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Bakhtiyor Navruz-Zoda  
*Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan*, bnzoda@mail.ru

Zebiniso Navruz-Zoda  
znzoda@mail.ru

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The Destination Marketing Development of Religious Tourism in Uzbekistan

Bakhtiyor Navruz-Zoda & Zebiniso Navruz-zoda
Bukhara State University, Uzbekistan.
bnzoda@mail.ru, znzoda@mail.ru

Uzbekistan has great potential to develop pilgrimage tourism based on the spiritual culture of the Islamic religion. Destination marketing development of religious tourism, based on Sufism is an innovative direction for the organisation of pilgrimage tourism. In this paper, the dual nature of this kind of religious tourism is revealed to comprise: first a pilgrimage nature, that consists of the Sufi pilgrimage to Sufi shrines to perform ritual and; secondly a religious-cognitive nature, whereby, a major segment of travellers can be Muslim, non-Sufis and scientists, researchers, teachers, tutors and other categories of tourists who are interested in the learning of Sufism.

For the stable development of inbound international religious tourism, we have applied a destination marketing methodology, based on a combination of the marketing concept and theory of regional management. In the paper, applying the concept of destination marketing to religious tourism along with the traditional concept of 'holy places', the 'religious destination' concept is introduced along with the creation of a new, Sufi-pilgrimage and religious-cognitive destination - ‘The Homeland of Sufi Sultan - Baha-ud-Din Naqshband’ (acronym: SP&RCD ‘Sufi Hajj’).

The marketing tools for this destination are being developed. Depending on the purpose of travel to Sufi shrines, a tailored version of the tour program is recommended. In addition, market segmentation of the SP&RCD ‘Sufi Hajj’ is implemented according to travel purposes, conviction, geographical basis and gender. In the report, the organisational structure of a new intermediary-marketing company ‘SufiPilgrimDestination, which is designed to control the flow of foreign pilgrims to Uzbekistan, is substantiated. As a brand for this destination, an image is selected, which includes a picture of the Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Ensemble in the centre (this site is located in the suburb of Bukhara); with the inscription: ‘Travel to the Holy Bukhara – Motherland of Sufi Sultan Baha-ud-Din Naqshband’.

Key Words: religious tourism, Sufism, Baha-ud-Din Naqshband, destination marketing, intermediary-marketing company.

Introduction

In terms of overcoming the impacts of the global financial-economic crisis, an important social-economical problem is to keep and create new work places to tackle unemployment. This problem can be mitigated somewhat, through diversification of tourism activities. Innovative and effective diversification can arise from the development of religious tourism, which is based on Sufi interests. In recent years, especially among young people and intellectuals in European countries, Islam has spread largely due to Sufism.

Sufism is a Muslim religious and philosophical doctrine that developed in the Arab countries in the VIII century. The reason for the development of Sufism was the state of social conditions in Muslim countries. Sufism contains elements of the New Doctrine of Plato (Platonic love), and according to Sufism, there are 4 stages: ‘shariat, tariqat’, ‘marifat’ and ‘haqiqat’ that lead a preson to spiritual perfection. In order to achieve these goals, Sufis have to undertake special meditative exercises (so-called ‘zikr’).

The peculiarity of Sufism is its prevalence around the world through its orders and the existence of unique rules of conduct in each of the orders. The Sufi order ‘Naqshbandiya’ has the greatest impact and has had particular influence on the territory of modern Uzbekistan. The founder of this order is Baha-ud-Din Naqshband. The main motto of Naqshbandiya is ‘Heart in love (with God), hands at work’, which calls Sufis to be saints in the process of labour (Muhammad Narshakhii, 2008).

Sufism became widespread in the Middle East, in northern India, south-west China, and the Caucasus, but for the purpose of this paper we consider its...
development in Maverennahr, especially in the territory of Uzbekistan. Sufism was widely practiced in the period of feudal wars in the second half of the 9th century and the beginning of the X century. During the XIII-XIV centuries, Baha-ud-Din Naqshband’s Sufi order of ‘Naqshbandi’ was founded in the Noble Bukhara (city in Uzbekistan). The teaching of the Naqshbandia fraternity is based on 11 ethical principles and since the XV century, this brotherhood of Naqshbandia has become one of the most widespread Sufi orders in the world. In Uzbekistan, in the years since independence, the monument of saint Sufi - Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi has been restored. Muslim Sufis make pilgrimage to this holy place and according to their faith, visiting his grave three times replaces the Hajj to Mecca and Medina (Navruz-Zova, 2005).

