



Epigraphy and History of The Mausoleum Of Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi

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Abstract: The Hast Imam Complex (Hazrati Imam) is one of the most significant cultural treasures of Tashkent, serving as the religious heart of the capital. It developed around the tomb of the great saint and the first imam of Tashkent, Abu Bakr Muhammad Kaffal Shashi. Abu Bakr Muhammad Kaffal Shashi was one of the early imams of the Muslim world, a renowned scholar, and an expert in the Quran, hadith, Islamic law, and lexicology. He passed away in 976/77, and his grave became a revered pilgrimage site. Alongside Imam al-Bukhari, at-Tirmidhi, and al-Maturidi, Imam Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi (904-977) holds a special place in the Islamic world. His contemporaries respectfully referred to him as "Hazrat Imam" ("Holy Imam"). The architectural complex of religious buildings near Karasaray Street in Tashkent evolved over the 16th to 21st centuries around the tomb of the esteemed Islamic preacher and Tashkent imam, Kaffal Shashi, who lived in the 10th century. "Hazrati Imam" translates to "Holy Imam." The Muslim pilgrimage to Imam Kaffal Shashi's tomb has a millennium-long history. The original crypt has not survived; the existing mausoleum was constructed in 1542 by the khan's architect of the time, Ghulam Husain, and is an asymmetrical domed portal mausoleum, known as a khanqah. The khanqah was designed to house pilgrims in residential cells, or hujras. Since the 16th

century, when the mausoleum over Hazrati Imam's tomb was erected, other religious structures began to be built nearby. Following the Uzbekistan government's decision to restore the sacred site of Hazrati Imam, extensive restoration works began immediately. The Kaffal Shashi Mausoleum was also restored, with its domes repainted, and its weathered walls rebuilt. As the mausoleum of Kaffal Shashi remains a holy pilgrimage site, new structures were constructed around it, integrating into a single architectural ensemble. This article examines the activities of Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi, as well as the history of his mausoleum and the epigraphic inscriptions on it.

Keywords: Shash, Tashkent, Mausoleum, Hazrat Imam (Holy Imam), Kaffal, Fiqh, Hadith, Lockmaker

Introduction

Central Asia, particularly the territory of modern Uzbekistan, is known worldwide as one of the cradles of Islamic science and culture. According to researchers, the region was the source of two significant surges of scientific and cultural advancement during the 9th-12th and 14th-15th centuries. These periods are rightfully recognized by the global scientific community as the era of the Eastern Renaissance, which positively influenced the Renaissance processes in other parts of the world (Nematullo Mukhamedov, Nurulloh Turambetov, 2022: 606-615).

Throughout the centuries, Islamic traditions have contributed to the formation of a distinct Muslim culture in Central Asia, intertwining with the rich cultural heritage of the region's peoples. This, in turn, has influenced the spiritual life of society and left a significant mark on the development of various sciences. Uzbekistan and its cities — Bukhara, Samarkand, Nasaf (Karshi), Termez, Khiva, Shash (Tashkent), among others — played a special role in these historical processes, gaining fame throughout the Muslim world as leading scientific and cultural centers (Mukhamedov, N., Turambetov, N., 2023: 322-325).

Methodology

In the context of globalization, during a period when there is increasing interest in studying the history and culture of cities that have hosted representatives of various religions and cultures, the significance of civilization in ensuring social cooperation in the world is growing. The study of the history and culture of these cities and the contributions of scholars to the development of civilization is becoming increasingly relevant. Tashkent, in particular, is recognized by the international community as a peaceful, friendly, hospitable, and generous city, bearing titles such as "Gateway to the East" and "Capital of Islamic Culture" (Mukhamedov Nematullo, 2020: 137-143).

