

Architecture Of The Palace Gardens Of The Bukhara Emirate: Sitorai Mohi Khosa

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Abstract: This article discusses the Sitorai Mohi Khosa palace garden, built in the late 19th and early 20th centuries in Bukhara. The article explores the architectural and compositional solutions of the palace, its traditional artistic decorations, and the integration of both modern and national architectural styles and elements. The creative works of the architects and craftsmen involved in its construction are also examined.

Keywords: Sitorai Mohi Khosa, palace garden, charbagh, "Khonai-safed," muqarnas, Moorish style, peacock, pool, pavilion, architectural monument.

Since ancient times, Bukhara has held a distinguished place on the world stage of architecture. The Ark of Bukhara, mosques, madrasas, khanaqas, minarets, and caravanserais, with their complex compositional solutions, are still being studied by scholars of the field, revealing new aspects continuously. The architecture of Bukhara during the final emirate period developed in a unique manner. Staying true to ancestral traditions, new and modern styles were harmoniously combined to create distinctive architectural directions. During this period, the influence of Moorish, European, and Russian architecture became evident in architectural monuments. The architecture of the palace gardens serves as a clear example of this influence. The current article is an extended version of an earlier article by the author. The palace gardens of the Bukhara Khanate, distinct from those of other khanates, were established outside the city on large tracts of land as separate garden ensembles. The Sitorai Mohi Khosa palace is one of the few that have survived to the present day. It included reception halls, residential rooms, a mosque, summer palace, kitchen, harem, and other structures, all situated within an expansive garden in a recurring layout. The palace features the charbagh style characteristic of Central Asia, as well as elements of Russian Moorish, Gothic, and local artistic influences.

The summer residence of the Emir, the palace known as Sitora-i Mokhi Khosa, was built in the northern part of the city of Bukhara. This palace belongs to the Manghit dynasty. The initial buildings were constructed during the reign of Emir Nasrullah, while the construction of the beautiful garden and the palace began during the times of Muzaffarkhan and Abdulakhadkhan. During the reign of Emir Alimkhan, a new palace was built, and from that time onwards, the palace was mainly divided into two parts: the old palace and the new palace. [2, p. 217]



The images above show the current state of the building near the pool in the new palace (left), and a historical photograph (right). In the historical image, it is possible to see the now-missing part of this building. According to many sources, it is known that there used to be a flower garden and a greenhouse in this part.

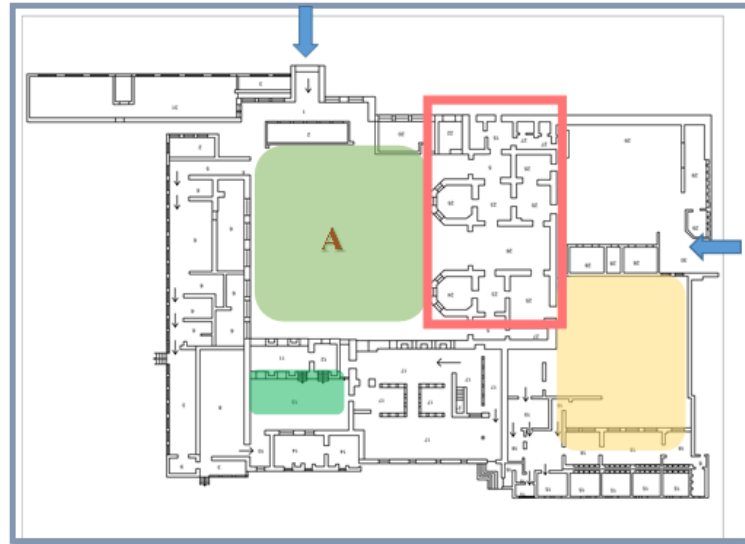


The next image above is also a historical photograph depicting the now-missing part of the new palace's harem building.

