

ITCHAN-KALA: OPEN-AIR MUSEUM

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Abstract: Itchan Kala is the walled inner town of the city of Khiva, Uzbekistan. Since 1990, it has been protected as a World Heritage Site. Notable buildings in Itchan Kala are Juma Mosque, Ak Mosque, madrasahs of Alla-Kulli-Khan, Muhammad Aminkhon, Muhammad Rakhimkhon, Mausoleums of Pahlavon Mahmud, Sayid Allavuddin, Shergozikhon as well as caravanserais and markets.

Key words: Khorezm, Khiva, Allakuli Khan Madrassah, Islam Khoja Complex: mosque and minaret, Kalta-minor: "short minaret", UNESCO

Itchan Kala is the walled inner town of the city of Khiva, Uzbekistan. Since 1990, it has been protected as a World Heritage Site. The old town retains more than 50 historic monuments and 250 old houses, dating primarily from the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. Juma Mosque, for instance, was established in the tenth century and rebuilt from 1788 to 1789, although its celebrated hypostyle hall still retains 112 columns taken from ancient structures.

The most spectacular features of Itchan Kala are its crenellated brick walls and four gates, one at each side of the rectangular fortress. Although the foundations are believed to have been laid in the tenth century, present-day 10-metre-high (33 ft) walls were erected mostly in the late seventeenth century and later repaired. Notable buildings in Itchan Kala are Juma Mosque, Ak Mosque, madrasahs of Alla-Kulli-Khan, Muhammad Aminkhon, Muhammad Rakhimkhon, Mausoleums of Pahlavon Mahmud, Sayid Allavuddin, Shergozikhon as well as caravanserais and markets. [1]

Itchan-Kala is the name of the part of an ancient city of Khiva, its living and trade area along with Dishan-Kala – outskirts.

Nowadays, Itchan-Kala is an open-air state architectural and archaeological museum. It is a historical part and the inner city in Khiva, where one can enjoy the authentic atmosphere of the old eastern city. The gates have their own names – Western (Ata Darwaza), Northern (Bagci Darwaza), Eastern (Palvan Darwaza) and Southern (Tash Darwaza). The main way lies from Eastern to Western gates. Main monuments of the past are located here.

Itchan-Kala, which is recognized as World Heritage by UNESCO, is the home for nearly 60 historical sights in Khiva. [2]

Allakuli Khan Madrassah



Madrassah of Allakuli Khan was built in the middle of the XIX century. It is considered the richest monument in its decoration. Majolica of Khorezmian type in black, white and blue colors prevails here, images in black contours is in the tambourines and framed double arcade of columns and three-quarters of the portal. Madrasah has a name of an initiator of its construction, the Khiva ruler Allakuli Khan. In several khujdras on the first floor there was the city library founded by Allakuli Khan. The library provide books for all students of Khiva Madrasah.



Islam Khoja Complex: mosque and minaret

This almost a modern complex dates back to the beginning of the XX century. It includes a minaret and a mosque. The complex is called in honour of Islam Khoja, Prime Minister of Isfandiar Khan. Islam Khoja minaret called the symbol of Khiva. It is narrowed upwards, which dates back to the earliest examples of the architecture of the XIV century. The brickwork alternates with bands of glazed patterns on the minaret. The height of the minaret 56.6 meters, diameter of the fundament is 9.5 at the base.

Kalta-minor: "short minaret"



It is difficult to imagine ancient Khiva without this monument of oriental architecture. The Minaret of Kalta-Minor has become the real symbol of the city. It amazes with its size and unique design. Foundation of the minaret is 15 meters, diameter at the foundation is 14,5 meters and the height is 29 meters. But this massive tower has only third part of the project height.

In 1855 the Khiva ruler Muhammad Amin Khan was killed and the construction of the magnificent minaret was stopped, though it was supposed to be of 70 meters (according to other records – of 110 meters). According to the architect project wide foundation was to increase durability and the supposed top was to be narrower to decrease the load. But the fate decreed otherwise – and the tower remained unfinished. And now it resembles huge glazed barrel and is called as Kalta-Minor that means “short minaret”.

There is a lot of interesting legends regarded to this minaret. During the construction of this grand minaret, people began to murmur close to the minaret. But Muhammad Amin-khan ordered to catch the strikers' leader Matyakub and to bury him alive in the foundation of the tower. Another interesting legend says that Bukhara ruler learned about the construction of such grand minaret and offered the architect to build higher minaret. When Muhammad Amin Khan learned about this arrangement he decided to kill the corrupt architect. But the architect managed to escape, leaving the tower unfinished. Only this architect could complete the construction. But these are just legends and the erection of minaret was stopped exactly after death of the khan. Even over a century later the minaret of Kalta Minor has been amazing with its size. Its unique decoration strikes an imagination: the minaret is completely covered with the glazed tile and majolica, which are still bright and vivid as in 1855.[3]

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