

## THE SHRINES OF KITOB DISTRICT – SYMBOLS OF OUR NATIONAL HERITAGE

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**Annotation:** *This article explores the historical, cultural, and religious significance of pilgrimage sites located in the Kitob district. These sites serve as vital symbols of national values and play a significant role in the lives of the local population. The article also analyzes the position of these pilgrimage sites in society and their importance in the development of tourism in the Republic.*

**Keywords:** *Kitob district, pilgrimage site, national values, cultural heritage, religious sites, tourism, history.*

The Kitob district is a mountainous region situated in the northeastern part of the Qashqadaryo region. It is surrounded on the north and east by the Hisor mountain ranges. Geographically, the district lies on the outermost edge of the region, bordering the Samarkand region to the north, the Republic of Tajikistan to the east, Shahrisabz district to the south, and Chiroqchi district to the west [12.4]. According to sources, the name of the district does not originate from the word "kitob" (book), but from the Persian "Kiftob"—"Kift" meaning shoulder and "ob" meaning water, i.e., "water on the shoulder." This is because the Qashqadaryo and Aq Daryo rivers flow along both sides of the district [1.198].

Although the Kitob bekdom was nominally under the rule of the Bukhara Emirate, it did not fully submit to it and functioned in alliance with the Kenagos tribe around the Shahrisabz bekdom. The Kitob bekdom covered the northern part of the valley, while the Shahrisabz bekdom occupied the southeastern part. On August 14, 1870, the Kitob fortress was captured by Abramov's forces [12.8,9]. During the Soviet period (the district borders were redefined and reorganized in 1926), the district was incorporated into the Shahrisabz district for 67 years. It was finally reestablished as an independent district on December 25, 1968, according to Decision No. 1782 of the Supreme Soviet of the Uzbek SSR [13.3,5].

The mystery of Mount Hazrati Sultan continues to astonish people. Located in the northeastern part of Kitob district, it ranks as the fifth highest peak in the Republic. It stands at 4,135 meters above sea level and lies 82 kilometers northeast of Kitob city, bordering the Republic of Tajikistan. It is adjacent to the G'ova summit, where the

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Zarafshan and Hisor mountain ranges diverge. A sacred site known as "Hazrati Sultan" is located here, which the local population calls "Ko'hi Tavba" (Mountain of Repentance) or "Avg'oyi Qiyomat" (Wind of Doomsday) [7].

At the summit, a flat rock surface—seemingly carved—can accommodate 70–80 people for prayer. There is a cave on the qibla side of this platform, said to contain a grave where locals believe the head of Imam Husayn was buried. After the death of Caliph Muawiyah in 680, a movement against the Umayyads began in Iraq. The Shia of Kufa invited Imam Husayn to be their imam and lead a revolt against Caliph Yazid. When Imam Husayn and his followers traveled from Mecca to Kufa, they were intercepted by a 7,000-strong army of the caliphate at the plains of Karbala. On October 10, 680, Imam Husayn (r.a.) was martyred by Sinan ibn Anas ibn Amr Nakha'i, who pierced him with a spear. Sinan then dismounted his horse and severed the Imam's head. This heinous crime occurred on a Friday, the 10th of Muharram (Ashura), in the year 61 AH [14.129].

Imam Husayn was buried on the Karbala plain, which has become a sacred pilgrimage site for Shia Muslims. According to folklore, after Imam Husayn was martyred and his head severed, it was sent to Yazid. However, the commander of the army, Khoja Dawud Dimashqi, reportedly substituted his own son Husayn's head in its place and fled with the Imam's head, eventually burying it on the G'ova summit. His companion, Mubil ota, was also martyred upon reaching the summit [3]. This is why the site is regarded as sacred by the local community. Pilgrimage to Hazrati Sultan is allowed from July 20 to August 10. In addition to being a sacred Islamic site, it is believed that the cave under the mountain was once a temple for pagans in ancient times. One of the unique features of the pilgrimage site is its connection to the sunrise. When viewed from the village of Qabzaxona, the sun's position over the mountain ridge gives the cliff the appearance of a human figure—further enhancing the site's sense of grandeur.