The two palaces are separated by a main road. The old palace was built during the reign of Emir Alimkhan's father, Abdulakhadkhan. According to historical sources, it was constructed by one of the local masters, Khoja Hafiz, who had traveled to Saint Petersburg and Yalta to gain experience before building the palace. The palace incorporates a complex blend of various European and traditional architectural elements. The old palace is an ensemble consisting of three courtyards and numerous rooms, forming a square layout around the palace. The oldest room here is Muzaffarkhan's guest room, which is distinguished by its wide and high hall, balcony pavilions on both sides, and European-style doors and windows. In contrast, Abdulakhadkhan's hall, which forms a square room divided into three sections, was constructed differently. Two halls placed opposite each other and similarly decorated are connected by a high dais, and there are similarities in the decorations of both halls. [2, p. 218]

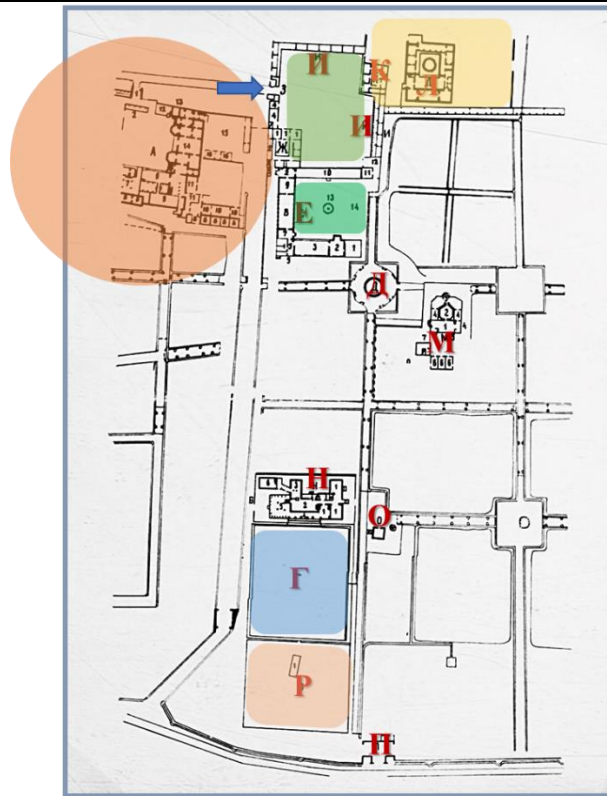
The historical design provided below shows the structural layout of Abdulakhadkhan's palace. According to this, each part of the palace is interconnected

but has its own unique historical solution. The typology of residential buildings, such as the presence of inner and outer courtyards, and the convenient placement of rooms according to their functional needs, are also depicted in this drawing.



OLD PALACE (Abdulakhadkhan's Palace) ROOM DIRECTORY

1. GATE – ENTRANCE
2. STORAGE ROOM - GUARD ROOM
3. BALCONIES
4. PORCH
5. VESTIBULE
6. BANQUET HALL - HALL FOR BANQUETS FOR THE EMIR'S CLOSE ONES
7. BANQUET HALL – HALL FOR THE EMIR'S OWN BANQUETS
8. STAIRS LEADING UP
9. ROOM FOR SERVANTS
10. SALON ROOM - RECEPTION ROOM
11. WAITING ROOM (FRONT PART)
12. KASHGAR-STYLE BALCONY – ENCLOSED COURTYARD
13. SERVANTS' ROOM
14. SERVANTS' ROOM
15. CORRIDOR – PASSAGEWAY
16. RECREATION ROOM – PUBLIC ENTERTAINMENT ROOM
17. HAREM
18. REST ROOM – RELAXATION ROOM
19. SHERBET ROOM – ROOM FOR STORING DRINKS
20. STAIRS LEADING UP
21. WATER ROOM – ROOM FOR STORING WATER
22. CART DRIVER'S ROOM – ROOM FOR STABLE HANDS
23. STABLE – PLACE FOR HORSES



NEW PALACE (Alimkhan's Palace, based on L.I. Mankovskaya's personal archive)
ROOM DIRECTORY

A – OLD PALACE

G - POOLS (WATER RESERVOIRS)

V – FRONT ENTRANCE (GATEHOUSE)

D - FLOWER GARDEN

E – NEW PALACE: 1 - TEAHOUSE, 2 - FRONT VESTIBULE, 3 - GUEST ROOM, 4 - SALON – THE EMIR'S RECEPTION ROOM, 5 - CORRIDOR (PASSAGEWAY), 7 - BATHHOUSE, 8 - WHITE HALL, 9 - BEDROOM, 10 - VERANDA, 11 - GUARDS' ROOM, 12 – PASSAGEWAY, 13 - FOUNTAIN, 14 - INNER COURTYARD

Zh - TREASURY – PLACE FOR THE EMIR'S PERSONAL BELONGINGS:

