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## Suburban Ensembles of Bukhara

The great Japanese humanitarian of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Ikeda, once said, "Nothing leads us to an understanding of other peoples better than touching their cultural roots." The preservation of the culture of the peoples of Central Asia is primarily a humanitarian task. For many centuries, camel caravans traveled from China to Europe, a distance of over six thousand kilometers. They braved a dangerous route that passed through deserts, fields, and the narrow mountain passes of Central Asia with goods to be traded. Among those goods was silk, the most expensive product of that period and a very fine fabric, whose production Chinese craftsmen had kept a carefully guarded secret for many centuries. That was why the 19<sup>th</sup> century German geographer the Baron Ferdinand von Richthafer called this route from east to west "the Silk Road." The great Silk Road influenced the development of major urban centers and generated trade between countries along this route. As a result of this association between the Middle and Near East, a unique transcontinental culture developed in these countries. Great architectural monuments and fine goods were not only the result of a thriving economy but also the reflection of a philosophy which aspired to assimilate various other cultures of the world.

Bukhara is one of the oldest cities in the world and its great historical role and contribution to economic and cultural development is difficult to measure. One of the major cities on the great Silk Road, Bukhara, during its over twenty-five centuries of existence, had a considerable influence on the cultural development of other cities along the route as an intermediary between Eastern and Western cultures. As the capital of an "empire" and one of the largest cities of the Muslim East, Bukhara contributed significantly to the spiritual and physical development of humanity. It was the city of great thinkers and artists like Muhammad Narshakhi and Ibn Sina. Bukhara was a miracle, an exotic city, and a wonder. Marco Polo visited it and called it the most magnificent of all Asian cities. Densely grouped single-storied buildings made up a unique three-dimensional composition, which also served as a backdrop to majestic architectural ensembles. Narrow streets without windows ran through the quarters and opened up unusual perspectives of impressive scale and architecture. From the roads leading to the north and northwest gates, the image of the city was incredibly beautiful. Bukhara is rightly called an open-air museum. In a city with a population of 300,000 people, there are more than 500 architectural monuments in different styles. Many of them have been added to the structure of the contemporary city. According to data from the Bukhara State Museum, there are 293 monuments and 253 residences

