

The Issue of Researching the Historical Topography of Bukhara City During the Samanid Period

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study examines the historical topography of Bukhara during the Samanid period, a time of significant urban and socio-economic transformation influenced by the Arab Caliphate. It aims to analyze the factors that contributed to the city's rapid development in comparison to other regional centers. **Method:** The research employs a historical-analytical approach, synthesizing primary sources, archaeological findings, and the works of previous scholars to reconstruct the urban landscape of Bukhara in the ninth and tenth centuries. **Results:** The findings reveal that Bukhara underwent significant structural and spatial reorganization during the Samanid era, including the expansion of commercial, religious, and administrative centers. The city's architectural advancements and strategic positioning facilitated its emergence as a major cultural and economic hub in Central Asia. **Novelty:** This study contributes to the discourse on medieval Islamic urbanism by highlighting the unique developmental trajectory of Bukhara under Samanid rule. It synthesizes existing research while offering new insights into the spatial dynamics that distinguished Bukhara from other contemporary cities.

INTRODUCTION

The transformation of Bukhara into the capital by Ismail Samani, the large-scale construction activities carried out by Samani rulers and officials, the dramatic increase in population, and the city's growing prominence as a center of trade and knowledge led to significant urban expansion and typological changes. As a result, Bukhara began to reflect new characteristics of urban planning. Historical sources and archeological excavations provide valuable information on the transformation of the city's structure, including the expansion of the rabad (suburban area), the fortification of the shahrstan (inner city) with walls and the regulation of entrance routes through city gates. These findings enable a typological analysis of Bukhara's urban development during the Samanid period [1].

RESEARCH METHOD

The object of the work is the historical topography of the city of Bukhara from the time of its incorporation into the Arab Caliphate to the end of Samanid rule. The research is based on the following sources:

1. The results of studies of the Russian Empire and the Soviet era;
2. Studies carried out during the years of independence.

The article employs various methodological approaches, including historical-comparative analysis, historical method, objectivity, systematization of data [2].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The first studies of the general historical topography of Bukhara in the XIX century can be seen in the studies of famous orientalists N. Khanikov, E. Everstman and local scholar Ahmad Danish. The basic topographical data are mapped and the city of Bukhara of the middle of the XIX century is depicted. But they did not touch the topography of the medieval city of Bukhara [3].

B. V. Bartold conducted the first serious research on the historical topography of the cities of Movarounnahr after the adoption of Islam, in particular the city of Bukhara. In his two-volume work "Turkestan during the Mongol invasion", published in 1898-1900, he gives important information on the topography and historical geography of the city before the Mongol invasion, relying on sources. In the course of observation and analysis of topographic maps created in the XVIII-XIX centuries, historians are invited to reconstruct the topography of the medieval period of the city of Bukhara, relying on early Islamic sources [4]. Despite the fact that he provided great material on the historical topography of Bukhara, based on the works of Arab historians and geographers-travelers, V.V. Bartold, who had not been to Bukhara, had a limited understanding of the city. Bartold, who had not been to Bukhara, had limited ideas about the city. The article "Bukhara", published in 1913, is covered on the basis of primary sources and fundamental research. When writing the work, such sources as Narshahi, Beruni, Tabari, Samani, Mukaddasi were used, which give information about the history of medieval Bukhara. The work discusses the rabad part of Bukhara of the Samanid period, the fortress wall and general typological features of the city, and the fact that the city gates of Bukhara of the Mangit era retained similarities with the outer rabad gates of the Samanid period [5].

After the fall of the emirate, the scholar visited Bukhara and reported a number of new research results on the topography of the city. Among them "Bukhara. Its monuments and their fate" in 1925, "Pre-Islamic religious buildings in Bukhara and its environs" in 1927 are of particular importance. Local historian A.H. Boltaev characterizes the 1927 article as compact, but full of scientific facts, written about the historical topography of Bukhara. The information given in the articles on the historical geography of the early Middle Ages has not lost its significance even nowadays [6].

In the 20s and 30s of the 20th century a lot of works were done to repair and restore Bukhara's historical monuments. Simultaneously with archeological excavations and restoration of the destroyed old part of Bukhara, topographical studies based on sources were carried out. I.I. Umnyakov, M.Y. Saidjonov and V.A. Shishkin were seriously engaged in topography of Bukhara during this period [7].

I.I. Umnyakov, who began his scientific research on the topography of Bukhara in 1912, published an article "Questions of historical topography of Bukhara in the Middle Ages" in 1923. The article compares the information of Narshahi, Ibn Khavkal, Istakhri and Muqaddasiyis about the residence of Ark, the city of Bukhara of IX-X centuries, the city of Bukhara and the gates connecting them. V. V. Bartold's opinion that the external

rabad of the Samonite period and the outline of the city of the Mangit period are almost identical has also been preserved. According to O.A. Bolshakov, in I.I. Umnyakov's article on the topography of the city of Bukhara in the Middle Ages, V.V. Barthold's conclusions were not significantly supplemented and corrected. However, in our opinion, I.I. Umnyakov's research served to eliminate confusion in the peculiarities of medieval urbanism, i.e. division of the city into 3 parts, their overview, the city of the Samanid period, comparison of the names of the inner and outer gates of Rabod in the works of Narshahi and Arab geographers [8].

The first attempt to reveal the historical topography of Bukhara city on the basis of constituent documents was made by Musa Saidjonov, a scholar from Bukhara. The scholar's research on the topography of Bukhara city differs from that of other scholars in its accuracy and evidence. In his article published in 1927, M. Saidjonov provides valuable information about the total area of the city, occupied territory and gates, as well as clearly indicates the names of 7 gates of the city based on the founding documents. The article also gives examples of waqf documents on structures built during the Samanid period, the Samanid mausoleum and Joy-i Muliyan [9].