1 - SHERBET ROOM – ROOM FOR STORING DRINKS, 2 - TREASURY – ROOM FOR STORING VALUABLE ITEMS, 3 - TOILET, 4 - STORAGE ROOMS

I – SMALL BALCONY (VIEWING AREA) FOR SPECTATORS, OUTER COURTYARD

K - SMALL COURTYARD – SERVANTS' ROOM FOR THE HAREM L - HAREM M - EIGHT-SIDED ROOM – PAVILION IN THE GARDEN: 1 - LARGE HALL, 2 - DINING ROOM, 3 - VESTIBULE, 4 - BEDROOMS, 5 - BATHROOMS, 6 - ROOMS, 7 - KITCHEN, 8 - TWO HEXAGONAL SERVANTS' ROOMS

N – TWO-STORIED PAVILION: 1 - BEDROOMS, 2 - KHAN'S ROOM (GUEST ROOM), 3 - KITCHEN, 4 - ARCHED GALLERIES (BALCONIES), 5 - GREENHOUSE, 6 - MOSQUE

O - SHED P - TERRACED GATEWAY LEADING TO THE BUZKASHI FIELD R -

ANIMAL ROOM – ZOO: 1 - ANIMAL CAGES FOR KEEPING ANIMALS

In the structural layout drawing of the new palace shown above, similar typological features as the old palace are compared. In this layout, the structural parts are described letter by letter, according to L.I. Mankovskaya.

Currently, many parts of the palace have been destroyed, and it is only assumed which rooms were located there based on their function. Although the old palace embodies the unique characteristics of ancient Bukhara, it is evident that architectural elements in European style have been widely used in its exterior. In some rooms, traditional local construction styles and decorations were not used at all. A large garden surrounded the palace, designed in the style of "Chaharbagh" (four gardens), with a pool built in the middle of the garden. We can see a clear blending of European styles and elements primarily in the new palace complex of Sitora-i Mokhi Khosa. [3, p. 147]

The construction of the new palace began during the reign of Emir Alimkhan, and it is often mentioned in many sources that before construction, the best craftsmen and architects of Bukhara were sent to Russia to learn new architectural experiences. Under the leadership of Khoja Hafiz and with the supervision of Russian engineers, construction began with the building of the first structure on the southern side of the courtyard. In building the main structure, architectural solutions from Europe, Isfahan's palaces, and Bukhara's rich residential buildings were widely utilized. The building had a beautiful artistic solution, and the craftsmen faced challenges in synthesizing different styles. On the other side of the courtyard, next to this building, was the "Khana-i Safed" or the "White Hall," which held great artistic significance. In this hall, the skilled craftsman of Bukhara, Master Shirin Murodov, demonstrated all his talent. L.I. Rempel described this hall as Shirin Murodov's "masterpiece" [4, p. 117].

Master Shirin spent two to three months developing the idea for the hall. Finally, an unexpected thought came to him — to use mirrors as a background and overlay delicate plasterwork. This technique yielded the expected effect in implementing a refined and relief-based idea. No gaudy gold or silver decorations were used in the hall. The master personally supervised the creation of each plaster decoration, working on the sketches and the most intricate styles with his own hands. Many of the plasterwork techniques used in this work were entirely new and had not been used anywhere else before. Moreover, the "White Hall" was the only room where the best traditional styles of plaster artistry were carefully preserved. I.I. Notkin described, "Master Shirin turned the White Hall into the treasury of Bukhara's plaster art masters." [5, pp. 9-10]

One of the rooms following the White Hall was decorated in the Roman-Gothic style. Similarly, a building with a portico in the European style was constructed on the third, northern side of the courtyard. [2, p. 221]

Another unique feature of the new palace is that it has the largest pool in Central Asia, surrounded by grey marble. Next to the pool was a two-story pavilion belonging to the emir. Unlike other palace gardens, Mokhi Khosa is closer to the Chaharbagh style; similar to the Chaharbagh composition, it includes a diverse animal world, landscape features, a large pool, and surrounding pavilions, which is a clear indicator. [1, p. 29]

In conclusion, it can be said that the contributions of the emirs of Bukhara to the formation of palace garden architecture are invaluable. Sitora-i Mokhi Khosa is a beautiful surviving example of palace gardens. With the efforts of expert scholars, all information related to the palace should be collected, graphic restoration projects of

the old parts should be implemented, and they should contribute to enriching our cultural heritage for future generations.

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