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Between Conservation and Innovation: The Central Plan of Bukhara

The plan of Bukhara, despite frequent and destructive nomadic invasions, has not changed for nearly a millennium. Under the Samanid dynasty, the city had three parts: the citadel, the *shahristan*, and the *rabad* (suburbs). The *shahristan* was located near the citadel on an elevated site, making the provision of a water supply to it a difficult task. It has no water supply system to this day.

The Citadel

The plan of the Samanid citadel differed from other contemporary citadels. It had two gates - the Registan (or West) Gate and the Great Mosque (or East) Gate. According to Narshakhi, the latter was called Ruriyan. The Registan Gate was also called the "Hay Traders' Gate" (Alaf Furushai or Kakh Furushan.) A street ran between the West and East gates. Inside the citadel was yet another walled enclosure, which was the residence of the Samanid rulers. It is identified by Narshakhi as a temple (*kakh*), supposedly built in the seventh century A.D. by the Bukhar-khudat Bidun, who rebuilt and restored the citadel. The name of Bidun has long been preserved on a metal plate on the temple gate.

There is some historical evidence that the temple collapsed several times before its construction could be completed. Finally, following the advice of a wise old man, it was reinforced by seven stone columns (for the number of stars in the Great Bear constellation), after which its construction was completed with no further interruption. In 1139-40, the citadel was destroyed by the Khwarazmshah Atsiz; in 1141-42, it was reconstructed by the Kara Kitai king from the city of Ali Tegin. In 1143-44, it was again destroyed by the Ghuz tribes, and the building materials from its ruins used to construct the wall for the Bukhara *rabad* in 1165. In 1207-8, the Khwarazmshah Muhammad rebuilt it once again, and it survived until Genghiz Khan's invasion in 1220, when it was once again destroyed.

The *shahristan* in Bukhara differed from the ones in Samarqand, Balkh, and Merv. It had seven gates, probably dictated by the same religious dictates as those followed in the construction of the temple and the citadel. The gates of the *shahristan* are described by Istakhri and Narshakhi. Narshakhi lists them in the following order:

1. The Market or Bazaar Gate (an "iron" gate according to Istakhri), later called the Spice Traders' Gate
2. The Shahrستان Gate (Bab al-Madina according to Istakhri)
3. Bani Sa'd Gate
4. Bani Asad Gate
5. Citadel Gate
6. Haqqrah Gate
7. New Gate, which was built after all the others.

Except for the Citadel Gate, we cannot locate these gates exactly on the basis of Narshakhi's description alone. It is clear, however, that the Bazaar, Bani Sa'd, and Bani Asad gates were close to each other. The Citadel Gate was considered to be the strongest in the *shahrستان*. The fortified structure close to it was built by a Turkish ruler Subashi Tegin. The site was occupied mainly by the houses of the Arab population of Bukhara. In the tenth century, this quarter, called Fagsadare, was ravaged. The Haqqrah Gate was somehow connected to Abu Hafs Kabir Bukhari, who lived near it until his death in 832, according to Narshakhi.

The *rabad* wall was built in 849-50; it had eleven gates, as does the present city wall. They are as follows:

1. Maydan Gate leading to the Khurasan road
2. Ibrahim Gate, located to the east of the first gate
3. Riw Gate
4. Mardaqsan Gate
5. Kalabadh Gate
6. Nawbahar Gate
7. Samarqand Gate, which marks the beginning of the road to Samarqand and other parts of Maverannahr
8. Baghashkar Gate
9. Ramithna Gate
10. Jadasarun Gate, the beginning of the road to Khwarazm
11. Ghashaj Gate

The Mardaqsan and Kalabadh gates led to the road to Nesef (Karshi) and Balkh. Historic sources show that the Maydan Gate is the present Karakul gate; and the Ibrahim gate is now the gate of Shaykh Jalal. The other gates with their modern names are:

- Riw gate - Namazghah
- Mardaqsan - Sallakhana
- Kalabadh - Karshi (Kavolya)
- Nawbahar - Mazar
- Samarqand- Samarqand
- Baghashkar (Fegaskun) - Imam
- Ramithna - Uglan
- Jaesarum - Talipakh
- Ghashaj - Shirgiran

Narshakhi mentions that at the time of the Arab invasions, the city consisted only of the shahrستان. But there is also some evidence in his writings that other sections were of significance even in pre-Islamic times,

although they might not then have been included within the boundaries of the city. The boundaries of the old city (presumably, before the Samanid epoch, and going back to Abu Muslim's reign) were marked by another wall, also having eleven gates. The names of those gates are as follows:

1. Bab al-Hadid (Iron gate)
2. Bab Qantarat Hassan
- 3 - 4. Gates at the Mah mosque
5. Bab Rukhna
6. Gate at the palace of Abu Hisham al-Kinani
7. Gate at the Suwayqa
8. Bab Farjak
9. Bab Darwazja
10. Bab Sikkat Mughan (Gate at Magicians Street)
11. Samarqand (inner) Gate

The Water System of the City

According to Narshakhi, the principal city canal was called the Rud-i-Zarrin (meaning "gold" or "golden river"). According to Muqaddasi, "The river entered the city from Kalabad; dams, wide sluices, and locks were installed there. In summer, during the flood, one after another the locks were opened, and as the water level rose higher, the main stream of water flowed into the sluice and thence to Paikant. The water would have flooded the city without that ingenious structure. This place was called Fashun. Other sluices, similarly arranged, were located outside the city and called Ras al-Varag (head of the Lock).