Today, as Tashkent transforms into one of the major metropolises in the region and the world, the study and exploration of its culture and medieval history have become pertinent topics. It is known that in the medieval oasis of Shash, over 100 scholars in the field of Islamic sciences lived and worked. Among them were Abu Said Haysam ibn Kulaib Shashi (d. 947), a renowned authentic muhaddith; Abu Bakr Kaffal Shashi (904-976), who was honored with the title "Hazrat Imam" (Holy Imam); and Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ahmad Shashi (1038-1114), who received the esteemed titles "Fakhr ul-Islam" (Pride of Islam) and "al-Imam al-Kabir" (Great Imam) (Myxamedov H., 2019: 29-33).

Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Ismail al-Kaffal al-Kabir ash-Shashi lived on this planet over a thousand years ago. However, there is no one in modern Tashkent who does not know the respectful title "Hazrat Imam" (Holy Imam), which the townspeople bestowed upon him as early as the 10th century. Over the ten centuries that have passed, in the syllable-swallowing Tashkent dialect, "Hazrat Imam" has transformed into "Hast-Imam" and even "Hastimom" (Ibrokhimov Abdukahhor, 2007: 5).

His full name is Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Ismail Kaffal Shashi. In Arabic sources, out of respect and honor, the word "Kabir," meaning "great" or "grand," is added to his name. Initially, he was a skilled craftsman who made locks, and his profession subsequently became part of his name, "Kaffal," meaning "locksmith."

Medieval Arab authors referred to Kaffal Shashi as a great scholar. The renowned historian Abu Saad Abdulkarim ibn Muhammad Samani (1113-1167) wrote about him in

his book "al-Ansab" ("The Book of Genealogical Names"): "*al-Kaffal means a master locksmith. Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Ismail al-Kaffal ash-Shashi was originally from Shash and gained fame as a locksmith. He was the Imam of his time and an indispensable and unparalleled scholar in various fields of Islamic sciences, such as fiqh, hadith, usul (principles of jurisprudence), and linguistics. The name Kaffal Shashi is known both in the Maghreb (West) and the Mashriq (East). It was said about him: 'This Abu Bakr, the locksmith and jurist, Solves complex problems with a key'*" (Samani, 1981: 244).

The renowned historian Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi (1274-1348) referred to him as a scholar not only of Mawarannahr but also of Khorasan. "*Among the scholars of Khorasan in the fields of linguistics, usul, and fiqh was Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Ismail ash-Shashi, known as the 'Great Kaffal.'* He was the imam of his time and the author of several books" (Shams al-Din al-Dhahabi, 1988: 283).

The Egyptian historian Taj al-Din al-Subki (d. 1370) described the scholar as follows: "*He was one of the great imams of his time, excelling in several fields of science*" (Taj al-Din al-Subki, 1999: 152).

Imam Kaffal Shashi was born in the city of Tashkent (Shash) in 904, into a family of an ordinary craftsman. He received his initial education in his hometown and then studied in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Termez, where he became acquainted with the works and invaluable religious-scientific heritage of Imam Bukhari and Imam Tirmidhi.

In his quest for knowledge, Imam Kaffal Shashi traveled extensively across the countries of the Near and Middle East. He studied under the most prominent scholars of Baghdad, Kufa, and Damascus. According to sources, he received his knowledge of fiqh from Ibn Surayj. In the field of history, his teacher was none other than Abu Ja'far Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari (d. 923), a renowned scholar and Quranic commentator (mufassir). Another of his mentors was the well-known theologian Abu'l Hasan Ali ibn Abi Musa al-Ash'ari (d. 935).

The scholarly activities of Kaffal Shashi attracted attention not only from the scholars of the East but also from the West. For instance, the famous German orientalist C. Brockelmann (1898: 307), the great Russian orientalist V. Bartold (1963: 220, 237), and our contemporary S. Prozorov (2000: 45) all highly praised the legacy of Hazrat Imam.

