



ICHAN CASTLE IS A WITNESS OF THE PAST AND THE PRESENT

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Abstract: In this article, the general history of the architectural structure of the Ichan Castle, which has a high place in spreading the name of Central Asia to the world, and is considered a masterpiece of Khiva, is highlighted. Also, information is given about the architectural monuments that make up the Ichan fortress, its gates, and the works of its protection today.

Key words: Central Asia, Khorezm, Urganch, Dishan Qala, Shahristan, Rabad, Bogcha, Polvan, Tosh, Ota, Anusha Khan, Muhammad Rahimkhan, Olloqulikhan, Muhammad Aminkhan, Pahlavon Mahmud.

The Central Asian region occupies a special place on world maps with its rich historical and cultural heritage. This region has long been the center of great civilizations and is known as a country of ancient cities, great scholars and miraculous monuments. In particular, one of the ancient cities located here - Khiva, has gained special attention for its architectural monuments, historical culture and important role on the stage of history. The city of Khiva is especially famous for its historical fortress - Ichan Kala, located in its center, surrounded by strong walls. Ichan Kala, with its antiquity, unique architectural complexes and historical significance, occupies an important place not only in the history of Uzbekistan, but also in the history of all of Central Asia. It became the political and cultural center of the Khiva Khanate. Behind the walls of Ichan Kala, many rulers lived for many years, trade, science and culture developed, and architectural styles of different eras were combined. Today, Ichan Kala is recognized not only as a historical monument, but also as a symbol of the cultural heritage of the Uzbek people.

Ichan Kala, included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990, has gained worldwide recognition for its antiquity, architectural richness and good preservation. At the same time, this fortress has changed the historical and cultural image of all of Central Asia and serves as an important tool in conveying the rich heritage of its ancestors to new generations. This article will discuss in detail the history of Ichan Kala, its architectural monuments and modern preservation. It will also express its views on the significance of this monument for the culture of Uzbekistan and the whole world. Khorezm is an oasis in Central Asia with a school of architecture rich in its own unique styles. The architectural structures that emerged in this region demonstrate the uniqueness of the Khorezm school of architecture with their elegant decorations and quiet patterns.

In the 18th-19th centuries, many buildings were built in the Khiva Khanate. Especially in the cities of Urganch and Khiva, the capitals of the khanate, many palaces, mosques and madrasas, houses, caravanserais, and covered bazaars were built. Architectural monuments in Khiva were mainly built in the Ichan (inner) fortress. The Dishan (outer) fortress, which was the summer residence of the khan, is also a rare example of architecture [1]. Its current appearance and architecture were formed mainly during the 14th-19th centuries. The main development of the Ichan fortress falls on the period of the Khiva Khanate - it was during this period that the fortress walls were strengthened and important structures in the interior were built. Ichan fortress, the capital of Khiva, gained a reputation as an important trade and cultural center

located on trade routes in Central Asia due to its strategic location. The walls that define the city's borders are about ten kilometers long, and their construction began in the 17th century and was improved in subsequent centuries. The height of the walls reaches an average of 8-10 meters, and defensive towers are located on them. Many historical buildings have been built inside the Ichan Kala. Among them are ancient minarets dating back to the 14th century, mosques, madrasahs, and palaces built in the 18th-19th centuries. These monuments demonstrate the high achievements of urban planning and architecture in different periods.

Ichan Kala is the inner fortress of the city of Khiva, distinguished by its unique architectural and urban features. This area offers ample opportunities for studying architectural and urban compositions, which reflect not only a complex of historical monuments, but also a perfect urban planning system. In the 19th century, the city of Khiva was divided into two parts separated by a wall. One of them was called Dishan Qala - the Outer City (Fortress), and the other was called Ichan Qala - the Inner City (Fortress).

It is known that in the East, the inner part of the city, that is, the center, was called Shahrستان, and the outer part was called Rabod. The territory of Ichan Qala was partially separated from the outer Dishan Qala by a high and strong wall called "kungurador". Dishan Qala had the appearance of a high fortified hill and served as a defense between these two areas. Four main gates were used to enter Ichan Qala - the Bagcha, Palvan, Tosh and Ota gates[2]. Each gate was an important part of the city's defense system and was comprehensively fortified.

The history of the creation and development of Ichan Qala is divided into three main periods:

First, the period of restoration after the Mongol invasion: During this period, monuments such as the Sayid Alovuddin Mausoleum were built in Ichan Qala. This period is considered an important turning point in the history of Khiva, because although the city was damaged as a result of the Mongol invasion, the process of restoration began.

The second, the period of revival in the 16th-17th centuries: During this period, the architectural monuments of Ichan Qala significantly developed. In 1657, the Anushakhon bathhouse was built, in 1675 the White Mosque with a peshayvan was built, and in 1688 the Khojamberdibek madrasah began to function. Also, in 1686-1688, the khan's reception hall was built. During this period, the cultural and political life of the city was revived, and a new breath was breathed into the architectural style and urban planning.

