

**THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MUG PODSHO ARCHAEOLOGICAL MOUND IN
THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN THE AVVAL–LOGON
AREA**

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Annotation: This article is devoted to the study of the history of the Mug podsho archaeological mound located in the Fergana district. The reason is that this archaeological monument has not yet been sufficiently studied. This aspect determines its high scientific significance. In addition, the article analyzes the tourism potential and opportunities of the Avval–Logon area based on the study of this monument. It is also shown that, according to the results of the research, the Mug podsho archaeological mound is an important object for the development of domestic sustainable tourism in the region, as well as for the establishment of an open-air museum.

Keywords: archaeological monument, sustainable tourism, open-air museum, rural tourism, Fergana Valley, tourist route, historical and ecological direction, integrated development.

Introduction. Today, tourism is undoubtedly one of the sectors that significantly contributes to the economic growth of many countries around the world. Numerous states rely heavily on tourism as a major source of economic development and revenue generation. In this regard, extensive and systematic efforts are also being undertaken in Uzbekistan.

In particular, the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan adopted several important decrees concerning the development of tourism, including the Decree “On Measures for the Further Development of Domestic and Pilgrimage Tourism in the Republic of Uzbekistan” dated February 9, 2021, as well as the Decree “On Measures to Increase the Flow of Tourists and Rapidly Expand the Scope of Tourism Services in 2025–2026 to Enhance the Role and Significance of Tourism in the Economy.” These decrees emphasize the registration of cultural heritage sites with high tourism potential, the priority restoration of cultural heritage monuments included in pilgrimage tourism routes during 2021–2025, and the further development of tourism as a strategically important sector of the national economy. This clearly demonstrates that tourism is one of the most profitable industries today and occupies a significant share in the national economy.

Not only international but also domestic tourism has become increasingly relevant and important. One of the key factors in developing domestic tourism and attracting foreign visitors is the presence of archaeological monuments. Presenting these monuments as part of the nation’s cultural wealth is of great importance. They represent a living history that speaks of a distant and glorious past. In this context, Mug Podsho Hill attracts particular attention as an archaeological site possessing substantial scientific and tourism potential for the development of sustainable domestic tourism.

No archaeological research has been conducted at this site, popularly known as “Mug Podsho,” located in Fergana District, for more than thirty years. Considering this situation, the present study aims to investigate the history of the hill, promote its public recognition, and facilitate the development of a new tourism route. Furthermore, the study analyzes the role of Mug Podsho Hill within the tourism system, examines its historical significance, and explores its

prospects for becoming a sustainable domestic tourism destination through analytical findings and practical recommendations.

Literature Review and Methodology. At present, public interest in studying cultural heritage sites and visiting sacred places has been steadily increasing. As noted by researchers, “it is advisable to make extensive use of historical information about cities in promoting historical and cultural heritage. A number of ancient cities have not been included in the list of sites of historical and tourism significance. Their inclusion could create broad opportunities for the further development of tourism.”

Mug Podsho Hill can be regarded as one such site. The importance of tourism in preserving these monuments and transmitting them to future generations is becoming increasingly evident. While tourism contributes economic benefits to the state, archaeological monuments provide historical and scientific knowledge, spiritual and educational enrichment, aesthetic enjoyment, intellectual development, and a deeper understanding of culture.

Moreover, Mug Podsho Hill is significant because it is a visible archaeological site that can be observed and studied directly without requiring extensive excavations or many years of archaeological exposure.

There are several similar archaeological mounds throughout the Fergana Valley, some of which are currently being transformed into open-air museums. This development is highly encouraging. Numerous scholars have conducted research emphasizing the necessity of studying and preserving cultural heritage and presenting history to the public. Particularly noteworthy are the archaeological investigations carried out at Dalvarzin (Y.A.Zadneprovsky and B.Kh.Matboboev), Eylaton (B. Latinin, T.Oboldueva, S.Qudratov), Mingtepa (A.N. Bernshtam, Y.A.Zadneprovsky, B.Kh.Matboboev), Axsikent (A.N.Bernshtam, Y.Chulanov, I.Akhrorov, A.Anarboyev), Balandtepa, Munchoqtepa (A.N.Bernshtam, B.Kh.Matboboev), and Quva (Y.A.Zadneprovsky, V.A.Bulatova, G.P.Ivanov, T.Sh. Shirinov, B.Kh.Matboboev).

