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MIRI-ARAB MADRASAH: HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Abstract: The Miri-Arab Madrasah is one of the key Islamic educational institutions in Central Asia, located in Bukhara (Uzbekistan). Built in the 16th century, it became an important center of Islamic education and culture. The article discusses the history of its creation, architectural features, interior, including hujras, and its role in religious education. Particular attention is paid to the educational activities of the madrasah and its importance in preserving Islamic traditions in different historical periods. The madrasah combines traditional elements of oriental architecture with rich decorative ornaments, creating a unique educational environment. **Keywords:** Miri-Arab Madrasah, Bukhara, Islamic education, Islamic architecture, hujras, religious education, Central Asia, mosaic patterns, calligraphic inscriptions, Islamic culture, spiritual heritage, Central Asian madrasahs.

The Miri-Arab Madrasah is one of the most famous Islamic educational institutions in Central Asia, located in Bukhara, Uzbekistan. It played an important role in training Islamic theologians and preserving the religious traditions of the region.

History of creation: The madrasah was built in the 16th century during the Shaibanid dynasty. hane Ubaydullah (1504-1540) on the initiative of his spiritual mentor Mir Arab Abdullah Yemeni ¹. Mir Arab Abdullah Yemeni, a native of Yemen, was a famous theologian and preacher who had considerable influence at the khan's court. He was able to convince Ubaydullah Khan of the need to create a large educational center for the training of Muslim scholars and judges ². The construction was financed by military spoils obtained during the khan's military campaigns, which was a common practice at that time ³. The Miri-Arab Madrasah became part of a large-scale program for the development of religious education and Islamic architecture in Bukhara, which at that time was the center of Muslim science and culture. Upon completion, the madrasah quickly gained fame among theologians and students of Central Asia. Education here included both religious and secular sciences, which made it one of the most prestigious Islamic educational institutions in the region. For many centuries, the madrasah remained an important religious center, despite periods of decline and political upheaval. During the Soviet period, when many Islamic institutions were closed, the Miri-Arab Madrasah continued to function, remaining one of the few official centers of Islamic education in the Soviet Union. After Uzbekistan gained independence in 1991, the madrasah was restored and once again became a leading educational institution for Muslims not only from Central Asia, but also from other parts of the Muslim world.

Architectural features: The madrasah building is a traditional two-story educational institution with a central courtyard, a mosque, and residential hujras for students. Its façade is decorated with mosaic

¹ Bartold V.V. "History of the cultural life of Central Asia". - M.: Eastern Literature, 1963.

² Bartold V.V. "History of the cultural life of Central Asia". - M.: Eastern Literature, 1963.

panels, calligraphic inscriptions, and carved decorative elements characteristic of Timurid and Shaybanid architecture.⁴

One of the main architectural features of the madrasah is its monumental portal, decorated with complex mosaic patterns containing geometric and plant motifs. The domes of the building are covered with azure ceramic tiles, which gives them an expressive appearance. The internal galleries of the madrasah are decorated with arches with exquisite ornaments, and massive carved doors emphasize the grandeur of the entrance. The central courtyard is framed by columns with mosaic inserts, creating a harmonious combination of light and shadow.

Interior. The interior of the Miri-Arab Madrasah is richly decorated, emphasizing its religious and educational significance. The main space includes:

- The main prayer hall is decorated with intricate mosaic patterns and Arabic calligraphic inscriptions from the Quran⁵.
- Hujras for students, featuring traditional furnishings such as carpets, low seats and niches for storing books. Hujras were small but comfortable spaces designed for study and living.
- Each hujra usually contained a sleeping place, a small shelf for books, and a lamp for evening reading. The walls were decorated minimalistically, but sometimes included elements of wood carving or inscriptions from the Koran.⁶
- Decorative ceilings made with wood carving and gilding, creating an atmosphere of coziness and spiritual elevation⁷
- Mihrab, the prayer area of the imam, richly decorated with glazed tiles and geometric patterns.
- Wall paintings, including epigraphic inscriptions and stylized arabesques, are characteristic of the Islamic art of Central Asia.

Educational activities. The Miri-Arab Madrasah remained one of the few centers of Islamic education in Central Asia for a long time, especially during the Soviet period, when religious educational institutions were closed en masse. Today, it continues to function and accepts students from all over the Muslim world.⁸

The educational process in madrassas includes the study of Arabic, Islamic law (fiqh), hadith and Quranic sciences. The main emphasis is on a deep understanding of Islamic theology and traditions. Students are also trained in oratory, which allows them to become imams or teachers in the future .

The madrasah curriculum is built on a traditional system, including oral teaching (talim) and a discussion method (munajara), where students discuss complex theological issues. There is also a practice of memorizing the Quran, which is an important part of the training of future theologians.

The Miri-Arab Madrasah not only provides deep knowledge in the field of Islamic sciences, but also helps to preserve and transmit the traditions of spiritual education in the region. Thanks to strict discipline, attention to detail and an individual approach to each student, the madrasah remains one of the leading religious educational institutions in Central Asia.

The Miri-Arab Madrasah is not only an outstanding architectural monument, but also an important center of Islamic culture. Its interior, combining traditional artistic elements and spiritual symbols, creates a unique atmosphere conducive to learning and spiritual growth.

⁴Bulatova R. A. "Architectural monuments of Bukhara." - Tashkent: Fan, 1980.

⁵Kagan Yu. G. "Islamic Art of Central Asia". - M.: Art, 1987.

⁶Ashrafi H. M. "Islamic architecture of Bukhara". - Bukhara: Nauka, 1992.

⁷Pugachenkova G. A. "Architecture of the East". - Tashkent: Nauka, 1976.

⁸Denikin A. A. "Islamic schools of Central Asia in the 20th century". - St. Petersburg: Nauka, 2005

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