

KHIVA – A LIVING MUSEUM OF THE SILK ROAD**Begjanova Zuhro Qudratovna***2nd year student of the Faculty of English Philology and Translation Studies,
Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages***Pardayeva Aziza Rahmatillovna***Senior teacher, Samarkand State Institute of Foreign Languages*

Annotation. *This article examines the historical development of Khiva as a unique urban and cultural center of the Silk Road. Based on archaeological findings and written historical sources, the stages of the city's formation from ancient times, its defensive system, architectural features, and the role of Ichan-Kala as a preserved urban space are analyzed. Special attention is given to Khiva's role in regional and international cultural relations and to the preservation of its historical and architectural heritage. The study substantiates Khiva's outstanding value as a living museum of world civilization.*

Keywords: *Khiva; Ichan-Kala; Great Silk Road; urban planning; architectural heritage; archaeological research; Khorezm civilization; medieval cities; cultural heritage preservation; UNESCO World Heritage Site.*

Khiva is one of the most ancient cities of Central Asia, distinguished by its long history, unique architectural ensemble, and exceptional preservation. Located in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan, the city has played a significant role in political, economic, and cultural processes along the Great Silk Road. The historical development of Khiva reflects the evolution of urban planning, defense systems, and intercultural relations in the region [Tolstov, 1948]. The purpose of this article is to analyze the main stages of Khiva's historical development, its architectural structure, and its cultural significance from antiquity to the modern period. Archaeological research indicates that Khiva emerged in the 5th–6th centuries BC. Based on the analysis of pottery fragments and cultural layers, archaeologist Yahyo Gulyamov concluded that the city is approximately 2,500 years old [Gulyamov, 1970]. Alongside archaeological data, historical tradition connects the foundation of Khiva with the legend of Som, the son of the Prophet Noah. According to this legend, the city originated around the Kheyvak well, whose water was described as exceptionally sweet. This well, preserved in the north-western part of Ichan-Kala, is considered the most ancient point of the city [Ahmedov, 2001]. In the 4th–3rd centuries BC, Khiva was fortified with massive defensive walls constructed of mud bricks and raw bricks. Rectangular towers were erected along the walls at regular intervals, and an additional outer barrier strengthened the defensive system [Tolstov, 1948]. Ceramic finds from this period demonstrate the high level of craftsmanship and confirm the city's early

development as an agrarian and artisan center. During the early Middle Ages, Khiva became an important urban center within the Khorezm state. From the 4th century AD, the city was part of the Sassanid state, and in 712 it was conquered by Arab forces. Arab geographers such as Istakhri and Muqaddasi described Khiva as one of the largest and most developed cities of the Khorezm oasis, located on major caravan routes of the Great Silk Road [Istakhri, 930; Muqaddasi, 10th]. In the 13th century, Khiva came under the rule of the Mongol Empire, and later it became part of the Timurid state. Despite frequent political changes, the city retained its importance as a center of trade, crafts, and Islamic culture [Yakut Hamavi, 13th]. From the beginning of the 16th century until 1920, Khiva served as the capital of the Khiva Khanate. The city gained particular prominence during the reign of Abul-Gazi Khan, who emphasized Khiva's historical and political importance in his works *Shajarayi Turk* and *Shajarayi Tarokima* [Abulg'oziy Bahodirxon]. During this period, Khiva expanded significantly. The city consisted of two main parts: Ichan-Kala (inner city) and Dishan-Kala (outer city). Ichan-Kala was surrounded by fortress walls approximately 2,200 meters long and up to 8 meters high, with four main gates connecting the inner city to surrounding areas [Ahmedov, 2001]. In 1842, Dishan-Kala was also enclosed by defensive walls during the reign of Alloqli Khan. By the mid-19th century, Khiva contained numerous neighborhoods, mosques, madrasas, and caravanserais, reflecting its role as a religious, educational, and commercial center [Gulyamov, 1970]. In 1873, Khiva was conquered by Russian troops and became a protectorate of the Russian Empire. Despite political changes, cultural and educational life continued to develop. The first printing house in Khiva was established under Muhammad Rahimkhan II, and Otajon Abdalov published the first lithographic book in Central Asia in 1876 [Ahmedov, 2001]. In 1920–1924, Khiva served as the capital of the Khorezm People's Soviet Republic. Detailed city plans compiled by Russian topographers during this period provide valuable historical and urban data [Tolstov, 1948]. Khiva occupies a unique place among the ancient cities of Central Asia due to the integrity and preservation of its architectural ensemble. In 1967, Ichan-Kala was declared a historical and architectural monument reserve, the first of its kind in the region. In 1990, it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, recognizing its outstanding universal value [UNESCO, 1990]. Today, Khiva is a major center of international tourism, combining historical preservation with modern infrastructure. Its monuments, including the Juma Mosque, Pahlavan Mahmud Complex, and Islamkhodja Minaret, attract thousands of visitors annually.

Khiva is a unique historical city that has preserved its cultural and architectural integrity over more than two millennia. Archaeological evidence and written sources confirm its continuous development from antiquity to the modern era. As a key center of the Great Silk Road, Khiva played a crucial role in regional and international

cultural exchange. The preservation of Ichan-Kala and its recognition by UNESCO emphasize the global significance of Khiva as a living museum of world civilization.

References:

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