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BUKHARA IS THE ANCIENT CITY OF THE EAST

Abstract: The article explores the history of Bukhara is one of the most ancient cities in Central Asia.

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Introduction

Bukhara is one of the most ancient cities in Central Asia. Most of the monuments in the romantic Eastern city, which attract tourists from all over the world, date back to the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, archaeological excavations conducted by the Uzbek Academy of Sciences have revealed thick cultural layers, i.e. traces of ancient settlements in locations providing favourable conditions of life. It has been established as fact that Bukhara never changed its site but grew vertically. In archaeological cross sections of almost 20 metres thick there have been discovered the remnants of dwellings, public buildings, and fortifications. These have been dated on the basis of the artifacts associated with them: ceramic pottery, fireplaces, coins bearing images and inscriptions, jewellery, tools of artisan, i.e. everything that is associated with the activities and culture of human society. The lower layers (the 3rd and 4th centuries B.C. to the 4th century A.D.) of the period of antiquity are the thickest. The upper layers are those of the Medieval city (from the 9th to the beginning of the 12th centuries). This means that Bukhara is at least 2,500 years old, just like Samarkand.

Analysis.

In the ancient past, the Bukhara oasis formed part of Soghdiana, a vast region of Central Asia which had been conquered by Alexander the Great. After seizing Samarkand, Alexander spearheaded his legions deep into the Bukhara oasis.

The process of town formation was very active and ancient settlements surrounding Bukhara developed into the towns of Varakhasha, Vardanzi, Ramish (Ramitan), Kermine, Paikend. Archeological conducting excavation Varakhsha has discovered an early feudal palace of the bukharkhudats displaying exquisite mural paintings in no way inferior to the famous murals of Pendjkent.

All these towns had more less a similar structural pattern: the arks (citadel), the shakhristan- well-planned residential core, and a necropolis beyond the town limits where crypts were built to accommodate ceramic urns with the bones of the dead. Bukhara of the early feudal period also followed this pattern of development. It sprawled over an area of 40 hectares. The rectangular shakhristan was cut into four sections by two crossing main streets which led to gates opening out on all four sides of the world. This traditional layout of lowland cities reflected the ancient world outlook principles of the East. It symbolized the structure of the Universe and reflected the cosmogonical concepts of the order of things in nature and society. In the north- western section of the city (considered to be a place of honour) rose the Ark- the palace fortress of the bukharkudats. Beyond the walls of the Ark and the shakhristan sprawled the commercial and artisan suburbs – the rabad with its blocks of adobe –clay houses. The rabid was stimulated in its growth by the development of caravan trade: Bukhara was on the crossroads of ancient trade routes linking up China, Iran and India.

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At the western gates of the citadel were the divans – the state offices, and the palaces of the nobility. At the eastern gates stood a Christian church. The country's vassalage from the caliphate continued well into the 9th century, even after power in the region was taken over by the Samanids – a local dynasty of rulers. The Samanids minted coins bearing the names of the ruling caliphs and paid taxes to the caliphate treasury irrespective of their almost complete political and economic independence. At the turn of the century Bukhara developed into a major cultural and religious centres of the Islamic world. It became known as the “dome of Islam”, although the city had been a focal point of numerous religions.

Discussion.

Indeed, the toponymy (geographical names) of Bukhara reflects the location of pre-Islamic temples of the Zoroastrians, idol worshippers, Christians, Manichaeists, and Buddhists. According to one version the name of the city is derived from “vihara”, which means Buddhist monastery, Hafizi Tanish, a sixteenth-century annalist of Bukhara wrote: “...the word ‘Bukhara’ is derived from ‘bukhar’ which is the Zoroastrian name for ‘source of knowledge’. It is also closely associated with the idol worshippers of Uighuria and China, where the temples housing idols are called ‘Bukhar’ The real name of the city was Lumdjikat”.

Over the centuries destruction at the site of the **Ark** accumulated an artificial hill 18 metres high. The top layer was built up by the last emirs of Bukhara. The fortifications were built up layer after layer one on top of the other till they developed into a motley facing of the hill. There are few surviving buildings in the Ark since most of the wooden framework structures burnt out in a fire in 1920.

The first of the structures that has survived to this day are the gates of the Ark which face west and open out on the Registan square. The gates were built in the 18th century in the form of a massive portal fringed by double towers.

The **Registan** square to the west of the Ark developed into the city's social centre during the pre-Arab period. Up to the 13th century, the square was built up with administrative buildings and palaces of the nobility. Later, the square was turned into a bazaar: at the entrance to the square sprawled Rasta-iy-tirgaron – rows of stand where gunsmiths sold their ware; in the centre of the square rose Toki Ord Furushon arcade and a domed structure where head-dresses were sold. And all around was the noisy and colourful eastern market. Close to the entrance of the Ark were the arsenal, the office of the kushbegi (military chief), the Poyanda grand mosque, the block mosques of various guilds and also the medresseh Bozori Gusfand belonging to the bachelors' guild. Also there was the dar ash-shifa (hospital), where,

according to ancient sources, patients were given potions and special food for treatment.

