

ARCHITECTURAL AND TOWN-PLANNING HERITAGE OF THE KITABO-SHAKHRISABZ OASIS FROM ANTIQUITY TO THE BEGINNING OF THE XX CENTURY (RECONSTRUCTION ISSUES)

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Abstract

This article examines the architectural and town-planning heritage of the Kitabo-Shakhrisabz oasis from antiquity to the beginning of the XX century, paying special attention to the reconstruction of the ancient archaeological sites of the region, including Uzunkyr, Sangirtepa and Padayataktepa.

Keywords: Shakhrisabz, Kitab, Uzunkyr, Sangirtepa, Padayataktepa, Kitabo-Shakhrisabz oasis.

Introduction

Shakhrisabz is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia, with a unique architectural and urban heritage. Its origin goes back to ancient times. For centuries, the city played a key role as an important junction at the intersection of the largest caravan routes connecting Central Asia with the East and West.

Due to its strategic location, fertile valleys and densely populated surroundings, Shakhrisabz has repeatedly become the scene of significant historical events.

The history of the city, identified with ancient Kesh, covers a number of not fully studied stages of its formation. In written sources, Kesh is mentioned from the VII to the XIX centuries. However, the data of archaeological excavations conducted at the end of the 20th century in the upper reaches of the Kitabo-Shakhrisabz oasis indicate that the formation of urban culture in this region is associated with earlier stages of the development of ancient cities throughout Central Asia.

In the 1980s, archaeologists of the Tashkent State University (now the National University of Uzbekistan named after Mirzo Ulugbek) discovered the ruins of a large urban center - Uzunkyr, with an area of about 70-80 hectares, dating back to the VIII-VI centuries BC.

The Shurobsay archaeological microoasis included three separately located settlements - Uzunkyr, Padayataktepa and Sangirtepa, which together formed a single urban ensemble of ancient Kesh.

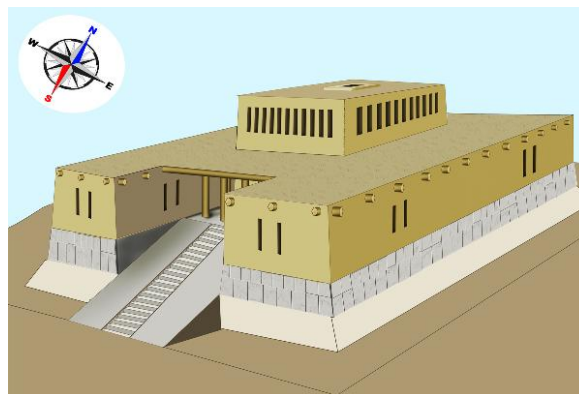


The total area of this complex is estimated at about 95 hectares.

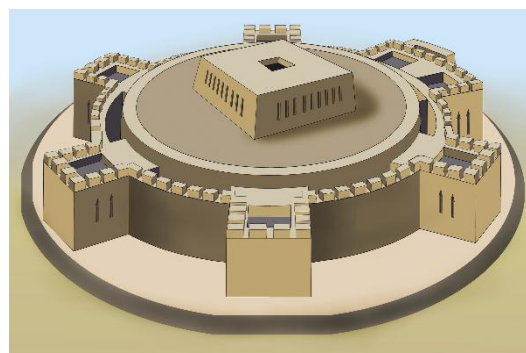


Fig.1. Graphic reconstruction of the Uzunkir settlement of the VIII - VI centuries BC. by N. Gilmanova

Padayataktepa was a citadel (upper city), Uzunkyr was a site with preserved fragments of the city defensive wall, Sangirtepa was a structure located outside the city walls, which existed as a temple complex at an early stage.



Rice. 2. Reconstruction of the temple complex period of Sangir III (VII-VI centuries BC), by N. Gilmanova



Rice. 3. Reconstruction fortified structure (castle of the Chionite period), period of Sangir IV (IV-V centuries), by N. Gilmanova



By the end of the III – the beginning of the II century BC, Uzunkyr lost its importance and fell into decay. During this period, a new urban center with an area of more than 40 hectares appeared on the territory of modern Kitab. The existence of this city is confirmed by a fragment of an ancient wall discovered along the Aksu-Darya River in the 1960s. elements characteristic of the ancient building tradition are traced.

The first written mention of the ancient Kesh is found in the Chinese chronicles of the 1st century BC, in particular, in the history of the senior house of Han, where it is designated under the names of Suse or Suhe. These names, in all likelihood, are associated with toponyms originating from the area of settlement of the Sogdians: Suse, Sute, Sude.

Obviously, the formation of a new ancient city in the area of modern Kitab took place in 329-327 BC, during the period when the troops of Alexander the Great crushed the Achaemenid state, of which Sogd was a part. After the collapse of the empire of Alexander the Great, ancient Kesh began to develop south of Kitab - in the territory now known as Baland-tepa.

The settlement of Baland-tepa reached its peak in the first half of the 7th century, occupying an area comparable in area to the city of Kitab. During this period, its own coins were minted here with the names of local rulers - Dije, Shishpir and Akhurpat, which indicates the presence of autonomous power and a developed urban culture.

