

HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS BUILT IN BUKHARA

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Abstract: This article provides a detailed description, based on scholarly literature, of archaeological sites, architectural monuments, notable architectural complexes, and historical places built in Bukhara. It also discusses the attention given by statesmen and rulers to the construction of mosques with iwans and domes, as well as neighborhood assemblies (guzars), and the historical monuments built under their patronage. In addition, information is presented about the monuments constructed in the Bukhara oasis during the Karakhanid period and about the lives of architects.

Keywords: Bukhara, Namazgah, Magoki Attori, mosque, architecture, Central Asia, mihrab, Vobkent minaret, Kalon mosque, mausoleum, architectural ensemble.

INTRODUCTION

It is well known that ancient and eternal Bukhara, for many centuries, has attracted the attention of peoples all over the world with its glory, honor, beauty, and grandeur, and has long been valued as a revered place rich in charm and mystery. In these days, when attitudes toward our priceless cultural heritage have fundamentally changed, it is no secret that a deep sense of responsibility has taken root in the hearts of our compatriots to preserve the unique historical treasures and magnificent monuments that enhance the beauty of our noble city, and to pass them on to future generations in all their splendor and majesty.

MAIN BODY

Today, a total of 660 tangible cultural heritage sites have been registered in the Bukhara region. Of these, 231 are archaeological sites, 364 are architectural monuments, 19 are works of art, 22 are architectural complexes, and 22 are places of interest. Including the components of architectural ensembles, the total number of tangible cultural heritage sites in the region that are under state protection amounts to 777 [1,1].

As noted in our plan entitled “A Look at the History of Traditional Architecture,” in the 9th–12th centuries a number of new types of buildings were constructed, whose significance for the development of architecture in later periods was extremely great. In particular, the construction of mosques gained special importance.

There are several hundred mosques in Bukhara. Among the oldest types of such structures are the “courtyard” mosques. In these mosques, spacious courtyards are covered with colonnaded or domed iwans; along the wall facing Mecca, decorated with a mihrab, several rows of columns are installed.

Examples of such mosques include the Namazgah (12th century) and the congregational mosques of the 12th century that have not survived to the present day. Domed central mosques have also existed since ancient times. This type includes Mag’oki Attoriy, Sayfiddin Bokharzi, and Muhammad Otaliq. Sometimes small iwans were built on the northern, eastern, and occasionally southern sides of domed central mosques. Examples include the Baland Mosque (16th century), the Khoja Zayniddin Mosque (16th century), and the Khalifa Khudoydod Mosque (17th century) [5,95].

The construction traditions of courtyard mosques were also adopted in congregational mosques. These were domed mosques located on the western side of the courtyard and

surrounded by an iwan gallery. Examples include the Masjidi Kalon (1514), the Khoja Mosque (16th century), as well as the Sheikh Shona, Usto Ruhi, and others.

Iwan and domed mosques also became the basis for the construction of neighborhood (guzar) mosques, many of which were built in the 19th century and the early 20th century. These mosques typically consisted of rectangular halls, and more rarely cross-shaped halls. Others incorporated a central space with one, two, four, or six columned iwans made of brick. Smaller rooms were connected to the main hall. In addition, near neighborhood (guzar) mosques there were usually primary schools, and in some cases shrines (mausoleums). Although mosques may appear similar in form, there was a wide variety of construction methods used in building them. In particular, guzar mosques were constructed by folk craftsmen using very interesting techniques. In their form, these mosques were close to traditional folk architecture and free from excessive ornamentation. Guzar mosques harmonized with the layout of the streets; they were built freely and, with their own pools, added beauty to the streets of Bukhara.

Turning now to the Namazgah Mosque, it is located to the south of Bukhara. The mosque was built outside the city because, on the days of Eid prayers, the city's mosques could not accommodate all the worshippers. The mosque was constructed in 1119. According to witnesses, the large open area was surrounded by a fence. In the middle of the courtyard stood a brick wall with a mihrab, and near the mihrab there was a minbar. It is likely that in front of the minbar there was a wooden-pillared canopy that provided protection from the sun and rain. The mihrab was decorated with delicate ornamentation and carved inscriptions. However, the Namazgah was later rebuilt.

