

ABDULAZIZKHAN MADRASAH – A MONUMENT OF 17TH-CENTURY BUKHARA ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract: This article discusses the historical significance of the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah, built in Bukhara in the 17th century, its architectural structure and decorations. It also analyzes the activities of the ruler Abdulaziz Khan, who founded the madrasah, and its place in cultural life. The place of the madrasah in the history of Bukhara and Central Asia is also highlighted.

Key words: Ashtarkhanids, Ulugbek, Samarkand, Nadirmuhammad, Karshi, Mirakon, Bazari Gosfand, Khiyabon, Mimkhaqan ibn Khoja Muhammadin,

The peoples of Central Asia have created their own architectural school over the centuries. In particular, the territory of Uzbekistan has long been a crossroads of great civilizations, a land where science, religion, trade and cultures collided, and the structures built here reflect the level of cultural and artistic development not only of their time, but also of the entire region. In particular, the city of Bukhara is highly valued for its wealth of historical monuments, their artistic approach, patterns and architectural ideas. Many madrasas, mosques, mausoleums, minarets and other monuments have been built in the rich history of Bukhara. Among them, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasa occupies a special place. The Abdulazizkhan Madrasah was built in the 17th century, more precisely in 1652, by Abdulazizkhan, a member of the Ashtarkhanid dynasty. This period was a time of relative political stability and economic recovery in Transoxiana. It was this historical situation that laid the foundation for a new stage in the development of science, culture, and art. The Abdulazizkhan Madrasah, located in the center of Bukhara, opposite the Ulugbek Madrasah, reflects the artistic taste and achievements of the period in the art of construction with its architectural structure, elegant decorative works, ganch carvings, colorful tiles, and inscriptions.

This madrasa not only served as a center of religious education, but also was an unrivaled example of the highest examples of Islamic art, unrivaled in terms of pattern and composition. In creating this building, the masters, while continuing ancient traditions, tried to use new styles and decorative forms. It is precisely for these reasons that the Abdulazizkhan madrasa is known as a building of high artistic level in the history of Eastern architecture. This article will comprehensively cover the historical conditions of the creation of the Abdulazizkhan madrasa, its architectural design, decorative art, inscriptions, internal and external structure, as well as its place in scientific and spiritual life. At the same time, the unique architectural solutions of the madrasa and its value as a work of art are evaluated based on modern analysis. Also, the madrasa is of great importance not only as a historical monument, but also as an expression of the artistic thinking, aesthetic views and religious culture of the people.

In the 17th century, in the Bukhara Khanate, while the discontent of officials who had been dismissed from their palace posts was growing, nomadic tribes from the north began to attack the country's territories. Nadr Muhammad Khan (1642–1645) gave his son Abdulaziz Sultan an army to fight against this threat and sent him to fight. However, the palace officials,

dissatisfied with the central government, proclaimed Abdulaziz Sultan as khan in April 1645 in a place called Yangisaroy near Uchtepa. Hearing this news while hunting in the Karshi steppes, Nadr Muhammad Khan voluntarily retreated to Balkh. Thus, Abdulaziz Khan (1645–1681) came to power[1]. After Abdulaziz Khan came to the throne, he carried out reforms in the Bukhara Khanate to ensure political stability, regulate internal administration, and pave the way for economic development. It was during this period of stability that culture, science, and especially architecture found favorable conditions for development. While strengthening his political power, Abdulaziz Khan sought to turn Bukhara into not only a political, but also a religious, educational, and architectural center. In such historical conditions, in 1652, the construction of the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasah began in the ancient center of Bukhara. This madrasah became not only a symbol of the Khan's political power, but also a symbol of respect for religious beliefs, attention to science, and love for art. Each wall, each decoration of the madrasah reflects the artistic and spiritual state of its time. In particular, through this structure, Abdulaziz Khan clearly demonstrates his desire to leave a cultural legacy, his intention to leave a mark in history. Thus, Abdulaziz Khan's coming to power was not only a political event, but also the beginning of an era of architectural upsurge. The madrasa associated with his name has gone down in history as a truly exemplary work of 17th-century Bukhara architecture.

During the reign of Abdulaziz Khan, many creative works were carried out, among which the unique exterior facade of the muqarnas is the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa in Bukhara. The ruler also organized a library of manuscripts in Bukhara during his time. Of the Mirakon, Bazari Gosfand, and Khiyabon madrasas built by Abdulaziz Khan, the Mirakon madrasa has survived to our time. The exterior of the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasa, which is considered a unique example of Central Asian architecture, is distinguished by its exquisite taste. The harmony of colors close to each other creates a magnificent view in the muqarnas, that is, the decoration of the upper part of the mihrab, tahmon, or porches in the form of a semi-dome[2]. All the decorations used in the madrasa can be considered an encyclopedia of the use of a combination of new and old techniques. The reason is that the crypts of this magnificent and fascinating madrasa are decorated in three different ways. These include majolica (meaning glazed or decorated with different colors) mosaics, patterned majolica, and geometric mosaics[3].

Majolica mosaic is a type of mosaic art that uses ceramic tiles or pieces called majolica, polished and covered with colored glaze. These tiles are used to decorate walls, roofs, domes, porches and other architectural elements.

Ornamental majolica - is used to create complex, beautiful patterns and decorations using majolica tiles.

Geometric mosaic - the madrasa is decorated with various geometric shapes (triangles, rectangles, etc.) that are repeatedly placed on the surface, which gives the madrasa its beauty.

