



SAYYID OTALIQ MADRASA

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Article history:	Abstract:
Received: 14 th December 2025 Accepted: 11 th February 2026	<i>This article examines the history, construction period, architectural structure, and historical significance of the Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa located in the city of Denov in the Surkhandarya region. During the research process, historical sources, scientific literature, and local materials were analyzed to reveal the circumstances of the madrasa's construction and its role in the spiritual and educational life of Denov. The study also provides information about the architectural features of the madrasa complex, its place within the system of twin architectural structures, the damage it suffered during the Soviet period, and the restoration work carried out during the years of independence. The research results demonstrate that the Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa is one of the important historical and architectural monuments of the Surkhan oasis.</i>

Keywords: *Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa, Denov city, Surkhandarya, madrasa, architectural monument, twin madrasa, historical heritage, Juyborids, Bukhara Khanate.*

INTRODUCTION

The territory of Uzbekistan has long been one of the centers of science, culture, and enlightenment. Hundreds of madrasas operated in this region, functioning not only as institutions of religious education but also as important scientific centers that contributed to the development of knowledge and scholarship. In particular, the construction of madrasas flourished during the period of the Bukhara Khanate.

The Surkhandarya oasis is also considered one of the regions rich in historical monuments. One of the important historical monuments of the oasis is the Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa located in the city of Denov. This madrasa deserves special attention not only for its architectural value but also for its historical and spiritual significance.

DISCUSSION

The Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa in Denov, together with another medium-sized madrasa (demolished in 1930 and whose name has not been preserved in documents), served as centers of spirituality and enlightenment. Historical sources indicate that Denov once had one large and one medium-sized madrasa. These buildings are considered a source of pride for the people of Denov and an inseparable part of the historical memory of the local population. Madrasas reflected not only the activities of historical figures but also the people's aspiration for knowledge, their understanding of the universe, existence, life, and the Creator.

Thanks to the knowledge acquired from madrasas over centuries, the population maintained a cultured and spiritually rich way of life, transmitting their finest cultural and religious values through books and other means. The madrasas in the Denov beklik were mainly constructed of baked bricks and local colored limestone and decorated with Islamic ornaments [1].

According to historical sources related to Chaganiyan, the earliest madrasas in Denov functioned between the 9th and early 13th centuries, and later during the 14th–16th centuries in the period of Amir Temur and the Timurids, as well as during the rule of the Shaybanid dynasty. Many scholars of both secular and religious sciences received their education in these institutions and became renowned scholars. The madrasas of Denov and Boysun are historically recognized centers of knowledge [2].

Particularly during the reign of Muhammad Shaybani Khan, Denov became the regional center. In the city center two structures known historically as a "twin madrasa complex" were built — a madrasa and a khanqah. The madrasa building has survived, and according to sources it was constructed by Ahmad Muhammad Bukhari. The khanqah building was demolished between 1929 and 1934 by the Soviet authorities. Its bricks were reused in the construction of various buildings, including the public education department, prosecutor's office, hotel, police building, district committee, railway clinic, and school buildings. Some of the bricks were even used to pave a walkway



from the market to the railway station because Denov was known for its swampy terrain [3].

The Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa is also considered a source of pride for the residents of Denov and an inseparable part of the historical memory of the people. Historical monuments reflect not only historical figures but also the intellectual aspirations of the population and their efforts to understand the universe, existence, life, and the Creator. The cultural and intellectual heritage of the Uzbek people is visible not only in major ancient capitals and scientific centers but also in small towns and villages.

It is sometimes claimed that the construction of the Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa dates back to the mid-15th century (around 1440–1450). However, this assumption appears questionable. For instance, the famous Mir Arab Madrasa in Bukhara was completed in 1536. It was unlikely that a building of similar scale would have been constructed in a peripheral region before such major architectural projects in the capital. Moreover, architectural features of the 15th century differ significantly from those of the 16th–17th centuries, and the layout of the Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa does not resemble 15th-century architecture.

Some local traditions claim that the madrasa was built in the mid-19th century during the rule of Abdulkarim Dodkhoh. However, this view is also considered unfounded because Mahmud ibn Wali's 17th-century work *Bahr al-Alam* mentions the existence of two madrasas in Denov [4].

The Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa located in the center of Denov city is considered an architectural monument dating to the 16th century. It was built by the sons and grandsons of Khoja Alouddin Attar and named after Sayyid Otaliq. The madrasa was constructed in a style similar to the Kukeldash and Mir Arab madrasas in Bukhara. This type of educational architectural monument is unique in the Surkhandarya region.

The construction of the madrasa lasted twenty-six years under the supervision of the master builder Ahmad Muhammad Bukhari. Its foundation reaches a depth of 5.5 meters, with several layers of reeds laid beneath baked bricks bonded with gypsum mortar [5].

Architecturally, the madrasa has a rectangular layout (46 × 64 m) oriented north-south. Decorative towers are located at the corners. The entrance portal includes a two-story three-arched gallery. Behind the entrance lies a central vestibule (*miyonsaroy*), with a mosque and classroom located on either side. The courtyard (40 × 29.5 m) is surrounded by two-story cells with deep arched entrances. The interiors contain

plaster carvings, muqarnas ornaments, and decorative plaster lattice windows [6].

The Sayyid Otaliq complex was constructed during the reign of Imamquli Khan of the Bukhara Khanate. His rule was characterized by efforts to strengthen central authority and reduce feudal conflicts. Historians note that peace and prosperity prevailed in the country during this time, contributing to the development of cities and villages. Consequently, educational and cultural life in the Hisor region, including Denov, also flourished, creating the need for the construction of madrasas [7].

The madrasa was built according to the architectural principle known as "qo'sh," meaning two buildings constructed opposite each other. In Denov, the madrasa and khanqah were built facing each other, with a road passing between them leading to the Denov beg fortress. This urban planning style was also common in Bukhara, Khiva, and Kokand during the 16th–17th centuries [8].

Before the October Revolution in Russia, the madrasa educated nearly 400 students and employed 33 teachers. During the Soviet period, the madrasa was closed and used for various purposes, including as a military headquarters, prison, warehouse, garage, and workshop. Significant damage was inflicted on the building, and the khanqah structure was completely destroyed [9].

After Uzbekistan gained independence, restoration work was carried out. In 1997 the "Sayyid Otaliq" Cultural Center was established under the International Charity Foundation "Golden Heritage" (*Oltin Meros*). Efforts have since been undertaken to restore the madrasa to its original state and improve the surrounding area. The square in front of the madrasa is now known as Registan Square, and there are plans to establish a historical and ethnographic museum within the madrasa building.

CONCLUSION

The Sayyid Otaliq Madrasa is one of the important historical and architectural monuments of the Surkhandarya oasis. The madrasa served as a significant educational and spiritual center in the cultural life of Denov city.

Its architectural structure reflects the traditions of Central Asian architecture and represents a vivid example of the architectural style of the 16th–17th centuries.

Despite suffering considerable damage throughout history, the madrasa has been restored during the years of independence and is preserved as a valuable historical heritage. Further study of the Sayyid



Otaliq Madrasa plays an important role in researching the historical and cultural heritage of the Surkhandarya region.

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