**Sufism - Scientific Basis of Islam**

Sufism is a distinctive a phenomenon that arose within Islam, thereby making it a subculture of Arab-Muslim culture. Sufism is defined as a mystical-ascetic form of Islam, its origin is explained by historical changes in the economic, political and spiritual situation of Muslims after the four righteous caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Usman and Ali Abu Talib. Following these caliphs in the Muslim community (umma) a sharp polarisation occurred: at one pole of society enormous wealth and luxury was accumulated, on the other - poverty and wretchedness. Many Muslim rulers, in spite of numerous prohibitions of the Koran and the Sunnah subjected their followers to robbery, rape and abuse. Most often, the role of senior Muslim clergy was limited to please the whims of those in power. Ordinary Muslims, the poor God-fearing people, often found neither justice nor protection from the rulers and the official clergy. In addition, the power struggle in the Muslim world, between the different clans often reached horrific levels. Infighting between Sunni and Shia, the Umayyad and the Abbasids, the frequent uprisings of Muslims against individual rulers, ultimately led to the collapse of the empire of the Arab caliphate and the emergence of tiny states, subsequently conquered by the Mongols and the Seljuk Turks.

According to the majority of Islamists, the term ‘Sufism’ (Arabic name - tasavvuf) comes from the word ‘sufl’, which means ‘wool’. The first Sufis, emphasising their ascetic life, wore a rough woollen patched rag (hirk). A synonym for ‘Sufism’ is the term ‘Tariq’, which means ‘path’ in Arabic. Tariqat - a system of spiritual and mystical preparation of the believer, who has chosen the path leading to the Truth (God). The first source, which provides theoretical information about Sufism, is a book by Bukharin scholar Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Abu Iskhokov Ibrokhim al Bukhori al Kalobody (d.991 y.) called Al-Taarruf Mazhabi bi-tasavvuf (‘Introduction to the Sufi way’ tasvuf). In it, Sufism is defined as: the science of the state - ‘Ilmi xol’; esoterism or, the inner world science - ‘Ilmi botin’; the science of indication - ‘Ilmi ishora’, thus, it is differentiated from exoterism - the science of external events - ‘Ilmi zohir’.

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Fig.1. Philosophy of Sufism

- **Shariah**
- **Marifa**
- **Haqqa**
- **Tariqah**
- **Sufism**
Sufism is seen to be a form of ‘world wisdom’, it ‘is a religious philosophy of love, harmony and beauty’ (Inayat-khan, 1914:30). Its purpose is to reveal the spirit of humanity until the beauty of the universe leads one to achieve perfection and become, so far as possible, the expression of divine harmony. ‘The essence of Sufism is the Truth. [The d]efinition of Sufism is the knowledge of Truth’ (Nurbaxsh, 1993:7). Thereby, Sufism is a mystical trend in Islam that promotes contact with Allah.

How is this connection made? To communicate with God, according to the teachings of Sufism, a person should seek personal spiritual perfection, which involves four stages (See Figure 1):

1) **Shariah** (translates as exoteric path) strict compliance with the laws of Islam;
2) **Tariqah** (translates as esoteric path) the period of probation under an authoritarian Sheikh;
3) **Haqiqa** (translates as mystical truth) complete identification of the knower of the deity;
4) **Marifa** (translates as final mystical knowledge, \textit{unio mystica}) knowledge not only by the mind, but by the heart and unity of the universe in God (the world - is an emanation of God), the equality of all religions (the same rays of one sun), the relativity of good and evil.