Result and Discussion

In particular, Nil Lykoshin (Nil Sergeyevich Lykoshin – a retired military officer who taught Turkic language and ethnography at the Turkestan People's University in Tashkent from 1918 to 1920. He is the author of several works on local history) emphasized the activities of Hazrat Imam – Kaffal Shashi during the opening of the Turkestan People's University in Tashkent in 1918:

"Today, on this joyous day when European science gains citizenship in Old Tashkent, the bright image of a humble worker who greatly contributed to the enlightenment of Tashkent's Muslims involuntarily comes to mind. I recall Imam Muhammad Kaffal Shashi, or Hazrat Imam, whose remains found an honorable place in the cemetery of the same name in the Sibzar part of the city... Hazrat Imam brought the foundations of pure science to ancient Shash. This effort cost him greatly, but grateful descendants have not forgotten the humble worker to this day. His name has been preserved in the memory of the people for many centuries because he gave the people the first foundations of knowledge" (Lykoshin N., 1918: 1).

The emergence of the largest architectural ensemble in Tashkent is linked to the burial of one of the most renowned theologians, jurists, hadith scholars, and poets of Central Asia, Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Ismail al-Kaffal al-Kabir ash-Shashi (904-976). This area, irrigated by the Kaikavus irrigation canal, was part of the northern suburb of the shahristan called "rabat-i dahil" in the 10th century, and later became the northeastern district of the city known as Sibzar (Abdukholikov F., Nekrasova E., Rahimov K., 2016:54).

Pilgrimage to the mausoleum of Muhammad al-Kaffal ash-Shashi has continued uninterrupted for over a millennium. The building was rebuilt several times, and the existing memorial was erected on behalf of the ruler of Tashkent, Navruz-Ahmad or Barak-khan. A chilla-khana was located near the mausoleum. In the first quarter of the 16th century, to the south of the al-Kaffal ash-Shashi necropolis, buildings of two mausoleums initially appeared, which were later incorporated into the madrasa by the same Barak-khan, known by his name. In 1579, Abdullah-khan II, who had visited the grave of al-Kaffal ash-Shashi multiple times, ordered the construction of a mausoleum over the grave of al-Kaffal's descendant, Sheikh Baba-Khoja, to the north of the existing building. Interestingly, the structure was almost a replica of the great ancestor's mausoleum. In the 16th century, the territory of the memorial and religious complex was landscaped and represented a park with ponds (hauz) and canals.

The next phase of the ensemble's construction occurred only in the 19th century. In its northeastern part, a large Namazgah mosque was built. In 1273/1856-57, opposite the Barak-khan madrasa, a miniature madrasa called Mui-i Mubarak was constructed, and about thirty years later, the Tilla-Sheikh Juma Mosque was erected nearby (Abdukholikov F., Nekrasova E., Rahimov K., 2016:54).

At the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, according to contemporaries' descriptions, the memorial and religious ensemble made a tremendous impression on visitors. Monumental buildings were connected by alleys lined with elm trees, poplars, and shrubs. Small gates (darvozakhana), ziyarat-khana, and chilla-khana were scattered throughout, with large ponds (hauz), sometimes with platforms (sufas) along their banks, as important elements (Masson V., 1954:131).

As the urban area expanded, the Hazrat Imam ensemble found itself practically in the center of Tashkent. Over time, the space between the monuments became densely and chaotically built up with residential structures, some of which came very close to the walls of the ancient buildings. The architectural monuments became disjointed and were no longer perceived as a unified complex, with restoration works being carried out on a small scale.

Discussion

At the end of the 20th century, the development of a comprehensive reconstruction plan for the Hazrat Imam memorial and religious complex was undertaken over several years. In 2006, on the initiative of the Government of Uzbekistan, restoration and improvement works were carried out here. During these works, the residential buildings were demolished, and landscape architects made excellent use of the freed-up spaces by creating lawns, planting trees, shrubs, and flowers brought in from various countries. All ancient architectural monuments were restored. The banks of the ancient Kaikavus canal, which runs along the northern and eastern edges of the memorial and religious complex, were reinforced with durable pebble paving.

