



## HOLY PLACES AND PILGRIMAGES OF JIZAKH REGION

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***Annotation.** This article provides a scholarly analysis of sacred shrines and pilgrimage sites located in the Jizzakh region as historical and ethnographic sources. The study examines shrines associated with saints, sacred natural and geographical objects, as well as belief systems related to animal cults. Source analysis, historical-comparative methods, and ethnographic observation were applied in the research. The findings indicate that the pilgrimage sites of the Jizzakh oasis represent not only religious practices but also embody ancient worldviews, traditional beliefs, and elements of intangible cultural heritage. The conclusions highlight the significant role of these sacred places in shaping social life, ritual practices, and collective cultural memory.*

***Keywords:** Jizzakh region, pilgrimage sites, sacred shrines, saints, intangible cultural heritage, folk beliefs, nature cults, animal cults.*

Sacred places and shrines in Uzbekistan are important historical and ethnographic objects that reflect the religious views, social memory, and traditional culture of the people. Jizzakh region is a unique area in this regard, where shrines associated with Islamic saints, sacred places based on natural wonders, and shrines associated with animal cults are widespread. This article analyzes the system of these shrines from a historical and ethnographic point of view.

The relevance of the study is determined by the need to scientifically illuminate the place of shrines in the Jizzakh oasis in folk beliefs, ritual practices and intangible cultural heritage.

The article adheres to the principles of historicity, consistency and systematicity. During the study, source analysis, historical-comparative methods and

ethnographic observation methods were used. Scientific literature, archival materials and local legends were studied on the basis of comparative analysis.

*Burhoniddin Kilich Shrine.* One of the shrines associated with famous religious scholars and saints in the oasis. Sayid Burhoniddin Kilich Shrine is a shrine located in the village of Beshkubi, Zamin district, and local residents associate this shrine with the name of this person. Hazrati Sultan Burhoniddin Kilich (real name Sayyid Burhoniddin ibn Sayyid Kamoliddin) is considered the first representative of one of the famous sayyid classes widespread in Central Asia to be born in our country. His parents were from families belonging to the descendants of the Prophet (pbuh), and their genealogies are reflected in many ancient books, documents, tombstones, and on the facades of historical monuments.

*Khojamushkent Ota Shrine.* One of the shrines associated with the saints in the oasis is the Khojamushkent Ota Shrine in Yangiabad District. Local residents attribute the appearance of the shrine to the personality of Khoja ibn Isak, after whom the holy place was named.

*Khojai Serob Ota Shrine.* A sacred place located in the village of Peshagor, Zamin District. This place is called “Khojai Serob Ota” (the owner of the water source) by the locals. On the territory of the shrine there is the grave of Mavlana Muhammad Pishagori, a mausoleum dedicated to him, a mosque, and a spring considered sacred.

*Osmat Ota Shrine.* One of the prominent children of the Ustrushana oasis is undoubtedly the famous jurist and scholar of his time, thinker Muhammad ibn Abdulhamid Usmandiy Samarkandiy. The full name of the scholar is Abulfat Alauddin Muhammad ibn Abdulhamid ibn Umar ibn Hasan ibn Husayn Usmandi Samarkandi, and the sources give different information about the year of his birth and death. Some sources state that “Allama was born in Samarkand in 408/1017 and died there in 502/1109,” while most sources state that “He was born in 488/1095 in “Usmand”, one of the villages of Samarkand, and died in 552/1157 at the age of 64.”

The sources state that Abulfat Muhammad ibn Abdulhamid ibn Husayn ibn Hasan ibn Hamza Usmandi was a resident of Samarkand and was known by the title “The Pillar of the World.”

*Jondahor Ota Shrine.* A sacred place located in the village of Garasha, Farish district of the oasis. The real name of the saint, who is buried in the village cemetery, is Muhammad Sharif (nickname "Gireh Kushod" (Persian), "untie the knots", "untie the spells"). During the development of Islam, many spells and Islamic patterns were placed on the facades of historical mausoleums and mosques, and people who could read them and decipher their meaning were given such a title in their time. In fact, the meaning of the word "gireh" is used in the meanings of "problem", "knot", "tangle", and is a type of pattern widely used in architecture and artistic crafts. The period when this saint settled in this village falls on the 12th century. The hodja, eshan and sayid strata of the population of the village of Garasha consider themselves descendants of Mevlana Muhammad Sharif, a disciple of Ahmad Yassavi.