Al-Faraj gives various definitions of Sufism (Inayat-khan, 1914). Here are some of them: Sufism is the adoption of noble manners; Sufism is a competition in pious deeds, and an allowance of the most senior mores by the person; Sufism - the observance of fidelity and renunciation of callousness. Naturally, this is not all the definitions of Sufism, but the most characteristic ones. In his work, al-Derbendi (Magomedov, Sultanmagomedov and Karimov, 2007) provides highly instructive moral and philosophical maxims. Some of them are as follows:

1. Great God closes the doors of luck to some of his slaves in one of five causes: receiving knowledge, but not acting on it; enjoyed prosperity, accompanied by good people, but not following their examples; committing sins, but not repenting: burying the dead, but not learning a lesson from it; witnessing heritage, but not preparing for the afterlife;
2. Science is perceived only by learning, gentleness is achieved only by patience; little benefit is derived by those who have not studied, yet have learned from those who do not seek to be gentle and patient;
3. Refusing envy will eliminate grief; renouncing sweet delight will get rid of sins;
4. Respect for people should be expressed in three forms: love the person as God loves them; pray for them to ask for forgiveness of their sins; help them to repent their sins;
5. Respect for parents is also expressed in three formulas: respect and give them compliments; take their dependents to supply them with all their needs; do not raise a voice to them.

In short, the treatise of al-Derbendi is a treasury of moral-philosophical and Sufi wisdom, a source for understanding the Muslim world of the XI century.

In Sufism, there are 12 main (parent) tariqats (Navruz-Zova, 2005): rifaiya, yasaviya, shizaliya, suhravardiya, chishtiya, kubraviya, badaviya, kadiiya, mauaviya, bektashiya, halvatiya, and nakshbandiy’a. The names of these tariqats are derived from the names of their founders. Some of them gave rise to many branches, transformed into a structured Sufi Association (brotherhood), with their charter, led by mentors (murids, peers, sheikhs). Members of the Sufi brotherhood are called murids, who by Sufi statute must be in constant communication with their spiritual mentor.

According to Western orientalist Trimingem, the number of Sufi orders, including older systems and those now functioning, exceeds six hundred. These are united in dozens of different ‘chains’ or communities, and fraternities - the basic orders were often large and sophisticated organisations, each with their own leader and special internal rules. Some of the orders hold high-profile rites (dzhahriya), others are silent and contemplative (hufiya).

Sufism has spread worldwide through their orders and the internal organisation of each order, is characterised by a strict spiritual hierarchy. In each chapter of the order is a teacher (Sheikh, pir), who is the bearer of spiritual power (barracks), this passes from one chapter to another by means of emanations from the founder of the order, who is revered as a saint. Each order has its own rules of conduct such as:

1. A person’s clothing should be kept clean and should always be tidy;
2. Do not sit and gossip at the mosque, as well as in other holy places;
3. The first step should be, all together to read a prayer;

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2. Science is perceived only by learning, gentleness is achieved only by patience; little benefit is derived by those who have not studied, yet have learned from those who do not seek to be gentle and patient;
4. One must pray repeatedly during the night;
5. At dawn, one should ask forgiveness from God;
6. In the morning, one should read the Koran, as much as possible and not talk until sunrise;
7. Between the evening and night, prayers should be addressed by repeating the obligatory prayers;
8. One should assist the poor and all, who need it, as well as all those who join the community;
9. One must not eat food without each other;
10. One should not be absent without asking each other's permission;
11. Leisure time should be devoted to one of three classes - the study of theology, religious exercises or comfort.

**Great Hadja Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi** - founder of the ‘Naqshbandiya’ Sufi Order

At different times representatives of various Sufi orders have operated in the territory of modern Uzbekistan (Akhimushin, 1997). However, the most influential impact was provided by the ‘Naqshbandiya’ Sufi order. The founder of this order is Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi, also known as Khodjai Buzurg and Shahi Naqshbandi. Naqshbandiya motto is:

*Dil ba yor, das ba kor.*

Translated from Farsi, this means: ‘heart in love (with God), hands at work’.

In other words, one should be holy but at the same time one must work. Starting in the XV century, the brotherhood of Nakshbandiya became one of the most widespread Sufi orders in the world.

Baha-ud-Din was born in 1318 to the family of a tajik-craftsman in the village of Qasr-Hinduwan (Castle of the Hindus), which was later renamed the Qasr-i Arifan (castle, that had learned the divine truth), 10km from Bukhara city; he died in 1389 and was buried in his native village, which later became a place of pilgrimage. He spent practically all of his life in Bukhara, or close to it. Twice he made hajj.