The river flows through the city, runs through the bazaars and then divides into channels along the streets. There are large, open *hauz* (reservoirs) with wooden buildings along the edges, used for ablution rites. Sometimes, the water running to Paikant overflows and the ground is covered by water. The year that I visited Bukhara, the water overflowed and flooded a considerable area, damaging fields and property."

From this description, V. V. Bartold concluded that "the *arik* (canal) was in the city near the present Karshi gate, approximately at the same place as it is now. Presumably, a bridge was built over the *arik*, referred to by the name 'Hassan's bridge' in the eastern part of the city."

The location of the bridge gate at the small bazaar (Suwayqa) supports the assumption that the canal flowed out of the city at the Shahrستان Gate. Istakhri counts many small city canals branching from a larger one, the Rud-i Zarrin, and flowing through the city.

1. The Fashidize canal, beginning at a place called Varag (since the canal flowed toward the city from the east, this place corresponds to Fashun, not to Muqaddasi's Ras al-Varag), passed through the Mardakshan Gate (the present Sallakhana) by the place called Jubar (meaning "stream"). The Ibrahim canal ran to the gate of the "glorious Shaykh Abu'l Fazl" and into the Naukande canal. There were about two thousand castles, orchards,

and estates along the sides of this canal along a total length about half of a farsakh. Shaykh Abu'l Fazl was the well-known Samanid vizier of Abu'l Fazl Muhammad b. Abdullah Balami, who died in 940. The gate named after him is probably the Ibrahim Gate, which at present, is called Shaykh Jalal. There is a madrasa and cemetery named Juybar near his grave.

2. The Juybar Bekar (literally, "useful stream") canal ran from the center of the city near the Ahyad mosque and drained into the Naukande canal. There were about a thousand orchards and castles along its banks.

3. The Juybar al-Kavaririn (glaziers' stream) canal began from the river in the city at the square of the Army Treasurer's Mosque, and supplied the *rabad*. That canal had a higher level of water than the previous one and irrigated a great number of gardens.

4. The Ju-Gushej or Juybar al-Ariz canal also flowed out of the city at the square of the Army Treasurer's Mosque, supplied a part of the *rabad*, and drained into the Naukande canal. The former name of this canal proves that it flowed in the western part of the city, where the Army Treasurer's Mosque may have been located.

5. The Paikant canal flowed out of the square at the beginning of what was "Guide Street" (Khuta), supplied water to part of the *rabad*, and then drained into the Naukande canal. It would seem obvious that this canal was named after the city of Paikant (if the pronunciation of the name was correctly established by de Gue), but in fact they probably had no connection.

6. The Naukande canal ran from the river at the Khamdu house and served as a collector for other canals; it supplied water to part of the *rabad* and finally ended in the steppe, but did not provide water for plots of land. The name of the canal (meaning "newly dug") allows us to assume that the Naukande canal had been dug later than the others, probably to provide additional water. It ran in the western and mainly southwestern part of the city.

7. The Takbun (mill) canal began at Naukher square, which used the water of the canal. A great number of mills were built along its banks. The water flowed to Paikant and supplied its inhabitants. Most likely, the locks described by Muqaddasi were located at the Mazar gate.

8. The Kushna canal ran out from the city, also at the place called Naukher, which also used the water from this canal. A great number of mansions, gardens, and plots were located along its edges. It ran through Kushna and reached Murga, a village a short distance from Neseif (Karshi).

9. The Rabakh canal (the name means "profit") flowed out from the river at Registan, then reached Rabakh castle. Nearly a thousand gardens and castles were located along this canal.

10. The Registan canal began at Registan. Its water was used to irrigate the Registan, citadel, and palace. The canal flowed up to the Jaladize castle.

11. A canal, whose name is not mentioned, began at the Khamdun bridge (probably at the same place where the Naukande canal began), ran underground up to the various *hauz* located near Bani Asad (i.e., at the southwest part of the *shahristan*). The excess water ran into the citadel

moat.

12. The Zugarkande canal emerged at Varag Square (probably Muqaddasi's Ras al-Varag), ran through the Derva Gate and bazaar, then to the Sepid Masha square. Its stream was a *farsakh* long. A great number of castles, gardens, and plots were located there. The canal ran through the northwest part of the city.