*Parpi Ota Shrine.* Located in the Sharof Rashidov district, on the southeastern slope of Mount Morguzar. The shrine is located in the area adjacent to the villages of Parpi Ota and Yalpoghbash, and has been revered by the local population as a sacred place for several centuries. A khanaqoh, a porch, and a separate mosque building were built next to the Teshiktash.

Some sources say that the shrine was visited by Al-Ahmad ibn Abduhamid Ghazali (died c. 1122), a famous scholar of the science of oriental hadith who lived in the 12th century and one of the leaders of the Sufi order. The shrine has been known since those times, and its location is characteristic for its location on the branch of the old caravan routes passing through the mountains. It is significant that Zahiriddin Muhammad Babur also passed through this place and the “Boburnoma” mentions the “Cho‘bar oshuvi”.

*Malik Ota Shrine.* This shrine is located in the village of Sug'unboy, Ravot QFY, Sh. Rashidov district, and a new small mausoleum was built by the local population in place of the old khanaqoh by hashar. Inside the mausoleum The tombstone, which is made of marble, is decorated with various Islamic patterns and a part of the Ayat al-Kursi verse of the Surah "Baqara" of the Holy Quran is inscribed on top.

*Hazrat Zaynulobiddin Shrine.* Located in the village of Mojirum, Farish district. According to the book "Khazinat ul-Asfiyo", which is kept in the manuscript fund of the Abu Rayhan Beruni Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan, two people in the Muslim world were nicknamed Zaynulobiddin. This shrine is associated with the names of the 24th generation of Hazrat Hasan ibn Ali ibn Abu Talib, the second to receive this nickname, i.e. the 25th generation of Hazrat Ali, whose names were Alauddin and whose nicknames were Zaynulobiddin, and the 12th generation of Sayyid Ghawsul-Azam Abdulqadir Gilani.

*Sa'd ibn Abu Waqqas Shrine.* This shrine is located in the village of Awliya, Galla-Arol district. According to some literature, there are shrines with the same name in the villages of Sherabad in Surkhandarya region, Uyrat in Karmana district of Navoi region, Sintab in Nurata district, and Pitnak district of Khorezm region. Sa'd ibn Malik, ibn Uhaid, ibn Abdumannof, ibn Zuhra, ibn Kilab, ibn Murra, etc. are names attributed to Abu Waqqas. His birth year is given as 591, and his death year is 674. He is said to be one of the first Meccan Muslims to convert to Islam and one of the ten companions who were predicted paradise during his lifetime.

*Ersulaymon Bobo Shrine.* Located in the old cemetery of the village of Jo'langar, Yangiabad district. There are three graves inside the khanaqoh, one of which is the grave of Ersulaymon Baba, and the other two are the graves of his children. According to a letter written in Arabic script by Hamidulla Hafizov, a descendant of Ersulaymon Baba and currently residing in this village, this man came

from the Chelak fort of Samarkand region in the 17th century to preach Islam and serve as an imam in the village's mosque.

*Hazrati Eshon Caliph Shrine.* This place is located in the Andagin village of Farish district. The places where this person lived, the mosques where he prayed and his eternal resting place is located on the right bank of the stream flowing through the village of Andagin. The name of the saint who achieved the status of a saint was Jalaluddin ibn Abdukarim. He studied at the famous Mir Arab madrasah in Bukhara and received an excellent education.

*Khoja Bogbon Ota Shrine.* This shrine is located not far from the village of Karatash in the Farish district. It is believed that "Khoja Bogbon Ota", whose real name was Ibn Muhammad al-Vase', came to these places to spread Islamic knowledge and enlightenment.

"Kulpissar Ota" Shrine. It is located in the Chimkurgan region of the Sharaf Rashidov district, and the shrine area includes a khanaqoh, a mosque, archaeological sites, remains of fortresses and an old cemetery. The length of the tomb in the shrine is 12-13 meters, and according to the local population, the saint's head was buried in this tomb with a lock. Therefore, this area is called "Kulpissar", that is, "a locked head".