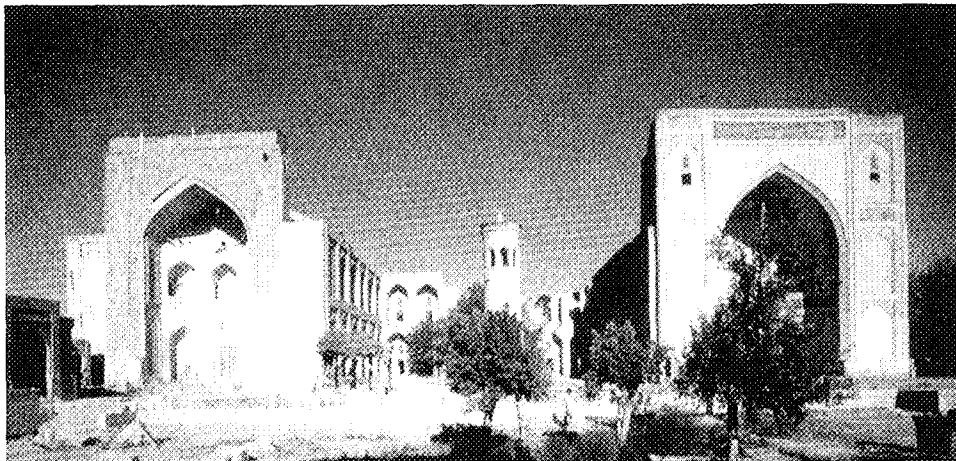
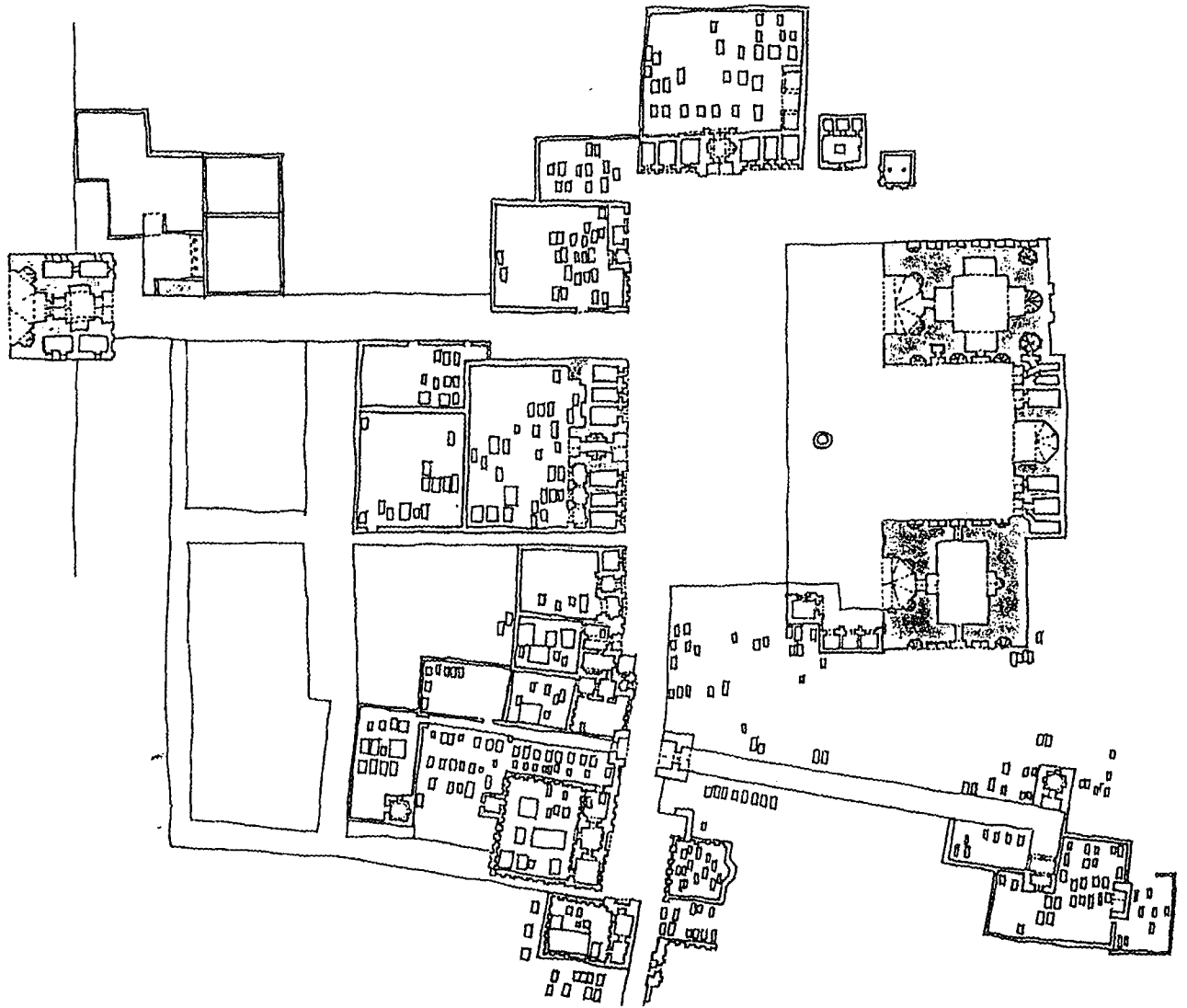
currently under state protection. Among the architectural monuments are 99 mosques, 37 *madrasas*, 9 mausolea, 9 *khanqahs*, 15 caravanserais, 9 *sardoba*, 9 minarets, 5 *hammans*, 3 domed bazaars, the Shahrud and Hauzi canals, the fortress wall, gates, and other buildings. Many of these are part of architectural ensembles, of which there are fourteen: the Ark, Poi-Kalian, Mohi-Hosa, Char-Bahr, Bahauddin, Kwajah-Zinautdin, Hosrati-Imam, Labi-Hauz, Bolo-Hauz, Maulana-Sharif, Khalifa-Hudaidat, Gavkushan, Hausi-Nab, and Abdukadiri geloni. Of these ensembles, the Ark, Poi-Kalian, Kwajah-Zinautdin, Khasrati-Imam, Labi-Hauz, Bolo Hauz, Maulana-Sharif, Khalifa-Hudaidat, Gavkushan, Hausi-Nab and Abdukadir geloni are public centers. The Sitorai-Mohi-Hosa belongs to a system of gardens and parks, the *Charbagh*, and was the country retreat of the amir of Bukhara.

