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Functional Changes in Namangan's Historic Buildings and Their Interpretation for Tourism

BUNYODBEK SAIDAHMAD O'G'LI TALABJONOV
PhD Researcher, Fergana State University
Email: talabjonovb@gmail.com
Tel: +99894 132 27 93
ORCID: 0009-0001-9460-1434
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Abstract: This article discusses the assignment of new cultural functions to historic buildings in Namangan and the interpretation of their history of use for visitors, drawing on the examples of the Otaullikhon Tura Mosque and Mulla Kyrgyz Madrasa. Source-critical and historical-typological methods were used to distinguish original functions, subsequent uses and presentation for tourism. The principal finding is the need to incorporate a building's functional history into tour content. As the available materials are insufficient to establish the dates of all changes, the article focuses on historical interpretation rather than providing a complete construction chronology. A new form of use is not treated as direct evidence of successful conservation.
Keywords: Namangan, architectural heritage, functional change, museum adaptation, madrasa, historical memory.

Introduction

A historic building may have served various functions over time. Its present use does not always fully reflect the purpose for which it was built. Consequently, when presenting a building as a museum, gallery or craft centre, its history across different periods should be explained.

The relationship between the reuse of historic buildings and the explanation of their earlier social functions requires particular attention when integrating Namangan's architectural heritage into tourism. This article aims to identify how changes in function affect historical interpretation. Its central question is: how can the original social significance of a building be communicated to visitors after it has been assigned a new function?

Materials and Methods

The study was conducted as a qualitative analysis of the interpretation of historic building reuse. Descriptions of the Otaullikhon Tura Mosque and Mulla Kyrgyz Madrasa were used as examples to frame the problem. Since the site information has not been fully verified against independent primary documents, it was not treated as an established chronology of functional change. The Law on the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Properties provided the regulatory framework [1]. The original site documentation, restoration plans and commissioning records were not obtained in full for this article. Accordingly, precise construction dates and a complete chronology of changes in function are not provided.

The historical-typological method was used to distinguish the original function of a building type from its subsequent uses. The source-critical approach distinguished information reported in a source as an actual occurrence from statements presented as projects or proposals. In the comparative discussion, the Venice Charter, the Burra Charter, the ICOMOS Charter for Interpretation and Presentation, the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape, the Nara Document and guidance on local community participation were examined in relation to

use, cultural significance, authenticity and historical context [2–7]. These international documents were not used as local evidence confirming particular changes in Namangan.

Results

The History of a Building as a Distinct Subject of Research

The study of a heritage building requires a distinction between at least three dimensions: its function when constructed, its subsequent uses and its present-day presentation. These dimensions may either extend or transform earlier meanings. The difference between a building's historical name and its current activities should therefore be made explicit.

General legislation also regulates the use of cultural heritage in conjunction with its protection [1]. This means that a new function should not override the conditions necessary for conserving a historic property. However, a general legal provision does not establish what work has actually been undertaken in a particular building. Site-specific documentation is required for that purpose.

The Examples of Otaullikhon Tura and Mulla Kyrgyz

The example of the Otaullikhon Tura Mosque is used to consider the relationship between a historic religious building and art gallery or museum activities as a problem of historical interpretation. The key criterion is to explain the building's original function separately from its subsequent cultural use. The date and legal basis of its adaptation as a gallery, and the architectural interventions involved, have not been substantiated by primary documents in this study. This example is therefore not presented as a verified chronology of functional change.

The example of Mulla Kyrgyz Madrasa is used to discuss the possibility of using a historic educational building for displaying and selling craft products. Here, a proposed use must be distinguished from documented activities. The article therefore does not claim that the site's current operating arrangements have been fully verified.

The two examples facilitate discussion of different uses: gallery or museum activities in the first case, and craft displays and sales in the second. There is insufficient evidence to treat these options collectively as implemented practices whose success has been demonstrated. The comparison highlights the need to assess the type of function separately from its historical substantiation.