However, as the famous archaeologist M. Pardaev notes, the meaning of the word "Kulfisar" is "head lock", "main lock". The reason is that a large military force (the army of the Ghazis) was stationed in the fortress here (9th century) against the nomadic tribes who attacked the Jizzakh oasis (city) from the borders of Kyzylkum. Therefore, it means that the road to Jizzakh was closed for enemy marauders.

*Said iso Khoja Shrine.* According to legend, when the enemy was attacking from the O'ratepa area, Saidiso Khoja prayed to Allah to prevent the destruction of the population, and when he put water in his mouth and sprayed it, the fog covered the enemy and they could not find their way back. Therefore, the residents who saw

this incident revered Saidiso Khoja as a saint, and after his death, his grave was turned into a shrine.

*Changovul Ota Shrine.* A shrine located in the Changovul village of Havotog QFY, Yangiabad district. It is revered as the place where one of the famous religious leaders in the Islamic world, Khoja Yusuf Hamadoni, stepped. A two-room khanaqoh was built over the symbolic grave. *Sovruk Ota Shrine.* A shrine located in the cemetery area of the Sovruk Ota village of Gallaorol district. There is a symbolic grave on the territory of the shrine, and a mausoleum was built over it. On the right side of Sovruksay, considered sacred spring and in its left part there is a legendary stone that cures several diseases. Locals associate the shrine with Sufiyon Savriy, and the spring, which is considered sacred, with the Nurota spring.

*Saifin Ota Shrine.* A shrine located in the old cemetery area of the village of Saifin Ota, G'allaorol district. There are five large marble tombstones in the cemetery area decorated with intricate decorations and inscribed with Arabic inscriptions, as well as several small tombstones. When the inscriptions on the tombstones located on the right side of the Beshbulak stream were read by experts, they did not come across the name Saifin or Saifiddin. This indicates that Saifiddin is not the name of a person, but a nickname or title. The word Saifiddin, translated from Arabic, means "sword of religion".

*G'ubdin ota Shrine.* It is one of the sacred pilgrimage sites located in the mountainous, intermountain part of the village, on the way to Mount Gubdin in the territory of the village. The monument area includes a khanaqoh, an archaeological site, a temporary mosque building, and an old cemetery. About twenty marble tombstones of various shapes and sizes have been preserved on the old graves in the cemetery to this day. They contain verses from the Quran in the Arabic alphabet, as well as dates. The book "Jizzakh Scholars" by Muslim Ataev, an employee of the Muslim Office of Uzbekistan, published in 2014 by the "Adib" publishing house,

contains information about six scholars who have gone down in history with the Gubdin lineage.

## 2. Shrines associated with natural wonders and geographical objects

*Paymard Ota Shrine.* Located in the village of the same name in the Sharof Rashidov district, the shrine has a cave about 25 meters long, which is easy for people to walk through. It is said that this cave is the road to Mecca, and there are various legends about this among the local population. No saint has lived here in history and there is no grave. However, since the cave is considered sacred, in the traditional worldview of all Turkic peoples there is a view that the underworld is connected with mountains and caves. This indicates that these places were considered divine and sacred by the ancient Turks.

*Parpi oyim ziyoratgohi.* It is located in the Uvol village of the Zamin district. Some legends have been preserved among the local population about the shrine, the first of which is that Parpi Oyim is the sister of the saint, after whom the Parpi Ota shrine in the Parpi Ota village in the Ravot rural municipality of the Sharof Rashidov district was named. The common features of these two shrines are the naming of both and the presence of a sacred hole stone. According to the second view, given the attribution to the word "parfi", that is, taking into account that it means "white" in Arabic, "Parpi Ona" can be a symbol of "white father" just like "Parpi Ota", and "white mother" can be a symbol of "purity and innocence". Parpi Ayim was originally interpreted as a holy woman in the image of Umay, a characteristic of the shamanic religion of the ancient Turks, and was understood as a goddess who protects young children and women from evil spirits, evil forces, and demons, and brings good. Although there is no grave of the mother in Kadamjo, the local population considers the natural hole there sacred.