The Char-Bahr and Bahauddin ensembles belong to the Ziaratgoh shrine. Char-Bahr is the tomb of the saint Abu Bakr Caada. Ziaratgah is where Shaykh Bahauddin Nakshbandi was born and is buried. The architectural organization of cult complexes are, as a rule, the result of many years of existence, aggregations of buildings linked over time. The place where the Char-Bahr ensemble is situated bears traces of its ancient culture.

There are a number of hills around the contemporary city called tepe; they represent the remains of feudal castles and villages. There has been no special investigation of these hills, but the village of Sumitan (now called Char-Bahr), where there is a necropolis and which consists of 27 buildings, has long been in existence. Char-Bahr village is six kilometers east of Bukhara. The ensemble is 200-300 meters from the Bukhara-Alat-Chargou highway. In addition to its large necropolis, its largest buildings are the *khanqah* and the mosque and *iwan* with *hujras* (cells) between them. The remaining 24 buildings are identified by numbers assigned in 1924, when the schematic plan of this ensemble was drawn. None of these buildings has a name. In 1927, the Char-Bahr mausoleum complex came under state protection and became the subject of study for various researchers.

At the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the nomadic Uzbeks led by Shaybani Khan, the founder of the Shaybanid dynasty, occupied Central Asia. The first half of this period was marked by local wars. In the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of several victories, Abdullah Khan (1557-98) united all the districts in the region of Bukhara and created a strong centralized state. Under his rule, Bukhara reacquired its political and cultural importance. There was extensive construction of new madrasas, mosques, and *khanqahs*. This was also a period of peace for Bukhara. The authority of Shaykh Khwajah Islam Juybari, who was also known as Khwajah Kalon (the great khwajah), grew rapidly. He assisted the khan in both small and large ventures. Out of his great respect for and trust in him, Abdullah Khan decided to build a madrasa, *khanqah*, and mosque surrounded by gardens and parks in Sumitan near the shrine (mazar) of his ancestor Abu Bakr Caada.

In 1558, craftsmen built the foundations of the buildings in Sumitan. The master masons and builders worked so hard that all the buildings,



Top: Char Bahr ensemble.  
Left: View of Char Bahr.

planned for completion in ten years, were built in a much shorter time. These majestic buildings with portals and arches were decorated with distinctive, ornamental, colored glazed tiles. There was a beautiful garden with rare trees near Khwajah Islam's mazar . The six kilometer long road from the garden to the city was flanked by trees so the *khwaja* could travel in shade. The servants and ministers of Abdulla also built gardens around Sumitan. The Char-Bahr complex was built over a long period of time. The oldest part of this complex is the mazar of Abu Bakr Caada, one of four saints named Abu Bakr, and some family tombs, which were built like courtyards, surrounded by walls and porticoes with rooms. Between 1560 and 1563, the complex with the main buildings was built. It consisted of three buildings linked to each other and built on a single foundation. To the left was the *khanqah* and to the right, the mosque. Between them were the *iwan* and monks' cells on the first and second floors. The *khanqah* and mosque were faced on the east by their heavy portals elaborated with lighter strips of mosaic, with ledges and niches. The portals of the *khanqah* and mosque looked onto the plaza between them, which was also the courtyard of the *madrassa*. It is a very unusual composition.