The findings obtained from these archaeological investigations constitute valuable sources for understanding the history of these periods. Furthermore, the studies conducted by archaeologists have provided important new materials for analyzing the emergence and developmental stages of numerous cities throughout the Fergana Valley.

This research employed several scientific and methodological approaches. First, a historical-analytical method was applied to examine cultural heritage sites, particularly archaeological mounds, and to evaluate the necessity of transforming them into open-air museums while ensuring the preservation of discovered artifacts. The study also analyzed the close relationship between tourism and cultural heritage sites and assessed their significance for society and the state.

A systematic approach was used to investigate the role of open-air museums in preserving cultural heritage and studying history, as well as the importance of tourism within this framework. Through analysis and synthesis, various scholarly sources and literary works were reviewed and generalized, allowing scientific conclusions to be drawn regarding the research problem.

Results and Discussion. As is well known from history, the Fergana Valley is distinguished by its rich historical layers and numerous archaeological monuments. Although Mug Podsho Hill, located in the Avval–Logon area of Fergana District, has not yet been sufficiently studied, it attracts considerable attention as a site with significant scientific and tourism potential. What does its history reveal to us? Can the study of this site contribute to the development of tourism? Can it play a substantial role in the formation of the Avval–Logon tourism route? These questions guide our examination of the history of this archaeological monument.

Today, the archaeological site known as Mug Podshohtepa is located within the territory of the *Mash'al* Citizens' Assembly in Fergana District and dates back to the 1st–6th centuries CE.

Although this region has not yet gained widespread recognition, it is known among the residents of Fergana Province for its favorable natural and climatic conditions, abundant water resources, and ecologically clean environment. The passage of the Isfayram Stream through or near the Avval–Logon area has historically served as an important source of irrigation and livelihood in the Fergana Valley. Historical evidence demonstrates that rivers, lakes, and streams have always played a crucial role in the emergence and development of human civilizations.

The Mug Podshohtepa archaeological site is situated approximately 15–18 kilometers from the city of Fergana and about 2 kilometers to the left of the Fergana–Logon road. This ancient settlement was first identified by the artist L.G.Panchenko.

According to available sources, “the area of the Mug Podsho settlement covers five hectares and is surrounded by defensive walls” [4:249]. Unfortunately, the monument has not been well preserved. A field survey of the site and a comparison with descriptions found in scholarly literature reveal that natural processes and environmental factors have transformed many parts of the mound into irregular formations. Nevertheless, the remains still evoke vivid images of the past.

Indeed, as archaeologists and historians who have visited the site have noted, one can almost physically feel the presence of history there. Such an experience can only be fully appreciated through direct observation. Seeing the monument with one's own eyes creates a powerful emotional connection, allowing historical imagination to become more vivid and meaningful.

The fortress walls surrounding the site undoubtedly once served as defensive structures against enemy attacks. One may imagine the inhabitants standing upon these walls, defending their freedom, independence, and homeland against invaders. Today, remnants of the northern wall, constructed of mudbrick and pakhsa (rammed earth), have survived. The wall appears to have contained curved rectangular bastions, and its considerable thickness remains clearly visible.

According to local oral traditions recalled by the respected village elder and community leader, Abduvali Nizomov, horse-drawn carts once moved along the tops of these massive walls. Approximately twenty to thirty years ago, portions of the site began to be occupied and utilized by local residents. Examination of the northern section of the monument also reveals the remains of defensive towers.