Nicknamed ‘Naqshbandi’ (meaning minter) his interest for Sufism came from his grandfather. His first teacher was Sheikh Muhammad Babayi Samasi, who died in 1340; his teacher sent him to the Amir Sheikh Sayyid Kulaly, who dedicated him to the hodzhagan society of dervishes. The spiritual initiation (ruhaniya) of Baha-ud-Din was received from Abdulhalik al-Gijduvani, whom he saw in his dream and who actually sent him to the Amir Kulaly. The history of his tariqat began with Abu Yusuf Ya'qub al-Hamadani (d.1140), however, Abdulhalik al Gijduvani is regarded as the creator of the new practice, which has become characteristic of his teaching. Unlike others, this system of Sufism greatly encouraged the development of a quiet, silent zikr and in addition, developed eight underlying rules, under which this system is formed. Abdulhalik al Gijduvani studied the retention of breath from al Khizr, and this was adopted in this particular form of Tariq. Al-Gijduvani, Hajj Abd al-Khaliq Abd al-Jamil is the founder of the independent school of Central Asian Sufism, known as hodjagan, the doctrine of which, was later fully accepted by the founder of the brotherhood of Nakshbandi.

The basis of Naqshbandi tariqat is the knowledge of God, the desire to meet him and the remembrance of Allah, hidden in the heart. Therefore Naqshbandi said:

*Murid is one whose hidden is fighting, but clear is in the world.*

That is, the murid leads the war with their own temptation, working to clean the heart from doubts and, at the same time, does not let others know their condition. If a murid talks about Maqams, for which he wasn’t raised, and which he doesn’t have, that means Allah did not lead him to this maqam, and deprives him of this level. Ahlyullah must patiently endure all hardships and adversities, by their approach to God. There is no vali, who is not looking to Almighty Allah, irrespective of whether the vali knows about it or not. Aside from that, all who meet with the vali, receive dignity from them. The following words belong to Naqshbandi:

*Our path to God is not through asceticism, asceticism brings glory and death hides behind the glory. Good deeds are found among the people.*

Naqshbandi was an advocate of simplicity and was unassuming about asceticism, rejecting false rites and piety. He formulated 11 rules of meditation (mushahid) and extended ‘silent zikr’ with a certain method of breathing. He had a very negative attitude towards false rituals, vagrancy, public vigils with music, dancing and loud zikr. He also regarded as useless, the principles of silsilat al-Baraka, when grace is transmitted personally by sheikhs via transmission line from the founder. According to him, grace is granted directly by God, but not from the sheikh, or patron.
His principles were - spiritual purity, renunciation of luxury and greed, simplicity, denial of contact with the authorities, seclusion in the cloister and in narrow circle. In addition the Sufi must strictly follow the Sunnah and fulfil all requirements of Shariah. Naqshbandiya is a tarikat that follows the belief of silent zikr. Naqshbandi zikr, which Sufis perform together, is called ‘xatmi xadjagan’.

Baha-ud-Din in teaching nakshbandi, adopted 4 principles-based on the guidance of Yusuf Hamadanani (1050-1142):

‘xush dar dam’ (conscious breathing);
‘nazar bar kadam’ (monitor steps);
‘safar dar vatan’ (voyage through the homeland) and;
‘hilvat dar anjuman’ (loneliness in humans).

He also established four principles basing on the teachings of Abdulholik Gijduvani

‘yodkard’ (remembrance);
‘bozgasht’ (return);
‘nigohdosht’ (vigilance, conservation) and;
‘yoddosht’ (Reminiscence).

In addition to these eight principles, Baha-ud-Din founded the following three principles:

‘vukufi zamani’ (a pause for self-control). Permanent self-monitoring of time: if righteous, one must thank God, but if not, they should ask for forgiveness;

‘vukufi adadi’ (pause for an account). Repeating individual zikr should be undertaken in strict accordance with the prescribed number of repetitions and the established ritual;

‘vukufi qalbi’ (pause for the heart). Making a mental representation of the heart with the name of Allah, to feel that in heart, there is nothing but Allah.

Hazrat Baha-ud-Din wrote a number of texts: *Hayotnoma* (Book of Life), *Dalil-ul-ashikin* (Evidence of lovers), *Al Avrod* (cover). Among the many Naqshbandi disciples and successors of the spiritual tradition of Hazrat Baha-ud-Din the best known are: Hazrat Alauddin Attar, Hadja Porso Bukhari, Mavlana Muhammad, Hadja Musafir Khorezmi and others. The books of Hadja Porso *Makomati Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi*, and *Alfosi Quds*, and a treatise of Muhammad Baqir entitled *Makomati Hadja Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi* (Steps of the Sufi path) were written about Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi. Jami, Navoi, Ali Safi, Makhdumi Azam, Hadja Akhror and other authors have also written about Hazrat Baha-ud-Din with great reverence. The son in law of Baha-ud-Din was Hazrat Alauddin Attar, and his grandson was Hassan Attar. The work of Hazrat Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi - *Al-Avrod*, is considered to be one of the most valuable sources of Islamic thought, and is of great value in the education of young people in the quest for perfection.