The courtyard of the *madrassa* formed by the left and right elevations of the *khanqah* and mosque gives great importance not only to the buildings, but also to the streets and open space, in an unusual architectural design. The opening up of the plaza of the *madrassa* and the design of the side elevations of the building as elements continuing up the streets represented an advanced design. The large buildings of this complex were at a slight distance from the old part of the necropolis. New funerary courtyards and porticoes with rooms were added to the old part of the necropolis, repeating the form of the great plaza before the main building. The reorganized ensemble was marked by a small minaret on the main axis of the plaza in front of the *khanqah* and mosque. The plaza was completed when built from the south and from the city side.

The cruciform plan of the *khanqah* retains the traditional double-dome construction on a tall cylindrical drum, which sits on the octagonal building. The dome differs from that of the Kalian *madrassa* only in its decorative pattern. The ceiling of the great rectangular hall of the mosque was very distinctive and high and known among Bukharan architects as a Char Zamin. Across the hall are two thick beams supporting two small arches, which support the high and narrow cylindrical drum bearing the dome. The sides of the hall are covered with independent arches connected to the main arches. On the intrados, the construction elements are emphasized. The soffit of the dome is beautifully decorated. The sides of the hall are of a stucco called *gurtas*, carved in low relief. The combination of construction and decorative elements, when the construction elements are not hidden, but decorated, holds out hope for the present. Every epoch contributes its own constructive and decorative forms, which are dictated by the architectural context, level of structural progress, and the tastes and needs of society. Dome construction and design methods in the Char Bahr ensemble are not only of practical value, but are useful for historical and



Side view of  
the Khanqah  
of Char Bahir.

cultural studies. The architecture of the Char Bahr complex retains the importance of decoration in building and construction, an aspect of avant-garde architecture in every epoch.

The main shrine of Bukhara is the *mazar* of Muhammad Ibn Jelal al-Din Muhammad, also known in the Muslim world as Bahauddin Nakshbandi. Khwajah Bahauddin (1318-89) was famous as a righteous man, clairvoyant, and miracle worker. According to information from contemporary sources, he reached perfection as a Sufi. After his death a Sufi brotherhood was organized, called the Tarikat Nakshbandiya, based on his teachings. In Bukhara, Bahauddin is considered the patron saint of the city. His tomb is greatly honored and is a site of pilgrimage for all Muslims. The tomb of the shaykh is in his homeland, Kasri Orifon Kishlok, 10 kilometers northeast of Bukhara. The shrine or *dahma* of the shaykh was the earliest building of this ensemble. As *ziarat* from the Ka'ba was an important attribute, a *qibla* wall with a mihrab was incorporated into the divan.

As the number of pilgrims grew, there was an increase in the number of madrasas and *chillalkhanas*. Elements of the landscape, the pool of water and trees, were not forgotten. The courtyard (*hasiri*) was surrounded by a wall. The entrance into the necropolis was initially to the west. It looked

like a *chartaq* with a suspended ritual wooden beam (*chabandi*). In the *chartaq* were mosques, rest houses for travelers, and other buildings. The *chartaq* was connected to the courtyard by a street with high stone walls on both sides, which protected the tombs. The creation of a spiritual atmosphere was determined by the meaning of the place. The streets led the pilgrims to the courtyard containing the relics of the *shaykh*. The straight lines of the streets, geometric composition, natural material of the walls, the black and gray marble all met the requirements of this task admirably.

One of the significant buildings of the ensemble is the Khanqah Bahauddin dating from about 1544-45. It is situated in picturesque fields among trees, pools, and buildings - which were added later - a summer mosque, *madrasa*, *iwan* and minaret. Square in plan, with a cruciform hall, deeply arched portal niches, and a group of rectangular *hujr* (rooms) in the corners, the *khanqah* is a massive and static composition crowned by a dome. Like other buildings of the same period, it has an interesting interior with fan pendentives which radiate from the corners to the dome and make the space very attractive. It recalls the lighter architectural forms of wood-frame construction, an architecture no less attractive than the more monumental one. The ceiling of the northern mosque is decorated with gilded and painted murals. In the preparations for the 675th anniversary celebration of Bahauddin's birth, all the buildings, except the family tombs, were restored for use.