awareness of Central Asia's contribution to world civilization.

The Center has emerged as one of the most advanced heritage institutions in the region. According to official reports, it contains more than 45,000 academic works, 2,600 rare manuscripts, and over 350,000 digital resources [5].

Moreover, the institution integrates advanced technological solutions — including artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and holographic exhibitions - which modernize historical preservation and educational outreach [6]. These innovations position the Center as one of the most technologically advanced heritage institutions in Central Asia.

The Center significantly contributes to Uzbekistan's soft power and cultural diplomacy initiatives. Through cooperation with organizations such as UNESCO, ICESCO, and IRCICA, the institution has begun to function as a platform for international scholarly engagement and intercultural dialogue [7].

Additionally, the Center enhances Uzbekistan's international image by portraying the country as:

- a guardian of Islamic civilization;

- a promoter of moderate and enlightened Islamic traditions;
- a regional hub of intercultural dialogue.

An important recent development further reinforces the Center's role as a global cultural institution. On April 13, 2026, the Center of Islamic Civilization was officially recognized by the Guinness World Records as the largest museum of Islamic civilization in the world. This recognition represents not only a formal institutional achievement but also a significant enhancement of Uzbekistan's symbolic and cultural capital on the global stage.

The official award ceremony was attended by representatives of the international adjudication body, including Seyda Subasi Gemici, who confirmed that the Center meets all required international standards. The event also brought together architects, designers, engineers, and members of the Center's Scientific Council, underscoring the collaborative and multidisciplinary nature of the project [8].

From an analytical perspective, this recognition performs several important functions. First, it strengthens Uzbekistan's position as a major destination for cultural and heritage tourism, particularly within the sphere of Islamic civilization, science, and education. Second, it serves as an external validation of the Center's scale, quality, and global relevance, thereby enhancing its credibility in international academic and cultural networks.

Moreover, the Guinness designation contributes to the Center's role as a platform for intercultural dialogue. By emphasizing principles such as mutual respect, tolerance, and cultural diversity, the institution aligns itself with broader global discourses on civilizational exchange and peaceful coexistence. In this sense, the Center transcends its national function and becomes part of a wider international cultural infrastructure.

The evaluative remarks provided during the certification process further highlight the institution's uniqueness and scholarly value. The assessment emphasized the distinctiveness of the exhibits, the rigor of documentation procedures, and the involvement of specialists in Islamic archaeology, art, and science. Such features reinforce the Center's dual identity as both a research-oriented institution and a public-facing cultural complex.

The findings indicate that the Center of islamic civilization operates far beyond the conventional functions of a museum. Rather, it should be interpreted as a strategic state institution situated at the intersection of memory politics, symbolic nation-building, and diplomatic branding.

From a domestic perspective, the Center contributes to nation-building by reconstructing a historical narrative that emphasizes Uzbekistan's connection to a prestigious civilizational past. This process strengthens public identification with the nation's historical and religious heritage and legitimizes contemporary state ideology through historical continuity [9].

From an international perspective, the Center functions as an instrument of soft power. As J.Nye suggests, cultural assets can enhance a state's influence by increasing international attraction rather than coercion. The Center allows Uzbekistan to project an image of itself as a historically enlightened,

culturally rich, and intellectually sophisticated muslim-majority state.

Furthermore, the Center's promotion of moderate Islamic heritage offers strategic value in international discourse by countering negative stereotypes frequently associated with Islam in global media and politics. In doing so, Uzbekistan positions itself as a model of Islamic moderation, scholarship, and intercultural openness.

Finally, the Center contributes economically through heritage tourism. Combined with historic cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, it strengthens Uzbekistan's position within the growing global market of pilgrimage and historical tourism [10].

The Center of Islamic Civilization in Tashkent represents one of the most important cultural and intellectual initiatives in modern Uzbekistan. The study demonstrates that the institution fulfills three strategic functions: restoring historical memory, institutionalizing the preservation of Islamic intellectual heritage, and enhancing Uzbekistan's international cultural diplomacy.

It embodies the strategic objective of positioning Uzbekistan as a global hub of Islamic civilization while simultaneously consolidating national identity within the framework of the "New Uzbekistan" development agenda.

By combining scholarship, technology, and symbolic heritage politics, the Center transcends traditional museum functions and emerges as a strategic instrument of both domestic identity formation and foreign policy branding. Consequently, the Center should be regarded not merely as an academic institution but as a contemporary symbol of Central Asia's enduring contribution to world civilization and a genuine visiting card of the region in the twenty-first century.

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