Each section of the hill presents visitors with different historical images and interpretations. Particularly impressive is a mound approximately ten meters high located in the northern part of the site, where remains of pakhsa and mudbrick structures are visible on all sides. Similar construction techniques have been observed at the archaeological site of Mingtepa in Marhamat District, which predates Mugtepa. At present, however, the monument has been partially destroyed. Nevertheless, it remains an important archaeological site and represents a unique fortress ruin, ranking after the major monuments of Quva and Oqtepa in terms of significance within Fergana Province.

This hill appears to have withstood the passage of centuries much like the pyramids of Egypt. As noted earlier, the remains of pakhsa and mudbrick structures on its northern side have survived to the present day. Archaeological studies indicate that “until relatively recent times, most residential buildings were constructed of pakhsa or mudbrick. Archaeologists estimate the average lifespan of such structures to be approximately 40–50 years. Without restoration after this period, even the most magnificent buildings gradually deteriorate” [5:5].

This observation helps explain why many fortresses and cities throughout history either underwent repeated reconstruction following natural disasters or military invasions, or eventually disappeared altogether. Over time, once-grand palaces and monumental structures that were neglected and left without maintenance often transformed into deserted mounds.

Mug Podsho Hill may be regarded as one such example. Nevertheless, it is encouraging that the monument has not completely disappeared and continues to survive despite the absence of systematic preservation measures. Unfortunately, the defensive walls of the inner fortress and the remains of the central structure have suffered extensive damage and continue to deteriorate due to natural factors.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the history of this monument constitutes a valuable source of knowledge for future generations. Its greatest significance lies in the opportunity it provides to observe, understand, and, most importantly, experience history directly.

According to published sources, the monument was first investigated in 1951 by the Pamir–Fergana Archaeological-Ethnographic Expedition. Subsequently, in 1973, research was conducted by the Fergana Archaeological Group of the State Hermitage Museum. Information provided by the Fergana Regional Department for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Sites indicates that additional investigations were carried out in 2013 by an expedition of the Institute of Archaeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan and in 2016 by an expedition from Fergana State University led by Z.Rahmonov.

However, these studies cannot be considered sufficient. The full historical significance and potential of the monument have yet to be comprehensively revealed. Moreover, insufficient attention has been paid not only to the archaeological site itself but also to the unique natural landscapes, favorable climate, scenic environment, exceptionally clean air, and traditional lifestyle of the people living in the Avval–Logon area.

These observations indicate that Avval–Logon possesses favorable conditions for tourism development. However, the available tourism resources remain inadequately systematized and the local tourism infrastructure remains underdeveloped. Incorporating the monument into the Avval–Logon tourism route could facilitate the creation of a new historical and ecological tourism destination, thereby increasing visitor numbers and contributing to the comprehensive development of the region.

At present, the Cultural Heritage Department of Fergana Province is developing a project proposal to surround the site with a 3D protective fence, install LED lighting, and equip the area with surveillance cameras. These measures would help prevent future anthropogenic impacts that could damage the archaeological monument.

Today, many local residents continue to engage in traditional handicrafts, including carpet weaving, embroidery, and shoemaking, while agriculture and livestock breeding have historically been the dominant occupations. Transforming the site into an open-air museum would undoubtedly create new opportunities for local communities. Furthermore, such a transformation represents one of the most effective means of restoring historical memory, preserving cultural heritage, and ensuring the sustainable utilization of the monument.

As a medieval archaeological site, Mug Podsho Hill has considerable potential to contribute to the study of the historical development of the region. Its morphological characteristics suggest the existence of an ancient settlement or defensive structure. Therefore, both the monument and the surrounding area possess significant value as tourism resources. Integrating the site into regional tourism routes and establishing an open-air museum could become a major catalyst for local development. Such initiatives would contribute to the economic and social advancement of the Avval–Logon area. Future efforts should focus on conducting more extensive archaeological

investigations and developing scientifically grounded tourism projects aimed at preserving and promoting this unique cultural heritage site.

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