For unknown reasons, in the X-XI centuries, this urban center fell into decay and ceased to exist. A new stage in the history of the region began with the shift of the urban core to the south - to the territory that later became known as Shakhrisabz.

For the first time, the name Shakhrisabz ("Green City") was recorded on silver coins minted in 752 AH / 1351 AD on behalf of Khan Buyan-Kuli. On the same coins, there is also an older name of the city - Kish (Kesh). Probably, until the XIV century, the city was known under the name of Kish (Kesh), while from the XV century a new name was fixed - Shakhrisabz. Nevertheless, during the XIV-XV centuries, both names continued to be used in parallel, which is a typical phenomenon in historical toponymy (compare, for example, with the parallel use of the names Binkat, Shash and Tashkent).

According to archaeological research, as well as written sources, Shakhrisabz has preserved to this day the key elements of urban planning, formed in the era of the Timurids and partially supplemented in the XVII-XIX centuries.

The main part of the city - Hisar - was a rectangle stretched from south to north, surrounded on all sides by powerful fortress walls erected from plush blocks. By order of Amir Temur in 1378, fortress walls with a total length of about 4 km were built, their thickness at the base reached 8-9 meters, and the height was about 11 meters, although initially it was even higher.

Every 50 meters, the walls were strengthened with semicircular towers. On the outside of the fortress there was a deep moat filled with water, over which wooden bridges were thrown.

The fortress system of Hisar included four main gates. In the XIX century, they had the following names: northern - Samarkand, western - Chirokchi, eastern - Kunchikar, southern - Yakkabag. The Samarkand Gate was distinguished by massive iron leaves decorated with inscriptions. These leaves were brought by Amir Temur from Herat, for which the gate was called "Akhanin" - Iron.

The territory of Hisar was crossed by two main highways, dividing the city into four sectors, each of which had its own functional purpose.



In the northwestern part there were quarters of the nobility and clergy. In the north-east there was a magnificent palace complex of Amir Temur - Ak Saray. The southwestern sector was occupied by handicraft quarters, while the southeastern part was reserved for religious and memorial buildings - the architectural ensembles of Dorut Tilovat and Dorus Saodat. There were also shrines - the tombs of Amir Temur's father, Amir Taragay, and his spiritual mentor - Sheikh Shamseddin Kulal.

Did Kesh remain on the site of modern Kitab or did its center move to the territory of Shakhrisabz? Archaeological research conducted in Shakhrisabz allows us to quite clearly trace the main stages of the settlement of this territory.

The earliest period may belong to ancient times. Thus, according to B.N. Kastalsky, four obols of Eucratides (ancient Greek coins dating back to 171-155 BC) were found on the territory of the city. However, no cultural layers directly related to this period have yet been recorded in Shakhrisabz. Fragments of pottery from that time are also extremely rare.

On the other hand, the layers of the early medieval time (V-VII centuries) are much wider and are recorded in different parts of the city. The south-western corner of the territory within the fortress wall, where a large tepe of this period is located, stands out. Despite the destruction, it reaches more than 200 m in length with a thickness of the cultural layer up to 2.5 m. Similar layers were found in the Chor-Su area - the central part of the city, in the north near Ak Sarai, as well as throughout the entire urban area from south to north, including the outskirts, where such archaeological sites as Baland-tepa (Zindan-tepa) and other tepe are located.

The combination of these data testifies to the existence in the early medieval period on the site of modern Shakhrisabz of a large settlement with a complex planning structure, the size of which correlates with the descriptions of the capital of Kesh, given in the Chinese source "Bei Shi".

During archaeological excavations in Shakhrisabz, a significant number of coins of the VI-VII centuries AD were discovered, including five coins with the name of the ruler of Kesh - Akhurpat. There are no similar finds for Kitab, which indicates a more active monetary economy and developed trade in the territory of Shakhrisabz during this period. This allows us to assume that Shakhrisabz in early medieval times was already a complex urban organism, while Kitab, most likely, served as a dehkan fortified settlement, the core of which was a castle located on the site of the current Bekovskaya Kala.

One of the arguments in favor of the late formation of the city on the site of Shakhrisabz is sometimes called the absence of a fortress wall of an earlier time than the wall of 1378, built by order of Amir Temur. However, it is worth noting that in Kitab there are no traces of the city walls dating back to the early Middle Ages.

Meanwhile, the historian Hafizi Abru (died 1490) writes in his writings:

"Kesh had an ancient fortress wall, but it was destroyed. His Majesty Sahibkiron (Amir Temur) – may Allah bless his glory – rebuilt the walls of this city in 780 AH/1378-1379."

An analysis of the terminology used by Hafizi Abru shows that he usually applied the epithet "ancient" to objects of pre-Islamic times, which strengthens the argument in favor of the existence of urban development on the territory of Shakhrisabz long before the Temurid era. However, the location and structure of the ancient walls ("bandi-kadym"), which, according to Hafizi Abru, had already been destroyed by the time of Amir Temur, remain unclear.