There exists a sacred shrine dedicated to Mavlono Abdulbaqi Khojagi Emkanagiy [3]. A prominent figure of the Naqshbandi Sufi order, he was a renowned scholar of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh) and hadith sciences, and a master of both spiritual states (hal) and formal knowledge (qol). Known with reverence as Azim Pir, Mavlono Abdulbaqi Khojagi Emkanagiy, son of Mavlono Darvesh Muhammad Vakhshuwari, was born in 918 AH / 1512 CE in the village of Khojaimkanagiy in Kitob district and passed away there in 1008 AH / 1600 CE. His son, Mavlono Khoja Abdul Qosim, also rests at the same location (d. 1022 AH / 1613 CE) [11.11].

Hazrati Khojagi Muhammad Emkanagiy (may Allah have mercy on him) was the spiritual successor (khalifa) of his father, Darvesh Muhammad. He inherited both exoteric and esoteric knowledge as well as spiritual teaching methods from his father. He kept his spiritual states concealed from the public [14.129]. All extant sources

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confirm that Hazrati Khojagi ibn Darvesh Muhammad Emkanagiy occupied the 22nd rank in the Naqshbandi silsila (spiritual chain) [4.5,6; 14:129].

According to the Catalogue of Manuscripts Related to the Naqshbandi Tariqat, Hazrati Khojagi Muhammad Emkanagiy ibn Darvesh Muhammad authored a work titled *Intikhob az Kitab-i Nasama* (Selections from the Book of Breezes). Five folios of this manuscript, copied in 1275 AH / 1859 CE, are preserved in the manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies under reference number 500 XVII (folios 194–198).

Located 30.5 km northeast of Kitob city, along the Qashqadaryo River between the Habash and Ko‘l mountain ranges, lies the village of Hazrati Bashir [3]. Hazrati Bashir (1368–1464 CE) was born as a result of the prayers and blessings of Sayyid Ne‘matillo, the brother of Amir Temur’s spiritual mentor Sayyid Baraka. His father, Khoja Hasan, was 90 years old and his mother, Bibi Malokat, was 80 at the time of his birth. The child was named Said Ahmad, but due to his mother’s inability to nurse him, he grew up without breastfeeding, earning the nickname "Bashir" (a reference to growing without milk). Later, his parents had two more sons, Said Ali and Khoja Ahmad [2.178–179].

From the age of 18, Hazrati Bashir began studying the Qur‘an and other Islamic texts. He was wise, ascetic, and generous. He was granted esoteric knowledge early in life, and as his spiritual abilities grew, so did the number of his disciples. He became a miracle-performing saint. His Sufi path, guided by Hazrati Shaykh Buzrukvor, included raqs (mystical dance) and sima (spiritual audition), which are rare in traditional Naqshbandi practice [12.30].

Due to his spiritual status, many people from across the Muslim world—from Egypt to Mongolia—came to study under Hazrati Sultan Said Ahmad. Many of his students attained spiritual excellence. Notable among them were Usmon Turkistoni, Shaykh Shamsiddin of Shahrисабз, Shaykh Poyanda, Said Ali, Darvesh Muhammad Koduboz, Sayyid Muhammad Shahbozi Haqiqat, Mavlono Lutfullah, Mavlono Ismail, Mavlono Aminuddin, and several distinguished women such as Bibi Robiya, Bibi Sohiba, Bibi Fotima, Bibi Baxt Sultan, Bibi Dursultan, Bibi Turkona, and Bibi Xovand Sultan. Most are buried in the village of Hazrati Bashir [12.31; 9.88].

Hazrati Sultan Said Ahmad Bashir, considered one of the greatest Naqshbandi saints after Bahouddin Naqshband, was honored with the title "Mir of Truth" (Miri Haqiqat). He passed away in 1464 CE and is buried at Niyoztepa in the village of Bashir [12.31]. As a revered Sufi and miracle worker, thousands of pilgrims visit his shrine annually. Additionally, the scenic mountainous area is ideal for ecotourism. A guesthouse and a cable car between the two mountains could enhance infrastructure and attract more visitors.

This shrine is located 2–3 kilometers from the center of Kitob city and houses the tombs of several notable figures: Abu Bakr Kitobiy (the spiritual guide of Kitob residents), writer and physician Jo‘naydullo Islomshayx o‘g‘li Hoziq, and Kitob beks

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such as Dustmuhammad ibn Anis Muhammad, Muhammad Humom ibn Hoji Abdulloh, and Ahmad Bobojon ibn Do'stmuhammad. Their graves lie atop a hill approximately 70–75 meters high.