The order has provided a great impact on both the rulers and the general population in Uzbekistan. Members of this fraternity include the eminent Persian poet Jami (1414-1492) and the great Uzbek poet Alisher Navoi (1441-1501).

At the burial place of Hazrat Baha-ud-din, the ruler of Bukhara, Abdulazizkhan, in 1544, built a dahma (mausoleum) and a hanaka (monastery of dervishes and pilgrims). In the XVIII century, the mother of the ruler Abulfayzhan erected a mosque with two ayvans (terraces), and in the nineteenth century Kushbegi Hakim Amir Nasrullah built another mosque. The Minaret (tower) was built in 1720. Sakkohana is a construction of the twentieth century for storing clean drinking water.

After his death, Naqshband was recognised as a saint and the patron of Bukhara, in the vicinity of which he had spent all his life. Above his grave, in 1544, there was erected a mausoleum, which became a place of pilgrimage for Central Asian Muslims, containing the Tombs of the seven ‘sacred visage’ - Abdulhalik al Gijduvani (1103-1120); Arif Rivyari (d.1259); Mahmud Andjir Fagnavi (d.1245 or 1272); Azizan Ali al Ramitani (d.1321); Muhammad Bobo Samosi (d.1354), Amir Said Kulal al-Bukhari (d.1371); in addition to Muhammad Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi. This is now a place of pilgrimage for many Muslims and is known by the name ‘Seven Pirs’ (Seven Saints). It is believed that visiting the mausoleum of Baha-ud-Din Naqshband three times is equal to one visit to the shrines of Mecca and Medina.
Destination Model of Marketing

Development of Religious Tourism

Destination Marketing - is an applied regional method and organisational form of management of tourism demand. Its task is to determine the time and place of demand for the destination, the volume formation and structure of demand for travel services of destination. The destination marketing model, according to our opinion, may be based on two theoretical assumptions: First, the theory of marketing associated with the formation and development of demand. Second, the theory of regional management associated with the creation and management of a regional commodity proposal. As a result of integration of destination demand and regional supply, the process of converting tourist attractions into a tourist destination occurs. Thus, by saying tourist destination, we refer to ‘the tourist centre (region), where the goal of travel is realised’ (Fig. 2).

In Soviet times (1920-1991) due to militant atheism, the shrine was in a state of desolation, and gradually turned into ruins. After the independence of Uzbekistan, for the 675th anniversary of Baha-ud-Din Naqshband in 1993, the shrine was restored. Big improvement works were done in 2003. The gates to Dilovar were restored. On the southern side of the memorial complex a darvazahana (entrance space), was built with a high canopy. On the eastern and western sides of the tomb of Hazrat Baha-ud-Din, richly decorated ayvan - terraces were recreated according to ancient designs. The extensive garden was combined into a single entity composing of the sacred burial place of Hazrat Baha-ud-Din and burial of his righteous mother. In the memorial Dahmai Shohon (necropolis of the rulers) was restored - which contains the graves of the rulers of the Timurid, Sheibanid, and Ashtarkhanid dynasties.

Fig.2. Methodological basis of Destination Model of Marketing

Fig.3. Tools of Destination Marketing
Therefore, the destination is labelled as a ‘Sufi hajj’ a Sufi-pilgrimage, which is both religious and cognitive.

An important tool for marketing activities is market knowledge. Securing this knowledge involves a multi-stage process: comprehensive market research, market segmentation and product positioning in the market.

First of all, it is important to determine the size of the market for Sufi-pilgrimage and a religious-cognitive ‘Sufi hajj’. Each year more than 2 million Muslims perform the hajj ritual in Mecca and Medina at a fixed time. Many of them, with sufficient and accurate marketing information and the overlay of service to them at any convenient time of year could make a ‘Sufi Hajj’ in Tashkent, Samarqand and Bukhara. The market capacity of SP&RCD ‘Sufi Hajj’ in a year may amount to more than 500 thousand people.