Thus, it can be concluded with confidence that the city of Kesh (now Shakhrisabz) long before the construction of new fortress walls by order of Amir Temur already had an ancient defensive system, probably dating back to the early medieval period. The analysis of archaeological data confirmed by the presence of cultural layers and fragments of fortifications allows us to assert that already in the V-VII centuries A.D., the center of Kesh was located on the territory of modern Shakhrisabz.

It seems likely that the transfer of the capital to a new place was carried out by a ruler named Dije, since the former center - the ancient city on the territory of Kitab - for some reason lost its importance.

It is this new Kesh-Shakhrisabz that is described in the Arab-Persian sources of the 9th-10th centuries, since the archaeological layers of this time are practically not recorded at the site of Kitab. No traces of dense and continuous habitation were found here either in the IX-X centuries, or later, which excludes the possibility of the existence of the inner or outer city of Kesh, as some researchers suggest.

At the same time, in Shakhrisabz, thick layers of the IX-X centuries have been recorded, covering both the central and peripheral areas of the city - both inside and outside the fortress walls. The territory of the city during this period was large enough to accommodate all the elements listed in the Arabic-Persian written sources when describing Kesh: quhandiz (citadel), inner and outer medina, inner and outer rabad.

Thus, the capital Kesh was located on the territory of modern Shakhrisabz since the VI-VII centuries and continued to develop here in the following centuries. Apparently, since the XIV century, the name "Kesh" was gradually replaced by a new one - "Shakhrisabz" ("Green City"), which is preserved to this day.

At the end of the XIV - beginning of the XV century, Shakhrisabz reached its apogee, becoming the second capital of the state of Amir Temur. During this period, as well as under the subsequent Timurids, outstanding architectural monuments were erected here: the grandiose Ak Saray Palace, as well as the cult and memorial complexes of Dorut Tilovat and Dorus Saodat.

The chronological development of the Kitabo-Shakhrisabz oasis can be divided into several periods:

1. Ancient period (I millennium BC): The city of Uzunkir, dating back to the VII-VI centuries BC, was surrounded by a powerful defensive wall and represented a significant urban center. It should be included in the reconstruction of the early stage of Kesh.
2. Ancient period (IV-I centuries BC – III century AD): It is represented by the remains of architectural structures on the territory of ancient Kitab. It is necessary to conduct additional research, in particular, on the southern slopes of the Bekovskaya Kala, where the localization of ancient buildings is possible. The found artifacts are subject to museumification.
3. Early medieval period (V-IX centuries): The city center shifted to the Baland-tepa zone, located between Kitab and modern Shakhrisabz. Unfortunately, the territory is now built up, which complicates field research, but information about it must be recorded in scientific and security documentation.
4. Medieval period (X-XV centuries): At this stage, the image of medieval Kesh was formed - the city of Shakhrisabz, which preserved the fortress walls, historically formed structure and



outstanding architectural complexes of the Timurid era: Ak Saray, Dorut Tilovat, Dorus Saodat, etc.

5. The period of the Bukhara Khanate (XVI-XX centuries):

During the period of the Bukhara Khanate (XVI-XX centuries), Shakhrisabz was in the shadow of Bukhara, but the development of architecture in this region did not stop. Despite the decrease in the scale of construction, religious and public buildings were erected in the city, the existing fortification systems were strengthened. In Shakhrisabz, the strengthening of the city walls and caravanserais continued, which indicates the importance of the city as a strategic point on trade routes. brick walls with towers, and the main gate was strengthened with massive portals. New mosques, madrasahs and khanakans were built in Shakhrisabz, which served as centers of spiritual and educational life.

Preserving its traditional historical and cultural appearance, modern Shakhrisabz has entered a new phase of development, due to the social, economic and cultural transformations taking place in the Republic of Uzbekistan at the present stage. Today, the city has significantly expanded beyond the boundaries of medieval Hisar. Its space is actively built up with new buildings, public structures; on the main square there is a monument to Amir Temur, which has become one of the symbols of the city.

The processes of modern urbanization continue, while the awareness of the high historical and cultural significance of Shakhrisabz is preserved. Its unique architectural monuments, formed in the 15th century, are part of the world cultural heritage and require a systematic and comprehensive study of both the objects themselves and their urban environment.

Unfortunately, only a few architectural monuments reflecting certain stages of the historical development of Shakhrisabz have survived to this day. Limited archaeological research within the area of historical structures does not allow us to fully reveal the complex and multi-layered history of the city.

The invasion of modern architectural forms and buildings has a negative impact on the historical and cultural environment. It disrupts the visual and spatial relationship between monuments of the past and modern architecture, undermining the integrity of the historical landscape.

Unjustified decisions on the construction of modern objects on the territory of the protected historical center cause irreparable damage to the appearance of the city, which was previously included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. A particularly critical example was the demolition of the residential quarter of the "jewelers", on the site of which a stylized "quarter of craftsmen" was erected, as well as the construction of fountains, a new wall isolating the historical center from traditional urban development.

These actions led to the loss of authentic urban life and turned Shakhrisabz into a deserted urban space that lost the authenticity and living connection of times, violating the Law "On the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Sites" and the Urban Planning Code.



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