Information on the birthplace, descendants, and legacy of Shaykh Abu Bakr Kitobiy is scarce. He is revered as a spiritual mentor who promoted Islamic teachings. He was affectionately called "Mulla Darvesh Oxund" by the people. After his death, a small mausoleum was erected over his grave, turning it into a shrine by the 17th century.

Mulla Darvesh Oxund was among the prominent disciples of Maxtumiy A'zam. Jo'naydullo Islomshayx o'g'li Hoziq was born in the village of Sharh near Herat, Afghanistan. In his famous poem Yusuf and Zulaykho, he refers to himself as "Hain-Hoziq" and "Junaydulloh ibn Shaykhul Islam." Hoziq studied at the madrasa in Bukhara, also mastering the medical sciences. His intelligence and erudition earned him a reputation, and he was later appointed imam of a top madrasa, bringing him closer to the royal court. However, disillusioned by the court's decadence, he moved to Kokand to serve under Amir Umar Khan.

Following Umar Khan's death in 1822, Muhammad Alijon ascended the throne. During this time, Hoziq authored medical texts such as Sharh-i Qanun and Tahqiq al-Qawa'id. He later traveled to Khorezm, where Olloqulikhon tasked him with translating several volumes of Rawzat al-Safa by Mirkhwand. He returned to Bukhara at the end of 1829. Over the years, he lived intermittently in Kokand, Shahrishabz, and Bukhara, practicing medicine to sustain himself.

Amir Nasrullo reportedly sent a prison guard named Doshaboy to murder Hoziq, promising him freedom in return. On Saturday, January 14, 1843, Hoziq was beheaded and the head delivered to Nasrullo. According to Hoji Hakimkhon's Muntakhab al-Tawarikh, Hoziq's headless body was buried inside the khanqah at the feet of Abu Bakr Kitobiy (Oxund).

The shrine of Khoja Ne'matillo is located in the northern part of the village of Mo'g'ul, 23 kilometers from the center of Kitob district [3]. Shah Sayyid Nuriddin Ne'matillo ibn Mir Sayyid Abdullo ibn Abdurahmon (1330–1431 CE) was a prominent scholar of Islam and the founder of the "Ne'matollahi" Sufi order. This order, similar to the Naqshbandi path, is based on the principles of spiritual guidance and mentorship. Today, the teachings of this order are still practiced in parts of Central Asia, India, and Pakistan [7]. Sayyid Ne'matillo was the 21st-generation descendant of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Muhammad al-Baqir. He was born in the city of Aleppo, studied in Iraq, and at the age of 24, undertook the Hajj pilgrimage, after which he became a disciple of Shaykh Abdullah Shafi'i (1298–1362) in Mecca.

He was the brother of Mir Sayyid Baraka, the spiritual mentor of Amir Temur. Sayyid Ne'matillo wrote 544 letters and treatises in Arabic and Persian, 110 of which have survived to this day. His scholarly legacy has been published four times under the name of Amir Sayyid Nuriddin Ne'matillo in Iraq and Kerman (Iran). According to

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Zafarnama, when Amir Temur marched against Amir Husayn and stopped near the city of Termez, Mir Sayyid Baraka and his brother Sayyid Ne'matillo presented the royal standards and drums—symbols of kingship—to Temur. Thereafter, Sayyid Ne'matillo accompanied Amir Temur in all his affairs and consultations. He lived for six years in the village of Mo'g'ul in Kitob district. It is said that due to his spiritual blessings, Hazrati Sultan Sayyid Ahmad Bashir was born [2.178–179].

Sayyid Ne'matillo later went to Kitob city and married the daughter of the city's governor, Imamiddin Hamza al-Husayn al-Harvoni. After leaving Herat, he settled in Yazd and Shiraz. He then resided permanently in the city of Kerman, where he administered lands granted by Amir Temur to the sayyids for 25 years. He passed away in 1431 and was buried there. The grave in Mo'g'ul village is symbolic. According to local tradition, those who wish for a child often come to the shrine of Khoja Ne'matillo to pray. Near the shrine, there is a pond inhabited by thousands of fish, which, due to the sanctity of the site, are never caught or eaten. The shrine is located in a mountainous area and is known for its picturesque scenery, making it highly suitable for the development of ecotourism.