*Peshagor (Pishagor).* A sacred cave located on the northern slope of Morguzar, in the western part of the Turkestan Range, on the left side of the Dolana brook in the village of Pishagor, Zamin district. Regarding the etymology of the

word Pishagor, it should be noted that Peshagor may mean “five streams” (five ditches), but local informants note that “Pishagor” means “a village in front of (at the foot) of the cave” in the form of “Peshigor - a village in front of (at the foot) of the cave”. Since this cave is considered sacred, locals perform various rituals here. Beshbulak Shrine. This shrine, located in the upper part of the village of Pishagor in the Zamin district, surrounded by archaeological sites, is famous for its healing springs. There are legends that there was a cave-chillakhona on the hill here. Now this chillakhona is completely buried. Since the water of these five springs is considered a cure for scabies, chickenpox, cough, and jaundice, the holy Beshbulak is visited mainly in the summer and autumn months as the abode of the ancestors.

*Teshiktash shrine.* In the village of Pastki Sarmich, Sarmich district, Yangibod district, Teshiktashbobo shrine is located. There are 2 large and 1 small teshiktash stones in the shrine. Local residents built a small, simple khanaqoh measuring 4x6 sq. meters. According to legends, this shrine is attributed to a saint who disappeared among the teshiktash stones and is considered sacred.

*Ko'k To'nli shrine.* Located in the Zamin district, an ancient resin tree grows opposite the cemetery. Local residents believe that this tree was the first tree planted by Kok Tonli Ota. Also, the oasis, Uch kyz (three stones) in the Ravot village area of Sharof Rashidov district, the three sacred trees of the Qatron tree, the Teshikh stone in Andagin village of Forish district, the Kiz uchgan rock in Sayyod village, Sogaltash in Kultepa village of Zamin district, Qatron ota in Jaloyir village, Boboyong'oq, and Terakli ota in Bakhmal district are also sanctified by the local population.

### 3. Shrines related to the cult of animals and their sanctification

*Bo'tatosh vali shrine.* A shrine located in the Yukorisarmich village of Yangibod district. There is a stone in the shrine that is considered sacred among the local population, reminiscent of a camel's baby, that is, a botalog. The stone is surrounded by a simple 3x3 sq. meter porched khanaqoh. Locals come to this shrine

to light a cotton-lined lamp and to be free from epilepsy and demonic possession, and as a charitable donation, they leave a white cloth they brought with them on the stone.

*Novka Ota Shrine.* It is located near the old cemetery of Novka in the village of Bakhmal district. The name “Novka Ota” is more likely associated with the Arabic word “Naq’atun” – meaning “camel”. Until the 1970s, there was a place called “Norchokdi” in the village. Until recently, there was a small hill near this place, and the villagers call this hill “the place where the woman in the legend strangled her camel and the remains of the camel.” It is significant that in the area of the ancient cemetery adjacent to the Novka Ota shrine, stone clocks dating back to the beginning of our era have been preserved to this day, that there was a small town here, and that there was a Zoroastrian temple there, and that various rituals and ceremonies were held there.

*Qoplon Ota Shrine.* Located in the Zamin district. According to legend, a leopard attacked a young man who was taking a ram to the market, snatched the ram from his hands, and the young man survived thanks to the miracle of the saintly father. The fact that the young man was saved from the leopard's attack and disappeared among the stones is called Qoplon Ota, and this is an indication of the sacredness of this place. Every year on Navruz, local residents slaughter a sheep, rooster, or other animals and perform a sacrifice ceremony to the spirit of Qoplon Ota.

*Khoroz Ota Shrine.* A shrine located in the upper part of the Turkman village of the Zamin district. Here, local residents perform sacrifices to the spirit of a saintly person, namely Khoroz Ota, and family ceremonies are held. So, as noted above, among the sacred places of pilgrimage in the oasis, the majority are those that have reached the level of sainthood and are recognized as the owners of omens. After all, if they are protected by the people and are considered to have divine power, then this

is evidence that the places formed on the basis of natural wonders and animal cults played an important role in the lifestyle of the population.

In conclusion, the sacred places and pilgrimage sites in the Jizzakh region are important sources reflecting the historical, religious and ethnographic development of the region. Their scientific study is of great importance in understanding folk beliefs and intangible cultural heritage. The results of the study will serve as a scientific basis for the preservation and systematic study of regional cultural heritage in the future.

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