**Segmentation**

It is recommended to distinguish two categories of Muslim visitor according to conviction:

1. *Mumins*, that is, religious people, who are fully obeying the five rules of Islam and trying to live according to sharia laws;

2. *Muslims*, that is, the categories of Muslims, who, for whatever reason (childhood, sickness, employment, business) are not fully complying with these rules of Islam, but mentally confide in God and consider themselves as Muslims.

The overall market can be segmented by purpose of travel into 5 groups:

1) *Muslim-Sufis*, whose goal of travel is the realisation of Sufi rituals in Sufi shrines;

2) *Muslim-non-Sufis*, whose goal of travel is visiting Sufi shrines as part of religious ceremonies;

3) *Representatives of other religions*, whose purpose of travel is visiting Sufi shrines as part of religious ceremonies;

4) *Scientists, intellectuals, researchers, educators*, visiting Sufi shrines in order to study the philosophy of Sufism;

5) *Other categories of tourists*, visiting these places inside other types of tourism.

On a geographical basis, there can be distinguished domestic and foreign pilgrims. According to gender they can be divided: the pilgrim-man and pilgrim-woman. Other segmentation factors could include ace, socio-economic factors, etc.
Formation of a product policy for marketing of this destination connected with the creation of a pilgrimage product, can meet the needs of Sufi pilgrims. By identifying this, pilgrimage a product is formed. From this Sufi tour a range of services would develop, including transport, accommodation, catering, holy places, worship spaces and other related facilities to serve pilgrimage. Given the characteristics of pilgrimage demand and its ability for qualitative satisfaction, we proposed this the program ‘Sufi Tour’ in SP&RCD ‘Sufi Hajj’ (for full details of the ‘Tour’ see Appendix A).

Conclusion

Sufism is a way of life, which allows the person to realise his / her full potential, given to us by God (Nature) and is founded on the ideological basis of Islam. Baha-ud-Din Naqshband is now recognised as the Sultan of Sufism. A triple visit to his mausoleum is equalled to one visit to the shrines of Mecca and Medina - the ‘Great Hajj’. This may be an important motivational tool for attracting tourists to the Sufi pilgrimage and religious-cognitive destination ‘Homeland of Sufi Sultan – Baha-ud-Din Naqshband’. The application of a destination marketing model in the field of religious tourism based on the Sufi interests allows for the implementation of product diversification of tourism services in Uzbekistan.
through the establishment of a prestigious Sufi-pilgrimage and a related religious-cognitive destination. This ‘Sufi hajj’, may involve in Uzbekistan, hundreds of thousands of people interested to the idea and philosophy of Sufism. This development may also facilitate the implementation of a geographic diversification of tourism services, through the transformation of individual, sometimes unrelated with each other ‘holy places’ in the ‘tourist destination. Linked to this is an integrated travel demand for destinations linked with the tourist offer in the region. In turn, this should:

- reduce the impact of seasonality;
- improve the tourist potential of Uzbekistan while increasing the flow of tourists;
- create new jobs in the Sufi shrines;
- grow foreign exchange earnings;
- increase revenue from tourism activities.

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Appendix : Proposed ‘Sufi Tour’ Through Sufi Shrines in Uzbekistan

Day One – Tashkent.
Visit to Mausoleum of Shayhantahur (Sheikh Khovandi Tokhur).

Sheikh Omar Vali Bogustani was the founder of the great Sufi teachers’ dynasty. His son - the famous Sheikh Khovandi Tokhur, was buried in 1355 in Tashkent. Khoja Dowud was the son of Khovandi Tokhur and grandson of Umar Vali, and his daughter in 1404 became the mother of Khoja Ahrar Ubaydulla Shoshi, who in his youth headed the Sufi order Naqshbandiya, and played a huge role in the government of Timurids. He built the mosque and mausoleum of Shayhontohur in Tashkent in honour of his grandfather. Khoja Ahrar moved to the capital of that time, Samarqand, where he developed the teachings of Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi, reforming it according to the needs of those times.

Visit to the Mausoleum of Zaynudin-bobo, the home of Sufi master Khoja Akhiror-Vali.