One of the best ways to find information about the medieval quarters, streets, and buildings of the city is to start looking for evidence on the *shahristan*, described by Narshakhi. Kutaiba distributed a part of the land in the *shahristan* among the Arabs and the space from the Bazaar Gate to the New Gate to the Mudar and Rabia tribes. The rest of the land he gave to the Jemen tribe.

Entering the city through the Bazaar Gate, to the left would be the Kui-i Rindan (street of profligates). A Christian church was behind it; it was later converted to a mosque for the Banu Mazal tribe. If you entered the city at the Shahristan Gate, to the right would be the Street of the Counselor Ziyub b. Khassan, also called Castle Street (Kui-i Kakh). Ziyub b. Khassan, a contemporary of Kutaiba, was the first Arab amir from Bukhara. The street and castle belonged to one Khin, a villager who later assumed the Muslim name of Ahmed. The "wooden grocery counters" *chuba bakkalyan*) and the bazaar of pistachio sellers were located along the *shahristan's* walls. The palace of Khasan b. Ala was located at the Bani Sa'd Gate of the shahristan. Even kings did not possess such a palace. The monthly income from his lands alone was 1,200 dinars.

The palace of the ruler of Khurasan was located at the entrance to the Bani Asad Gate. Near the Haqqrah Gate, at the northwest corner of the *shahristan*, the monastery of Imam Abu Khafs, which was a sanctuary, survived. A great number of mosques and monasteries were located nearby. Not far from the square, to the right of the entrance to the New Gate, was located the Koreishit mosque. It was built by Koreishit Muhatil b. Suleiman, the patron of the well-known Nabatei Khayan, a compatriot of Kutaiba.

The hill mentioned earlier was considered to be Afrasiab's grave and dated back to the pre-Islamic history of the Samanids. The grave of Siyavush, who was killed by Afrasiab, was located by the east gate of the citadel. Here, before dawn, the fire worshipers according to custom, sacrificed a rooster at Nauruz (New Year). Songs, known by the name of "magicians lament," were sung in honor of Siavush. The king's palaces, except for the well-known palace in the citadel, were also located in the Registan during the pre-Islamic period.

During this period, great importance was attached to a site in the southeastern part of the city, now called the Gate of the Makh mosque. The Makhruz bazaar was located there, and twice a year fairs for selling idols (probably of Buddhist origin) were organized. This heathen custom continued during Samanid rule. The demand for idols was quite high, and could fetch prices of up to 50,000 dirhams. The founder of the custom was the legendary King Makh, who according to tradition held the fair in the

shade of a grove of trees. The king sat on his throne encouraging his people to buy idols on the very spot where the mosque was built.

A temple for fire worshipers was built at the site where people gathered for worship on the days when the fair was held. The great mosque replaced it in the Muslim period. The Samanids knew another variation of this legend, which spoke of Makh as a fire worshiper, who then accepted Islam and converted his palace into a mosque. Under Samanid rule, a bazaar was built in the Makh Mosque Gate quarter.

Finally, in the eighth century, after Kutaiba had occupied the city, one more place gained great importance, where the wealthy foreign merchants called Kesh Kushan, resided. Tomashek considers them to be the descendants of the Kushans or Ephtalites. They let the Arabs occupy their houses in the *shahristan* and had new palaces built for themselves at another site. There they laid out gardens and housed their servants. Thus, in a short while, the new city outstripped the older one in its population. The palace was called the Palace of Magicians (Keshk-i-Mugan). Temples of the fire worshipers earlier occupied the site. During Samanid rule, only two or three palaces survived. In the twelfth century, only one door with the image of an idol remained.

The exact location of Keshk-i Mugan has not been determined; the gate of Magician's Street was located across from the present Imam Gate. Keshk-i Mugan was most likely located in the northwest part of the city. Narshahi also mentions a "Street of Magicians," saying that the Kharkan Bazaar was located between that street and "street of Dekhkan."

The first mosque was built by Kutaiba in 713 in the citadel, at the site of the former fire worshipers' temple (or perhaps that of the Buddhists). For prayers on the two principal holidays, there was another place in the northern part of the Registan, near the gate. The new congregational mosque, located between the citadel and *shahristan*, was built by Fazl b. Yahya Bannaki (794-95). In 902, the building was reconstructed and considerably enlarged by Ismail the Samanid, who bought neighboring houses for the purpose. The mosque collapsed twice early in the rule of Nasr (914-43), the first time during the Friday prayer, causing the deaths of a great number of people. The ruler ordered the building reconstructed, and the minaret was built in 918 under the patronage of Counselor Abu Abdullah Jaikhani. This mosque is mentioned by geographers. According to Muqaddasi, the mosque had a number of courts, which were remarkably clean. The main manufacturing area of the city was located near the mosque.