Figure 1. Epigraphic inscriptions in the mausoleum of Hazrat Imam



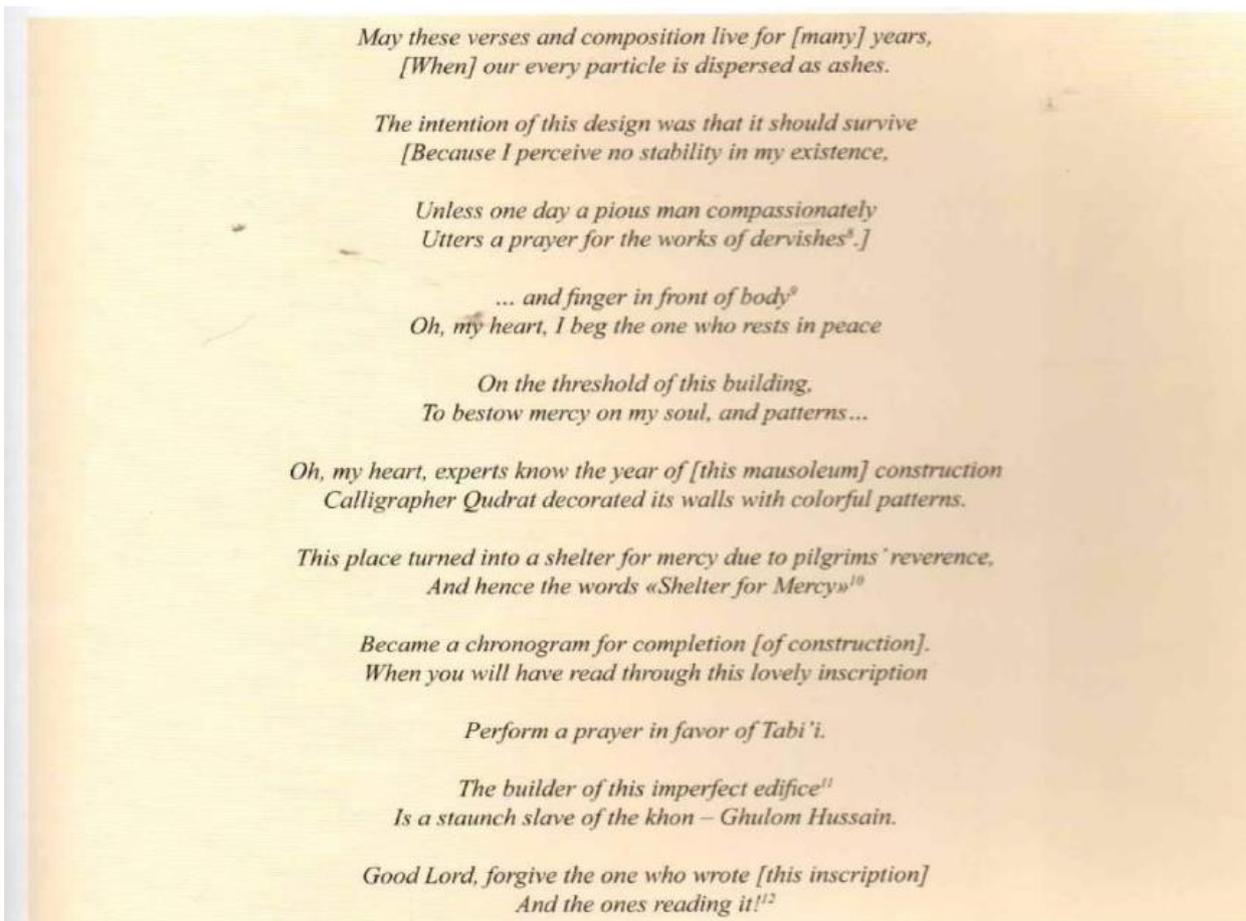
The tympanum of the portal features a fragment from the Quran [10: 62–64] in the *thuluth* script in white letters on a blue background. The top part of this inscription features repeating formulas glorifying Allah in golden letters in the *kufic* script: ³البقاء لله، الحمد لله – «Eternity belongs to Allah», «Praise be to Allah».