The shrines in Kitob district represent vivid examples of Uzbekistan's national values. They are deeply tied to the people's religious beliefs, cultural traditions, and historical memory. These places serve not only as centers of religious significance but also as instruments for strengthening national unity and social cohesion. Religious ceremonies, public holidays, and traditional gatherings held at these sites enrich the national spirit of the Uzbek people. They provide the younger generation with a profound understanding of their history and heritage, fostering respect and reverence toward it.

Moreover, these shrines play a significant role in the development of domestic tourism. They attract visitors not only for religious purposes but also as cultural and historical destinations, contributing to the local economy and creating new employment opportunities. Kitob district, as one of the oldest and most historically rich regions in the Qashqadaryo province, contains numerous shrines, tombs, cemeteries, and memorial sites. These sites embody the people's beliefs, customs, Sufi views, and spiritual life.

Among the most renowned pilgrimage sites in the Kitob district is the Oqsuv shrine. Documented in several academic and practical sources, Oqsuv is distinguished by its healing springs, lush greenery, and association with saintly figures. Local people believe that prayers and wishes made at this site are fulfilled. Oqsuv serves not only as a place of worship but also as a venue for national, spiritual, and cultural ceremonies.

Numerous old cemeteries and sacred sites within Kitob district are closely linked to national values. The individuals buried in these places were significant historical figures, and their resting places symbolize the deep respect of the people for Islam, honor, and tradition. These sacred locations have been preserved over the years and retain their significance to this day. Shrines, mosques, mausoleums, and historical sites

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in Kitob district are not only religious symbols but also direct reflections of our national identity and values.

Each site encapsulates the faith, labor, honesty, patience, and spiritual richness of our ancestors. These qualities should be instilled in today's youth as essential moral foundations. For example, the shrine of Hazrati Bashir is not only a sacred site but also embodies the way of life of our ancestors through oral traditions, ethical lessons, and ancient customs. The surrounding revered graves, centuries-old trees, and sacred stones serve as guardians of cultural memory.

Similarly, the shrine of Mavlono Abdulbaqi Khojagi Emkanagiy functions as a vital center for promoting national spiritual heritage. Educational and spiritual events held there strengthen youth awareness of national identity and cultivate reverence for ancestors. Through such sites, the teachings of the ancient Naqshbandi order, Sufi ideals, spiritual purity, and the values of patience are passed on to future generations.

The shrine of Qabri Oxund also plays an important role in the social life of the local population. It serves as a space where moral values such as respect for elders, reverence for traditions, and humility are preserved and transmitted through generations. The proverb "the words of elders are sacred advice" finds living expression in these places of worship.

Another notable feature of the shrines in Kitob is their close connection with oral tradition. Legends, epic tales, prayers, and proverbs related to these places blend with historical narratives and Hadith literature. This strengthens their function not only as religious centers but also as educational and moral institutions. Through these sacred spaces, national values are not only preserved but also transmitted to future generations, contributing significantly to the preservation of cultural memory and spiritual stability.

This scholarly article highlights the unique historical characteristics of the Kitob district, focusing on its revered figures, sacred sites, and their influence on youth consciousness. The research demonstrates that preserving historical memory and conveying it accurately to future generations is essential for maintaining a society's spiritual integrity. The historical monuments, shrines, and legends of Kitob serve as living carriers of intergenerational memory.

In particular, sites such as Hazrati Bashir and Mavlono Abdulbaqi Khojagi Emkanagiy play a significant role in transmitting local traditions and values to youth. Additionally, toponymic studies, oral literature, and ethnographic research serve as vital sources for understanding the region's rich history. Fieldwork, interviews with local residents, and academic literature have enabled a scientifically grounded exploration of Kitob's past.

Encouraging youth to take an interest in historical memory, involving them in research, organizing field visits, and integrating local history into the education system are effective means for nurturing a historically conscious and patriotic generation. Therefore, preserving intergenerational memory should not be considered solely the

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task of historians or local activists—it is a sacred duty for the entire society, especially the youth.

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