In the 16th century, the Namazgah had a domed structure in the form of a front iwan and gallery, with an elegantly decorated entrance portal (pishtaq). From the western side, the monumental part of the building adjoined the ancient wall with the mihrab. The mosque was decorated with finely carved floral ceramic bricks and small brick fragments. On the site of the present Namazgah Mosque, there was once a beautiful garden and a zoo. This place was called Shamsiabad. The historian Narshakhi described this place in detail in his work [7,238].

In Bukhara's architecture, minarets have always attracted attention with their height and grandeur. Among Bukhara's monuments, the Kalon Minaret rises skyward like a giant, astonishing viewers even today with the majesty and perfection of its form. This minaret was built in 1127 by the master craftsman Baqo on the order of the Karakhanid ruler Arslan Khan.

Originally, the minaret was constructed of wood, but after collapsing onto worshippers during an earthquake and causing great damage, it was rebuilt and strengthened. The new minaret was constructed of stone, with a circular base measuring 9 meters in diameter. Its height is 50 meters. The pedestal is faceted, the shaft is cylindrical, narrowing toward the top, and it ends with a muqarnas cornice.

The upper gallery of the Kalon Minaret is designed in the form of a domed pavilion, from which the surroundings can be observed through sixteen arched openings. Both the core and the decorative elements of the minaret are laid in square baked bricks ($27 \times 27 \times 4-5$ cm). The decorative bricks are carved in various shapes and smoothly finished. The elegant geometric ornamental bands arranged one above another are framed with brick dentils. The patterned brickwork reflects examples of traditional folk art.

Its decorative style clearly shows similarities to the ornamentation of the Ismail Samani Mausoleum. However, the Karakhanid architectural style differs from that of the Samanid period, which can be clearly observed here. The depth and lightness of the patterns are reduced, while the flatness and distinct separation of the floral reliefs are emphasized. The blue band of the dome consists of glazed tiles made in the 16th century.

The minaret is constructed from solid bricks bonded with a strong plaster mixture, forming a round shaft. Inside, there is a spiral staircase with 104 steps. The upper part of the minaret is narrower than its base and the cylindrical dome at the top contains sixteen windows.

Now, a few words about the dome: a dome is a roof in the shape of a cupola. There are various types of domes, including balkhi, charxi, chortoq, chorkunjak, mirzoi kulohi, shalg'ami, and others [2,48].

In Central Asia, domes occupy a decisive place in monumental architecture. Their construction varies depending on whether they are flat, elongated, or square in shape. Arches deepen to form iwans, and iwans, growing upwards in circular, square, or octagonal shapes, give rise to domes. Arches, iwans, and domes are interconnected—meaning the dome extends the concept of the iwan.

The structure of domes in Central Asia relies on three main types: stepped corbel, spherical arches, and stalactite-like (sumalaksimon). The stepped corbel and spherical arch forms constitute a type of cantilevered construction. The stalactite-like form emerges from a combination of the other two types: stepped conical and spherical arches. In her work *Domes in the Architecture of Uzbekistan*, B. N. Zapiskina notes that Central Asian architects used clay and baked bricks in dome construction according to well-tested principles, with each stage of construction carefully regulated and interconnected.

Domes are mainly shaped as conical, rounded-conical, faceted tent-like, or faceted forms. In the classification presented by B. N. Zapiskina, the diversity of arches, iwans, and domes creates a unified and interconnected system. Any other dome forms not explicitly mentioned also belong to this system. However, the classification has limitations: some shapes, such as faceted tent-like and faceted domes, do not occur in Bukhara. Other prominent dome forms in Bukhara are also not included. Moreover, Zapiskina's classification does not provide information on the statistical and artistic qualities of these dome types or their historical sequence. Nevertheless, her classification represents a logically generalized scheme, with both achievements and limitations [6,95].