Allah the Almighty said: «No doubt! Verily, the Auliya' of Allah, no fear shall come upon them nor shall they grieve, Those who believed, and used to fear Allah much (by abstaining from evil deeds and sins and by doing righteous deeds). For them are glad tidings, in the life of the present world, and in the Hereafter. No change can there be in the Words of Allah, this is indeed the supreme success».⁶

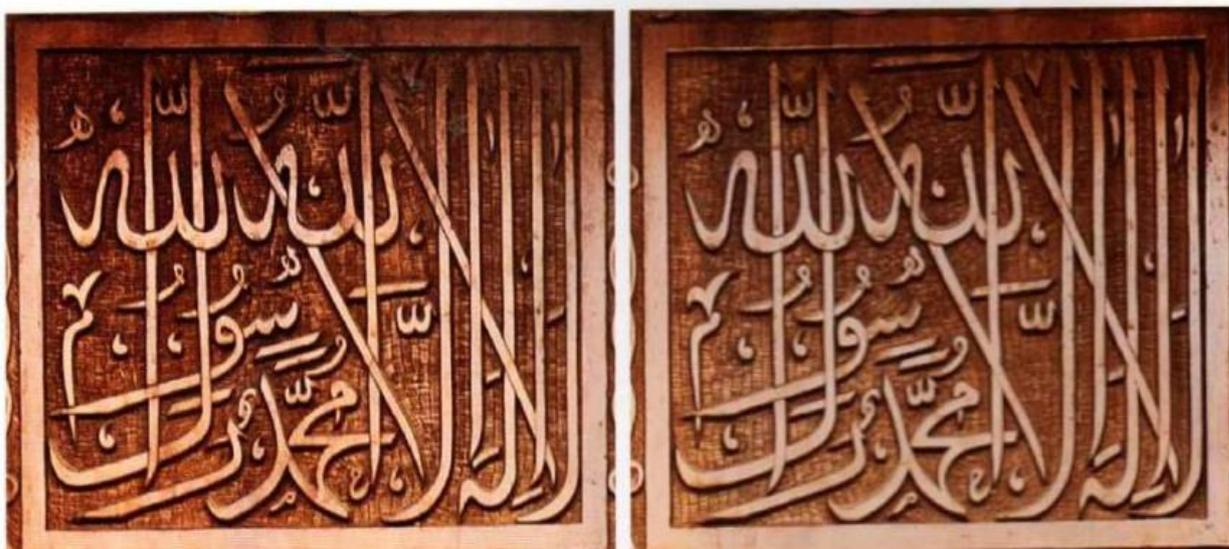


Inscriptions are placed only at the entrance portal. The strip of inscriptions, framing the entrance aperture is preserved here, with a Quranic text [3: 96: 23: 29] in the center of the strip inscribed in large letters. The invocations extolling Allah (*Glory to Allah,*

Great is Allah the Great) are inscribed recurrently in the *kufic* script in the upper strip of the entrance portal. This inscription, added during the last restoration works, bears the signature of master Husain Tabi'i at the end.



There is an engraved inscription on the mausoleum's entrance door, which represents the credo of religion («There is no God, but Allah...»)



The inscriptions in the Hazrat Imam complex were created by calligraphers H. Salih, I. Muhammad, and A. Hakberliyev under the supervision of Sheikh Abdulaziz Mansur. The tiling of the domes, portals, and facades of the mosques was carried out by architects and ceramic artists from the "Experimental Ceramic Plant." The installation of ornamental panels on the buildings was done by craftsmen from Shakhrisabz (Abdukholikov F., Nekrasova E., Rahimov K., 2016: 54).

Conclusion

It is known that the Hastimom complex is one of the oldest and most revered sites in Tashkent. "Hastimom" is a shortened form of the name "Hazrat Imam." The mausoleum and complex of Imam Kaffal Shashi are located in the area of Tashkent known as the "Old City" and serve as a place of worship for Muslims. Among the people, it is referred to as "Hastimom."

In conclusion, many works on fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence), tafsir (Quranic commentary), hadith, and literature contain quotes from Imam Kaffal Shashi. All of this attests to his high authority. The place known as "Hastimom" among the people exemplifies the deep reverence for this great scholar.

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