

State of Conservation Report 2022

Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi

World Heritage Property (Kazakhstan) (C 1103)



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



- **Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi**
- inscribed on the World Heritage
- List in 2003

1. Executive Summary of the Report

This State of Conservation report responds to the points of Decision 44 COM 7B.31 Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Kazakhstan) (C 1103) at the online 44th World Heritage Committee Meeting in Fuzhou, China. It also reports on the further implemented projects of the Spiritual and Cultural Center located in the setting responding to the Decision 3 COM 7B.67 point 3.

The state of the Mausoleum, its buffer zone and wider setting has been monitored by the International Institute of Central Asian Studies (IICAS) since March 2019. IICAS conducted six monitoring missions from August 2020 – April 2021. In addition, IICAS together with international and local experts visited the site in January-February 2022 to monitor the condition of the World Heritage property.

Following the Operational Guidelines 2021 (Annex 13), the SOC is divided into 6 parts, 1) Executive Summary, 2) Response to the Decision of the World Heritage Committee, 3) Current conservation issues, 4) Potential major restorations/alterations, 5) Public access to the SOC, and 6) Signature of the State Party, followed by a series of appendices.

The SOC concludes: The Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in Turkestan is in good condition and is being cared for by Azret Sultan Reserve-Museum administration and KazRestoration under the Ministry of Culture with several conservation and monitoring projects completed between 2019 and late 2021. In 2020, technical monitoring was performed jointly by Kazrestoration SRE and Kazakh Academy of Architecture and Construction Sciences (KAACS) at the Mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi.

Overall, five major areas were assessed as follows.

Structural stability: Observed polycarbonate crack monitors installed in 2015 and earlier plaster tell-tales demonstrate little or no movement. One crack monitor installed in 2015 shows some sub-millimeter 0.4mm movement on the back/south of the main portal, but earlier plaster crack monitors in the same vertical location at a higher level show no movement. The 2020 SOC states this could be due to thermal expansion. Another crack monitor within the dome on the back of the gypsum stalactites shows movement of 1mm and the appearance of another nearby new horizontal crack of approximately 30cm, also a 2mm crack in gypsum under the dome was recorded. Continued vigilance is absolutely required, especially given the recent recladding of the main dome. The crack monitors in the Mosque or Gurhana were observed and

displayed no movement. The wood beams are not satisfactory, as it is impacted by rot, insects and weakened bearing capacity support of the decorative gypsum.

Moisture infiltration: A series of projects were undertaken to address water entering the structure from above including recladding of the main dome, new kitchen roof, recladding of small dome over the well room and other minor repairs including the installation of a masonry cant and ventilation system. The recladding of the dome seems to have been effective as there is less moisture within. The kitchen and well room roofs are marginally effective and water infiltration remains a concern. Water from below is less of a concern given the drainage system. There remains some rising damp issues in the Mosque near the splash areas below the scuppers, and within the main portal at the entry. Given the introduction of new landscaping and irrigation to the west of the buffer zone, the Mausoleum must be monitored for rising dampness.

Electrical systems and disaster risk management: The electrical systems within the main dome were upgraded to avoid a fire risk including wires in conduit and junction boxes, and a fire alarm and suppression system. However, it seems that the alarm system has been disconnected during recent electrical work on the roof. A new lighting system was installed on the roof, interior, and in the paving around the monument. The new installations must be improved and it seems this work remains unfinished. There remains exposed wiring and open electrical panels mentioned in the SOC of 2015. These are in mainly closed parts of the Mausoleum.

Miscellaneous including visitor management: There have been some improvements including the installation of a new exhibit, a new ticket entry system, and COVID-19 health measures. However, there are areas of the mausoleum closed and the entry and exit system remain unchanged. Other positive miscellaneous elements include control of pigeons and installation of new wire coverings on most openings.

Immediate surroundings: A series of projects were initiated to seemingly enhance the visitors' experience. These installations include new lightweight and reversible shade shelters, benches, trash receptacles, new paving all around the site, planters, trees, shrubs, fencing, and lighting systems.

The SOC reports also reports on the works carried out in the buffer zone and wider setting. Monitoring of these activities used scientific evidence, including satellite imagery and results of photogrammetric and geodetic surveys. In the buffer zone the planned projects within the access zone, necropolis, open-air museum, garden and inner wall were implemented



according to the areas presented and approved in the Decision of the World Heritage Committee 43 COM 7B.67. In the landscape area additional monitoring and evidence is carried out to identify any impact to the Mausoleum. In the wider setting, the development of the Spiritual and Cultural Center is complete and monitoring was carried out. The results shows that the Hampton Hotel, caravanserai, and drama theatre projects complied with the project design. Only, the presidential park project changed in order to protect archaeological layers in the south of the Azret-Sultan Museum-Reserve and avoid any negative impact, its changes are reported in this report.

In addition, potential major restorations/ alterations are presented as part of this SOC in the 1) immediate surroundings to the Mausoleum 2) the Archaeological Park (buffer zone), and 3) the wider context (outside the buffer zone). The Ministry of Culture and Sport of the Republic of Kazakhstan will report on further developments executed in the buffer zone, and Heritage Impact Assessments (HIAs) for the new projects will be produced and sent to the WHC once completed.