To counter the collapse of the Muslim community, the Sheikh of the ‘suhravardiya’ brotherhood sent his closest followers and disciples to the outskirts of the Islamic world of those times. Thus, the younger son of the great Baghdad educator and thinker Shahabuddin Al-Suhrawardy was in Tashkent. He was named Zaynuddin (born in 1214). Tradition ascribes him as fifty years of age, when his camel suddenly stopped at the village of Kuh-i-Arifon, in the outskirts of Tashkent. A visiting dervish decided that this was a sign from above and it is at this point he should stay and begin to preach. This is now the famous old town of Mahallah Kukcha.

Additional elements in this area include:

- Kaffal Shashi mausoleum;
- Kukeldash madrassas;
- Barakhan madrassas.

Figure 1 : Map of Uzbekistan
Source: Google Maps
Day Two – Bukhara.

Early morning flight to Bukhara. Transfer to hotel.

Visiting the shrine of the ‘7 great Pirs (Holy people) of Bukhara’.

From ancient times the city was known as ‘Bukhoroi-Sharif’ – ‘Holy Bukhara’ throughout the Muslim East. Many believe Bukhara city got this name because of the huge number of ‘sacred’ places in the outskirts of the city. The most esteemed of them are the graves of the seven great Pirs (holy people). Between them, there is an invisible spiritual connection. After visiting one grave, one certainly needs to pay tribute to the rest of the saints. Their names are well-known, the legends of their deeds are still alive.

- Abdukhalik Gijduvani - founder of the Sufi Order ‘hodjagon’, Buried in Gijduvan city, which is 50 km. from Bukhara.
- Khodja Mohammad Orif Ar Revgar who is from Revgar village, near Shafirkan town.
- Khodja Mahmud Anjir Fagnaviy. The grave of this saint is located in the village of Anjirbog, in the Vabkent region.
- Khodja Ali Rometaniy, better known under the name Khodja Azzon is from the Kulogan village, near the town of Rometan town.
- Khodja Mohammad Boboyi Samosi is from the village of Samos in Rometan. Among the most famous of his students was Khodja Said Mir Kulol.
- Khodja Said Mir Kulol was born near Bukhara in the village of Suhor. He is known as mentor and spiritual teacher of Baha-ud-Din Naqshbandi.
- Bakha-ud-Din Naqshbandi – is founder of one of the most famous Sufi orders - the Order of Naqshbandiya.

Day Three – Bukhara.

Excursion to the ‘National hospitals’

Popular rumours cherishe the names of those whose aim was not personal benefit, but service to ordinary people. Graves, where these righteous people rest are honoured even in the present time. These sites possess a wonderful peculiarity, according to their followers, those who approach these sites get rid of ailments.

- Khodja Ubben - Here lies the tomb of the saint, near which is located the National hospital. In this hospital, just like many centuries ago, thanks to the healing water and a special aura of the place, patients are cured to their ailments.
- Khodja Zaffaron – is another tomb of the saint, whose name people associate with faith in the miraculous power of water from the well.
- Kiz-Bibi complex - few female Sufi convents exist in the territory of Central Asia. One of which perfectly preserved is the Kiz-Bibi complex. Here, in voluntary isolation, hidden from the eyes of men, forty girls lived with their mentor, whom people called Kiz bibi. Here only women could enter, who found solace and relief from their ailments in the walls of this distinctive ‘female nunnery’.

Day Four – Bukhara

Khodja Parsa. A site connected with the name Sufi-murid and successor of Baha-ud-Din Naqshband. Author of many books on the biography of Shaikh Baha-ud-Din Naqshband.


Magoki Attori mosque built on the site of a temples of fire-worshipers - one of 3 monuments in Bukhara, which survived the invasion of Genghis Khan.
Trip to Urgut (40 km. from Samarqand), to the holy places associated with the name of the founder of the Sufi Order, ‘Kadiriya’ Govsul Azam Abdul Kodir. Enlightened Sufis who have attained a high spiritual level are very few and rare. In Arabic they are called Vali. It is those who, driven by only the truth, like Khodja Muinuddin and the best representatives of his followers, use their supernatural powers in order to meet any situation strictly in accordance with divine law and God’s will. Many miracles (Karamat) accompanied the missionary activities of Muslim saints such as Gauz-ul-Azam Hazrat Abdul Kadir Gilani of Baghdad. After lunch, transfer to Tashkent (330 km).

Farewell dinner.
End of the tour.