Two Levels of Tour Content

Visitors to a building may encounter its current exhibition or services. However, its architectural form, original name and former social function should also be explained. This allows the building to be understood as more than a space housing an exhibition.

In the author's view, a tour should first explain the building's historical function and then its new use. Transitional stages for which evidence is insufficient should not be filled with speculative history. Interpretive signage or a guide's explanation should distinguish original elements, later repairs and modern fittings.

Discussion

Presenting the history of use does not require portraying a building's earlier period solely in terms of a lost function. Different stages can provide insights into changes in urban society. This raises questions about the circumstances in which a new cultural function was selected, which elements of the building were preserved and which aspects were reinterpreted. The relationship between the current exhibition and the historic interior also requires separate examination. In the author's view, such interpretation moves the discussion of adaptation beyond the fact of reuse to questions of historical memory. Precise answers to these questions will require further research using the relevant site documentation.

The use of a historic building may help maintain its place in public life. However, the existence of activities does not automatically demonstrate that its historic character has been successfully preserved. The suitability of retail, gallery or other services and the conservation of the structure and architectural significance must be assessed using different criteria. Article 5 of the Venice Charter identifies socially useful purposes as a factor conducive to conservation, while requiring that adaptation to a new function preserve the building's layout and decoration [2]. The Burra Charter defines compatible use in terms of respect for cultural significance and the limitation of the impact of change [3]. These criteria should be assessed independently of the presence of gallery or retail activities.

The article proposes a record of a building's history of use to support historical interpretation. This record would identify the original function, subsequent changes, the source of each item of information and any remaining uncertainties. It would support a coherent explanation of the building's history. It is proposed as a tool for future documentation, rather than presented as the outcome of new field observations. The 2008 ICOMOS Charter links interpretation to evidence, context and accessible information [4]. Accordingly, the record should also identify the type of document supporting each phase of use: an official decision, an inventory entry, a project document and an oral account do not have the same evidentiary status.

Local memory also has particular significance in assessing functional change. Residents' continued use of an earlier name may indicate a building's continuity in social memory. However, an oral account cannot substitute for evidence of a construction date or a formal right of use. These sources should be compared according to their respective purposes. The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape encourages consideration of heritage within its urban setting and sociocultural relationships [5]. A building's earlier name, its relationship with the neighbourhood and memories of its use can therefore be recorded as research questions.

The Nara Document emphasises the need to consider diverse cultural contexts and information sources when assessing authenticity [6]. In the author's view, reducing a historic building's original religious or educational significance to its current service function narrows historical interpretation. An explanation of the building should address its architectural form, history of use and community memory, with evidence appropriate to each dimension.

UNESCO guidance on engaging local communities and businesses recommends taking local interests and participation into account in heritage-related decisions [7]. For Namangan's historic buildings, this approach suggests discussing tour content with local specialists, adapting craft displays to the historic setting and documenting residents' memories. These possibilities are not presented in this article as outcomes that have been tested in practice.

The findings focus on distinguishing levels of evidence when assessing functional change. The study is limited by the incomplete availability of independently verified dates of change, project drawings and technical inspections for the sites. Consequently, no definitive assessment is made of whether the adaptations have been successful in economic or conservation terms. The conclusions on historical interpretation are presented as analytical recommendations.

Conclusion

The interpretation of Namangan's historic buildings for tourism should encompass historical meanings beyond their current activities. Explaining their original functions, subsequent changes and present uses together reveals their value as sources for urban history.

The discussion of Otaullikhon Tura and Mulla Kyrgyz demonstrates the need to distinguish a documented history of use from a proposed form of use. It would be inappropriate to treat all changes to these buildings as instances of a single uniform model.

The principal recommendation is to compile a record of the history of use and employ it as the basis for tour narratives. Each phase should be linked to a source; uncertain dates should not be filled with speculative figures. This approach can help maintain a balance between visitor convenience and historical explanation.

Further research requires site records, restoration documentation, museum inventories and relevant official decisions. These materials would make it possible to develop a precise chronological study. The present article is limited to proposing source-critical criteria for explaining functional history.

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