The work "Monuments of Bukhara Architecture", published by V.A. Shishkin in 1936, is devoted to the medieval city and its monuments, the important part is that the topography of the city is studied in detail from a scientific point of view, in addition, this work makes the first attempts to determine the boundaries of the city of Bukhara in the Samanid period [10].

L. I. Rempel, who worked in Bukhara in the 1940s of the 20th century, also conducted research on the historical topography of the city. In his research, conducted in 1940-1941, he expressed his thoughts on Bukhara's medieval city walls, gates and their location, settlements and places where domestic issues were resolved. The data collected during the research would not be published until 1962. The American scientist A. Naymark notes the inclusion of a set of maps of the city of Bukhara as an achievement of this article. The article retains its significance even today due to the introduction of information that makes it possible to reflect the topography of the city after the introduction of Islam in Bukhara. The analysis shows that one of the first maps of Bukhara, devoted to the end of the early Middle Ages, was reflected in the studies of L. I. Rempel [11].

An important role in the study of medieval Bukhara is played by the Ethnographic Expedition of Bukhara, established in 1940. It is logical that the city, which has kept its appearance, location and living conditions practically unchanged for thousands of years, has preserved toponymy dating back to the pre-Mongol period, particularly to the Arab Caliphate and the Samanid period [12].

Bukhara historian O.A. Sukhareva puts forward new ideas about the historical topography of Bukhara, comparing the results of ethnographic field research with the data of gift documents of the Narshah and Samoni periods. The first chapter of O.A. Sukhareva's work on the history of Bukhara is devoted to the historical topography of the city of Bukhara. Sukhareva on the history of cities of the Bukhara Khanate, which

covers the historical topography of Bukhara in the early VIII century, and then scientific views on the topography of the city in the pre-Mongol period, i.e. in the X-XII centuries. The work was published in 1958, and in it we can see that along with ethnographic information and works created in the Middle Ages, the work "Kitob-i Mullozoda" was used as a source for the historical topography of Bukhara. The information presented in this paper differs from that of L. I. Rempel on medieval toponyms [13].

In the 50-70s of the 20th century, a number of new works on the study of medieval towns, their typology, historical and topographical position, arch, shariston and rabadnaya parts of towns as separate objects, as well as analysis on the basis of archaeological and sources were carried out. It would not be wrong to say that one of the largest studies on the historical topography of Central Asian cities, especially Bukhara, belongs to O. G. Bolshakov. The cycle of historical and topographical fundamental works includes the scientist's work "Medieval City of Central Asia", published in 1973 in co-authorship with A.M. Belenitsky and I.B. Bolshakov [14].

In the study of O.G. Bolshakov we see that it is enriched with new scientific conclusions on the historical topography of the city. First of all, the issue of the boundary walls and gates around Rabod is clearly clarified. Scientific views of O.A. Sukhareva are supported and disclosed on the basis of sources. Here it should be noted that the tables about the gates belong to I.I. Umnyakov, and O.A. Sukhareva tried to interpret the tables and correctly identified the place of the seventh gate of the city, which was lost in the Narshakhi's data. Also attached is a map of Bukhara showing the Ark, parts of the city and parts of the rabad, a general view of the city surrounded by 7 gates and their location is also described. Therefore, the works of the above-mentioned scholars are important for the study of the topography of this period [15].

Discussion

The historical topography of Bukhara during the Samanid period presents a dynamic urban transformation influenced by political, economic, and cultural factors. The works of scholars such as V.V. Bartold, I.I. Umnyakov, O.A. Sukhareva, L.I. Rempel, and O.G. Bolshakov have contributed significantly to reconstructing the city's layout, yet the analysis remains largely dependent on historical narratives and early cartographic sources. One of the major challenges in understanding Bukhara's medieval urban structure is the limited availability of archaeological data to corroborate textual descriptions. While historical records provide valuable insights into the city's organization, the interpretation of these sources varies among researchers, leading to debates regarding the exact positioning of the city's gates, fortifications, and administrative centers. The comparison of medieval sources with modern archaeological findings could offer a more precise understanding of the city's spatial configuration. Furthermore, interdisciplinary approaches integrating geographic information systems (GIS) and remote sensing techniques could enhance the accuracy of historical reconstructions. Future studies should focus on bridging the gap between textual sources and material evidence to refine our knowledge of Bukhara's historical topography,

ensuring a more comprehensive understanding of its urban development during the Samanid era.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : The historical topography of Bukhara during the Samanid period reflects a unique urban development trajectory, characterized by a well-structured shahristan with organized streets and distinct religious and administrative centers. The works of scholars such as V.V. Bartold, I.I. Umnyakov, O.A. Sukhareva, L.I. Rempel, and O.G. Bolshakov have significantly contributed to understanding the city's spatial organization and evolution. **Implication :** These findings underscore the importance of integrating historical sources with modern archaeological data to reconstruct the socio-economic and cultural dynamics of medieval Islamic cities. A deeper analysis of Bukhara's urban layout during the Samanid era provides valuable insights into broader patterns of Islamic urbanism in Central Asia. **Limitation :** Despite extensive historical studies, a comprehensive understanding of Bukhara's topographical changes remains constrained by gaps in archaeological documentation and limited access to primary sources. **Future Research :** Further interdisciplinary studies incorporating advanced archaeological techniques and comparative analyses with contemporary cities could provide a more detailed reconstruction of Bukhara's historical landscape and its role within the broader Islamic world.

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