The facade of the building is traditionally made up of high-roofed, octagonal domes and aivans. Two-story rooms with a veranda were built around the madrasa with a wide four-aivon. At the entrance to the building, there is a miyon room, two classrooms, a mosque deep inside, and rooms in the rest of the rooms. The miyon room is the central passageway inside the building, which serves as a medium for entering various rooms. It is not only a link between

rooms, but also helps to evenly distribute light and air inside the building. In the room located to the right of the gatehouse at the entrance to the madrasa, as a result of the distribution of light according to a specific law, the image of a legendary old man with a turban on his head still appears today, and this image is clearly visible to a person[4]. We can see that the Abdulazizkhan madrasa was built in the traditional style, continuing the traditions of Bukhara architecture. The fact that the madrasa was built in the form of four ayvans, especially the fact that there is a miyan room inside the madrasa, increases the importance of the madrasa. Considered an excellent example of the architectural masters of the 17th century, the appearance of the image of the old man depending on the direction of light undoubtedly proves that the madrasa was built by skilled architects. The fact that the decorations of the madrasa have been preserved in good condition even after four centuries, and the appearance of the legendary old man, considered one of the most unique decorations in its construction, increases the importance of the Abdulazizkhan madrasa.

The Abdulazizkhan madrasa, one of the architectural monuments in Bukhara, was built in 1652 by the architect Mimhokan ibn Khoja Muhammadamin on the orders of Abdulazizkhan, the fifth representative of the Ashtar Khans. The structure of the Abdulazizkhan madrasa is relatively simple, consisting of two-story rooms. The large porch on the facade of the building is decorated with elegant and rare tiled patterns. Along with Islamic patterns, the decorations of the madrasa also include images of mythical animals, which further increases its uniqueness in art[5]. The rooms of the madrasa, in particular the southern porch porch, are decorated with various geometric and floral patterns. Among the intricate muqarnas of the dome ceiling, there are Islamic patterns and gilded decorations, which are mainly painted in blue. The main dimensions of the madrasa are: the outer perimeter of the building is approximately 50×67 meters, and the courtyard is 28×35 meters. The Abdulazizkhan Madrasa, built in the 17th century, is a magnificent and highly artistic example of Bukhara architecture. There are various legends about the emergence of the madrasa, including one legend that one day, before leaving for the sixth pilgrimage, the ruler of Bukhara, Abdulazizkhan, had a dream. In his dream, an old man told him: "After you return from the pilgrimage, you will build a building in your homeland that will be unlike any other. This building will allow people to feel the connection between the inner and outer life. For centuries, people will take comfort from it and remember you."

After returning from the Hajj, Abdulaziz Khan ordered the construction of a new madrasah. The masters, following the law of refraction of light, placed the ruler's reflection on the walls as a decoration. However, according to the Quran, drawing a human image was considered a sin. Abdulaziz Khan visited the madrasah and saw images of a scorpion, a snake, the gates of paradise, and a bear on the walls. He was angry that he could not find his reflection, but on the advice of the architect, he examined the walls of the mihrab more closely and saw his reflection. The ruler, impressed by the skill of the masters, decided to abandon state administration and spend the rest of his life in prayer.[6] The Abdulaziz Khan Madrasah (1652), built several centuries after the Ulugbek Madrasah (1417), remains the only historical sight in Bukhara. It was with the creation of the Abdulaziz Khan Madrasah, built by master craftsmen, that the foundation stone for the emergence of East Central Asian architecture that has survived to our time was laid. Although this story is told as a legend, it also contains certain truths. This story reveals the connection between the religious beliefs of the ruler of Bukhara, Abdulaziz Khan, architectural innovation, and art. The warning given through a dream about the future

construction of a unique madrasah can be understood as an attempt to connect the inner and outer worlds of people. During the construction process, architects and craftsmen, respecting religious rules, use light and decoration to secretly reflect the reflection of the ruler. The ruler's vision of his own reflection demonstrates their artistic skills and the connection between the inner world and the outer. Thus, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah is valued as a unique and unique monument of 17th-century Bukhara architecture and occupies an important place in the cultural heritage of eastern Central Asia.

Today, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah operates not only as a historical monument, but also as a cultural center. National music and folklore performances are regularly held in the courtyard of the madrasah, attracting the attention of tourists and local residents. Through these events, the rich cultural heritage, traditions and art of the Bukhara people are revived. At the same time, in the miyonsaroy in the north-eastern corner of the madrasah, an exhibition of examples of Bukhara woodcarving is located, where unique works of art by masters are exhibited. This exhibition is of great interest not only to local but also foreign tourists. The government of Uzbekistan also pays special attention to this monument. In particular, in 1997, on the occasion of the 2500th anniversary of the city of Bukhara, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah, like all architectural structures in the city center, underwent extensive renovation. These renovation works further increased the historical and cultural value of the madrasah and served to preserve its original appearance. The Abdulazizkhan Madrasah has also been recognized worldwide and has been included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. This confirms that it is an important heritage not only for Uzbekistan, but also for all of humanity.

In conclusion, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah occupies an important place in the history of Bukhara. It is distinguished not only by its unique architectural style, but also reflects the ruler's religious beliefs and respect for art. The fact that the madrasah continues to actively participate in cultural life today, serving to preserve national traditions and art, further increases its importance. The appreciation of the government of Uzbekistan and international organizations indicates that the madrasah is a valuable heritage for the people and world culture. Therefore, the Abdulazizkhan Madrasah is an invaluable historical monument that must be passed on to future generations.

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