The third, the period of revival in the 18th-20th centuries: During this period, Ichan Qala was further expanded and modernized. The walls were strengthened, new structures were built, and the social life of the city developed. Ichan Qala attracts the attention of historians and architects not only with its complex of historical monuments, but also with its perfect urban planning system. This collection of monuments is of great importance in preserving the rich cultural heritage of Uzbekistan[3]. Also, during this period, mosques, madrasahs, tims and toqls were built based on local architectural traditions, and a highway was built between the Ota and Polvan gates. During this period, many historical mosques were rebuilt, and new minarets were erected. Tims and toqls were built facing the Kutlug Murad Inak madrasa. At the same time, during the reigns of Muhammad Rahimkhan (1806-1825), Alloqulikhan (1825-1842) and Muhammad Aminkhan (1845-1855), large-scale construction was carried out here. During this period, magnificent palaces, madrasahs, and mausoleums were built, further enriching the architectural appearance of the city. In particular, the Toshhovli Palace was built, and the Pahlavan Mahmud Mausoleum was erected. The Kalta Minor Minaret was also built during this period. The construction of Ichan Kala continued the tradition of placing buildings opposite each other, using the "face-to-face" method of construction, which has long been used in Central Asia [4]. This method is one of the important aspects of urban planning, demonstrating not only its defensive, but also its aesthetic and useful aspects.

Today, Ichan Kala operates as an open-air museum. The city is surrounded by fortress walls, the old part of which has been turned into a state historical and archaeological museum-reserve. This territory, which occupies an area of about 26 hectares, has preserved the unique appearance of the ancient city. Ichan Kala is not just a museum, but also a place where the population lives. About 300 families live here, mainly engaged in crafts. Therefore, Ichan Kala is not only a place of historical monuments, but also a lively city. About 60 historical buildings have been preserved in the territory of Ichan Qala. Among them are the famous Juma Mosque with 213 wooden columns, as well as the Islam-Khoja Minaret, a symbol of Khiva,

and many other historical monuments[5].

Ichan Kala is of particular importance not only as a complex of historical architectural monuments, but also as an active cultural center where the population lives and is engaged in crafts. This fact ensures the preservation of the ancient city atmosphere, further enhancing its historical image. The walls and historical gates surrounding the city demonstrate the strength of its defense system, as well as the development of urban planning traditions. As noted, Ichan Kala consists of four gates, each of which has its own unique location and significance. In particular, the Western Gate is the Father's Gate, this gate means "gate of the fathers" and is the main gate for entering Ichan Kala. The gate housed 43 shops and there was also a tax collection room. The Father's Gate was restored in 1975. Its height is 10 meters and its width is 4 meters.

South Gate – Stone Gate, also known as “Stone Gate”, was built in the 1830s–1840s during the reign of Alloquli Khan and is 9 meters high. It is considered one of the most durable gates. The structure consists of six sections with two domes and a passage along the central axis. On the sides of the gate were guard and customs rooms. The Stone Gate was the main entry point for caravans coming from the Caspian Sea.

East Gate – Polvan Gate, also known as the “Gate of Warriors”, the Polvan Gate was built in the form of a stone walkway and was used as a trading post. The gate had six domes, with two shops under each passage. This gate was also built during the reign of Alloquli Khan, in 1835. The right side of the passage served as a slave market until 1873. The empty spaces inside served as cells for rebels and refugees. The gate was also known to the people as the "Pashab Darvoza", that is, the "Slave Gate", because it was there that the Khan's decrees were announced and criminals were punished.

Northern Gate – Garden Gate, called the “Garden Gate”, there was a garden where flowers and fruits were grown next to this gate. The height of the gate is 8.5 meters[6]. The four gates of the Ichan Castle play an important role in the city's defense system. Each gate has its own size, shape and function, serving to protect the city.

Ichan Castle is an ancient fortress of Khiva, which was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1990. This historical monument is one of the most important architectural and cultural heritage of Uzbekistan. The walls and internal structures of the fortress were built in the Middle Ages, and large-scale work on its protection and restoration began in the second half of the 20th century. After its inclusion in the UNESCO list, international cooperation intensified and modern conservation measures were introduced to preserve and restore the historical appearance of Ichan Castle. Today, Ichan Kala is recognized as a cultural monument not only of Khiva, but also of all of Central Asia[7]. The State Museum-Reserve preserves about 40,000 rare, main fund exhibits that illuminate the more than 3,000-year-long history of Khorezm, its spiritual and material culture.

In conclusion, Ichan Kala, with its rich history, unique architectural monuments and cultural heritage, is of great importance not only for Uzbekistan, but also for the whole world. This fortress has long been formed as a strategic and cultural center, many historical events have been embodied within its walls. The inclusion of Ichan Kala in the UNESCO World Heritage List has further increased the historical value of Ichan Kala and its significance for the world community. Therefore, Ichan Kala should be carefully protected as a cultural heritage and preserved in good condition from generation to generation.

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