Another remarkable monument built in the Bukhara oasis during the Karakhanid period is the Vobkent Minaret. On the lower decorative tier of the minaret, Kufic inscriptions record the date of the beginning of its construction (1169/97) and mention the name of Sadri Burhaniddin Abdulaziz II of Bukhara, who was likely the patron of the construction. On the upper tier, an inscription in diwani script states that “the minaret was completed in the year 595 (i.e., 1198/99).” [3,30]. The base of the minaret is constructed from twelve-sided baked bricks arranged in a wavy pattern. The diameter of the lower part measures 6.6 meters, while the upper part measures 2.81 meters. The overall height of the minaret is 37.07 meters. Both the core and the decorative elements of the minaret are made of rectangular bricks (27 × 27 × 4–5 cm) and plastered clay; corner bricks were also used. The ornamentation is arranged in pavilion-like tiers, and the wall surfaces are finished with smooth bricks.

The foundation of the minaret is very strong, built from stone and a special brick-clay mixture. Eight stacked ornamental bands are framed with brick dentils, each decorated with different geometric patterns. The minaret tapers upward and is crowned with a muqarnas. The Vobkent Minaret astonishes observers with its geometric similarity to the Kalon Minaret, which is why it is said to have been built by a student of Master Baqo.

During the Mongol period, Bukhara suffered extensive damage, as did the rest of Central Asia. New construction in the city resumed only in the second half of the 13th century. During this period, the large Khonia Madrasah was built by the mother of a two-room structure, and the Masudiya Madrasah was built in the Registan by the Mongol representative Masud. Neither of these has survived. Many ordinary and monumental constructions accelerated in the 14th century,

but only a few of the monuments from that time have reached us. Nevertheless, the two monumental buildings located behind the eastern wall of Bukhara provide insight into the architectural style of that period.

One of the madrasahs built in Bukhara during the Mongol period is the Bayonqulikhon Mausoleum. The Bayonqulikhon Mausoleum (1358) was constructed next to the tomb of Sayfiddin Bokharzi (d. 1261), the head of the Kubrawiya Sufi order, which held extremely high prestige in Bukhara. Shortly thereafter, a magnificent saqana (prayer hall) was built over the grave, and the structures were interconnected. Out of respect for the sacred saqana, the mausoleum behind it is smaller in scale.

Neither of these buildings resembles pre-Mongol mausoleums; they reflect a different era, a distinct approach to architectural issues, and a unique style. Unlike earlier single-room mausoleums, the Bayonqulikhon Mausoleum is architecturally more complex, comprising the saqana-tomb and the preceding shrine, creating a distinctive volumetric composition. Additionally, the mausoleum features a vestibule encompassing both rooms.

The front of the mausoleum is almost flush with the ground, but the adjacent wall sections are connected to a slightly raised, elegantly designed pishtaq, which contributes to the building's charm. The façade and the interior of the shrine, from the foundation to the apex of the dome, are decorated with rich 14th-century tiles—large, colorful items with intricate carved patterns and vibrant glazes. The decorations include geometric designs, varied floral motifs, and occasionally epigraphic inscriptions, with turquoise predominating, complemented by blue and white hues. [4,96].

CONCLUSION

Another such madrasah is the Sayfiddin Bokharzi Mausoleum, which stands out not for ornate decoration, but for the grandeur of its size and volume. Above the tall, faceted tomb and shrine, two egg-shaped domes rise, supporting the building's main dome. Later, in the 15th or 16th century, a magnificent entrance pishtaq was added.

The side pishtaqs along the transverse axis of the shrine do not protrude from the wall surface, yet they rise above it, creating a sense of spatial lightness. This architectural lightness is characteristic of three sides of the mausoleum, where delicate rays of sunlight enter through the upper windows, adding to the elegance of the interior space.

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