Another building was constructed in 951-52 by Amir Huh b. Nasr at the "palace of the Khurasan amir," probably in the southwest section of the *shahristan*. The only thing we know about this building is that it existed in the twelfth century. Narshakhi's description of this building mentions only a single surviving door with the image of an idol and the passage from the gate to the palace of the Khurasan shaykh.

In 971, Amir Mansur ordered the foundation of a new site for holiday worship at a distance of half a farsakh from the Citadel Gate on the road to

the village of Samtin. The location of this village is unknown, but it is possible that the new prayer site was near the old one.

The Samanid Great Mosque was burned down in 1068 during a battle over the throne between the sons of Tashgach Khan Ibrahim. A fusillade from the citadel ignited the wooden roof of the minaret, and it fell, destroying the mosque itself. The following year, the mosque was restored with the top of the minaret built of baked bricks. In addition, not far from the citadel, a new mosque was built whose *maqsura*, *minbar* and *nihrab* were carved in Samarqand.

Arslan Khan Muhammad ordered a new mosque built in the *shahristan*. It was a magnificent building; completed in 1121, it stood, most likely, until the invasion of Genghiz Khan. The minaret, erected in 521 A.H. is still standing. It is presumed that it was left undisturbed until the army revolt in September 1920, when it was damaged by the fire of the besieged army. In 1119, Arslan Khan found a new prayer site at the Ibrahim Gate; it remains there today. In the eleventh century the palace of Shams al-Mulk, with its gardens, pastures, and menagerie, was located there. It was considered a restricted area (*guruk* instead of *kuruk*), and bore the name Shamsabad, after the name of its builder. The Shamsabad palace was also used by Khizr, the successor of Shams al-Mulk, but later fell into disrepair and was totally ruined in 1089 during the invasion of the Seljuq sultan Malikshah. In Bukhara, the Syrian mosque or Masjid-i Shams is mentioned by the Samanids and Yakut.

A considerable number of palaces were built in Bukhara in the course of its history. Amir Ismail built a palace for himself at the site of Ju-i-Muliyān, not far from the citadel and Registan, which was reputed to be the best palace in Bukhara. The entire area from the Registan Gate to the marshy field of Deshtak near the citadel was covered with palaces, guest houses, gardens and pools.

The name of Ju-i-Muliyān was supposedly given to one of the canals, which began near the Registan, and could be either the Registan canal or Rabakh. Evidently, there was another one described by Istakhri, as having a thousand gardens and palaces; today there is a village named Ju-i-Muliyān 2 kilometers from Bukhara. According to Narshakhi, this name was changed from Ju-i-Mavaliyan (which means "clients' canal") because Ismail had built housing for his army, and his wish was to share part of his income with them. Years ago, the lands were the property of the Bukhar-khudat. Ismail bought Ju-i-Muliyān and Deshtak from Hasan b. Muhammed b. Talib and the income from Deshtak was given as *waqf* to the Great Mosque. The Ju-i-Muliyān palace was maintained until the end of the Samanid dynasty.

Another palace built by Nasr in the Registan existed until 961 and the offices of the administration were located nearby. During the reign of Abd al-Malik (961), the counselor Abu Jafar Utbi (until 959) had built a splendid mosque there. The palace was robbed and torched by rebels during an uprising after Abd al-Malik's death. Amir Mansur ordered the restoration of the palace, but within one year, there was another fire, this time caused

by the heathen tradition of lighting bonfires on holidays. The building was totally destroyed, and the amir's property was moved to Ju-i-Muliyān. Subsequently, the Registan fell into decay.

From the Karakhanid period, one further palace, in addition to the Shamsabad, that of Ahmad Khan (d. 1095) was built in Juybar near the Ibrahim gate. Arslan Khan ordered the palace moved to the citadel. A few years later, he built a new palace in the Dervazj quarter in the northwestern part of the city, on Bu Leisa street. Two bathhouses were also built there. Later, Arslan Khan converted the palace into a madrasa, and built a new palace for himself at the Sadabad Gate in the southwest part of the *shahristan*.

In addition to the quarters and streets already mentioned, Samani lists the following: Jedid street, Skamya street (across Haqqa), the Riw quarter and Farzih palace at the Maydan Gate (the present Karakul Gate). In his description of the fire of 937, Narshakhi also mentions Bekar street (probably located near the canal of same name) in the western part of the city between the Samarqand and Farjek gates.

The streets in Bukhara were remarkably wide and paved in stone from the Varka mountains, near the village of the same name. The mountain chain extends from the east and divides the Samarqand region from Kesh; Samani located Varka at a distance of 2 *farsakhs* from Bukhara along the road to Nesef (Karshi). Despite the wide streets, the population was dense and the city was even at that time overcrowded.