

## SAMARKAND ARCHITECTURAL STYLE OF TIMURID DYNASTY PERIOD

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*(Oksaroy and Ishratkhona mausoleums as examples)*

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**Abstract:** *the article attempts to illustrate the special styles of Samarkand architecture of the Timurid Dynasty period. It also seeks to stress the present importance of Oksaroy and Ishratkhona tombs.*

**Keywords:** *Oksaroy, Ishratkhona, “Kundal” style, “gul-o’simlik” (“flower-plant”) type of ornaments.*

The land, on which the present day Uzbekistan is located, is considered to be the home of multiple ancient buildings of architectural importance. Today, world community is giving more and more credit and attention to the skills and genius of Uzbek people, who created these buildings. The historical-cultural monuments, which reflect the rich history, national values, traditions and experiences of Uzbek people are considered the heritage of the people of Uzbekistan.

The measures, taken by the “Department of protection and realization of Historical-Cultural Objects” and the “Department of Cultural Heritage” by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan seek to regulate the normative documents, present in this sphere. Furthermore, the 25th UNESCO Summit, which was held in Finland in 2001, declared the ancient archeological site, which covers most of the old section of the Samarkand city to be one of the World Heritage Sites. Samarkand was also listed as one of the world’s top 50 “must-visit” cities by The Huffington Post. All of these events serving as boosters of national and historical pride nowadays.

Presently, there are 1851 cultural heritage objects, of which 1105 are archeological, 670 architectural, 37 historically important, 18 monumental and 21 memorial buildings. According to the data, provided by the “Department of protection and realization of Historical-Cultural Objects” by the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Uzbekistan, during the past twenty years, 1004 cultural sites across the Republic of Uzbekistan, and 210 sites in Samarkand Region alone, have been restored and rejuvenated.

It is known, that the majority of the archeological objects, which are presently the crown jewels of the old Samarkand city, have been built during the rule of Timurid Dynasty. The administration of Timurid Dynasty, the Timurid rulers were always attentive of the development of architecture in the empire, along with the development of culture and sciences. The most ideas of the founder of the Timurid Empire, Timur, on the importance of the development of landscape of the cities of the empire are briefly present in his book, “Timur Tuzuklari”. One of the most important of them runs as

follows: “I duly ordered to build mosques, madrasahs, guesthouses in each and every city, and to build bridges across rivers”. It is believed, that Timur considered the architecture of cities, their complexity and intensity as one of the prime factors determining the strength of his empire.

Samarkand architectural art reached its pinnacle of development in the reign of Tumurid rulers. To name a few, Oksaroi, Ishratkhona, Kirkkiz (Childukhtaron (Forty-Maiden) 16th century) and other architectural objects were built in this period. Each of the three abovementioned were considered architectural masterpieces of their times in the whole Central Asia and Near East. Especially Oksaroi and Ishratkhona, with their original ornamental patterns, murals and wall paintings, made up the jewels of the architectural heritage presently we have.

The members of the ruling Timurid dynasty were buried special mausoleums. The purpose of Oksaroy and Ishratkhona was to serve as mausoleums for the members of the ruling Timurid dynasty.

The Oksaroy mausoleum, which is located south-west of Guri-Amir complex, is a magnificent building. Its name is derived from the contraction of the words “ok” – meaning “white” and “saray” – “palace”. There is a number of theories, pertaining the construction of the building. According to the G. A. Pugacheva and L. I. Rempell, it was built in the second half of the 13th century, after the Guri-Amir mausoleum (present complex) run out of space for the male members of the dynasty.

Neither do we have enough accurate information on the specifics of the construction of the “sister-building” of the Oksaroy – the Ishratkhona. According to the popular legend in Samarkand, the mausoleum was built as a dedication to the beautiful queen of Tamerlan, Bibikhonim. According to the legend, at the completion of the construction, astounded by the magnificence and beauty of the building, Tamerlan wishes it not to be a mausoleum, but an ishratkhona (“ishrat” – “joy”, “entertainment”, “khona” – “chamber, house”) – a place of entertainment. As a result of this wish, the building was turned into one of the palaces of Timur and the Timurid rulers. But, it was again turned into a mausoleum after the unexpected death of Khovanbeka Sulton – the daughter of the Timurid Ruler Abu Said in 1464.

The two buildings served as mausoleums for the members of the Timurid dynasty: Oksaroy for the male members of the family, and Ishratkhona for the female members of the family.

The architectural style of the period of Timurid dynasty in Samarkand and Central Asia in general resembles that of whole Islamic world: they were of rather compact size, but they had the features, which every other building of the rest of the Islamic world has: they had a façade, an arch and especially the blue domes with tall spires.

The srchitectural style of the Oksaroy mausoleum is rather simple and not-so-much ornamental. The interior of the building is primarily covered with gul-o’simlik (flower-plant ) type of ornaments and Islamic letters.

The Ishratkhona mausoleum is, on the other hand, applied with ivy-like patterns and ornaments of this type, and it also has for intersecting arcs. Moreover, the Ishratkhona was the first building on which the traditional “Kundal” architectural style of the Samarkand school of architecture.

In kundal architectural style – the wall is covered with patterns and they were in turn applied with gold. This style afterwards used to apply the interior of the Tillakori Madrasah in Samarkand.

The buildings of the Timurid period of the Samarkand are the crown jewels of their time, and are still considered as the specimens of beauty and valor. Oksaroy with its simple appearance and complex architectural features, and Ishratkhona with its beauty are still attracting attention to the Timurid Samarkand and its heritage.

To sum up, Samarkand is one of the most historically important cities of not only Central Asia, but the whole region, and Asia, and the buildings in it can be proof of that good old times, in which the culture, the science, and religion lived and flourished in a city resembling the Heaved on Earth – which is Samarkand.

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