At a short distance from the Registan, in a park laid out on the site of an ancient cemetery, stands the gem of Central Asian architecture – the Samanid mausoleum which was the family crypt of a local dynasty that had established a state in Maverannahr practically non-dependent on the caliphate. The mausoleum has been stripped of a two-metre high layer of sediments and fully restored. It is now open for observation from all sides as was initially planned by the builders. The monument marks a new era in the development of Central Asian architecture which was revived after the Arab conquest of the region. It is quite obvious that on this ancient land there continued to develop an ancient tradition but in a new quality: baked brick construction technology, the construction and artistic potentials of brickwork, the means of architectural expressiveness are all accredited to our time, although they display traditional features dating back to the pre-Islamic culture.

Along the road leading from the park stands another mausoleum – **Chashma-iy-Ayub** (Jove's source). It is a complicated monument, one which was repeatedly reconstructed during the period from the 14th to the 19th centuries and which has developed the form of an elongated prism crowned with domes of various forms covering a wide range of premises. The silhouette of the building is highlighted by a double conical dome resting on a cylindrical drum which marks the water spring.

Medieval Bukhara is an architectural phenomenon. In the 16th-17th centuries the creative development of earlier systems of architecture continued, despite the economic depression, incessant strives of feudal lords, gradual breaking of Central Asia's broad contacts with other regions in the times of the great discoveries in the West. The turn of the 16th century was a restless period of unstable authority of the first Uzbek monarchs and transfer of the capital from Samarkand to Bukhara alternately. None the less, even then, original pieces of architecture came into being that testified to the fact that the creative spirit of the builders had not become extinct. The city was enriched with Mir-I Arab Medresseh, the central ensemble of Po-I Kalyan (Pa-I Kalyan) of the 1530s, the wonderful parish mosques of Khodja Zain ad-Din and Balyand: the Bakh ad-Din country ensemble was initiated at that time as well.

In the 12th century **Kalon Minaret** was built by Arslankhon, the Emir of the Karakhanids' dynasty. This wonderful minaret is reveted with annealed and polished bricks in the style figured decoration. Its height is 50 metres, it has a round widening towards the ground tower having the diameter of 9 metres at the basis. The top of the minaret, which resembles the turban, has the form of a cornice and is richly decorated. In the centre of the lancet support two names of Arslankhan and its master Bako were

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written. There is a spiral staircase inside the minaret leading to the top of it. Minaret was built close to the mosques and madrassahs or were within their area. The top and the walls of the Kalon Minaret served to strengthen the voice of the Muezzin convoking Muslims for praying.

The 12th-16th centuries. The **Kalon Mosque** was built by the order of Ubaydullakhan, one of the representatives of the Sheibanids' dynasty. According to the inscriptions written on the marble plate at the entrance to the mosque there had been announced a special order by Ubaydullakhan, saying that each makhalla should take part in construction or restoration of this or that part of the mosque, and for that purpose they would be duty free. Restoration work carried out in 1514 was closely connected with the name of the painter and calligrapher Bayazid Purroni. The Kalon Mosque was a very respectable place which played a significant role in training a lot of prominent scholars and thinkers of that time.

The 12th-16th centuries. The **Magok-i-Attari Mosque** was built on the place of the former Zoroastrians church that was situated on a relatively low place. The Persian name Maghoki (depth) came out of this. Time was passing, the mosque already was under earth. According to the inscriptions on the

eastern façade of the mosque in 1547 Abdulaziz ibn Abdullah planned to demolish the old mosque and to construct a new one on its place. But Mahdumi Azam, the leader of the Naqshbandiya trend and the religious master of the Khan, didn't allow him to do so. Such outstanding pirs like Abdukhalik Ghijdivani, Bakhauddin Naqshband are said to have taken part in some ceremonies in this mosque. Following the instructions of his religious leader Abdulazizkhan built a new mosque to the west of the old one.

Conclusion.

In Uzbekistan, after gaining independence, the old times monuments began to be paid much attention. Nowadays, many medressehs, palaces, ancient architectural monuments are being reconstructed. A number of measures on their restoration are taken to give an opportunity for the future generations to get acquainted with their ancestors' craftsmanship.

Majestic buildings, wide avenues, mosques and medressehs have been erected, markets and rows of stalls in the Oriental style as well as modern hotels are being constructed to decorate the city. Considerable changes have taken place in the life of people of ancient Bukhara.

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