

Mechanisms Of Formation And Development Of Mahalla Centers In Central Asia

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Abstract: this article is devoted to the architecture of mahalla, where mechanism of its historical formation and evolution, planning solutions, structural composition are analyzed. In addition, an attempt has been made to cover the activity of mahalla, neighborhood team in family lifestyle of Central Asia's nations from historical and ethnographic viewpoint. Recommendations on increasing the opportunities for efficient use of populated areas.

Index Terms: architectural-artistic view, guzar, mahalla center, harmony, functional, planning and compositional solution, hoikhona (tea-house), hovuz (pool).

1 INTRODUCTION

From early years of independence of Central Asian states, and namely of Uzbekistan, improving the activity of mahalla, which has been viewed as a traditional form of self-governance, has gained a high importance in the course of active socio-economic reforms in all areas. It has gained the status of lower government body, primary social organization, and its duties and tasks have been broadened. This has been of great importance for revival of historical traditions of Central Asian nations and formation of spiritual and moral characteristics in citizens' minds. Study of activity of mahalla, i.e. neighbourhood team in family lifestyle of Central Asian nations from historical and ethnographic viewpoint is currently of great scientific importance. People's tradition of living as a team dates back to ancient periods of human history. According to historical data, people's kindred collectives, who lived together and shared common labor tools, were formed in the late Paleolite period. In the course of long historical evolution this associations has passed certain stages and turned into a neighborhood team [1]. Here it is necessary to mention L.Levitin's opinions stating, "Mahalla is the supreme form of joint habitation in Uzbek society. This form of local collectives, local self-government has survived over centuries and was preserved event at the points of sharp turns in Uzbeks' history. Today it has not still fallen into oblivion" [2]. Mahalla originates from Arabic word "mahallum", and has meanings of populated place, guzar, residential quarters.

2 CONCEPT OF MAHALLA IN HISTORICAL WORKS

Mahalla, a small territorial unit in cities has been inherited from the past. People, who live in mahalla, follow the discipline, interests and obligations. Mahalla is a style of community life, and constitute the self-governance system. Mahalla is managed by an elected elder, who lives in that area. [3]. Prior to discussing the history of the topic, it is appropriate to note that related information is reflected in historical and ethnographic literature in a certain way.

Various issues concerning the people's lifestyle is reflected to some extent in the literature related to religion of Zoroastrianism, ancient spiritual heritage of history and culture of oriental nations. Opinions, which reflected the moral and philosophical ideas of that time, served to formation of socio-ideological views in people's minds. Namely, in the Avesta, family, primary economic basis and social component of society was called *nmana*, kindred community – *vis*, neighbors' community, i.e. certain area or state was called *dahya*, and they ensured mutual order and organization in society [4]. In Zoroastrians' community people were categorized into various groups depending their lifestyle, including their commercial and economic relations, and religious beliefs. Their social status was specified separately in the Avesta. Morals views in the Holy Qur'an, sacred book of Islamic religion, and Hadiths with respect of neighbors relations, kindred relations are still relevant in our days. Moral and spiritual views on children's upbringing in the community, progressive ideas on human perfection have always been under the focus of the Oriental thinkers. In this sense, historical and ethnographic works such as "Diwani Lughat-it-Turk" by Makhmud Kashghari and "Family" by Rezauddin ben Fakhruddin are of special importance as significant sources in researching the ethnography of Turkic nations, and specifically that of Uzbeks. Substantial information related to our ancestors' lifestyle can be found in these works. For instance, there are ethnographic data about family lifestyle, customs and traditions, religious believes and imaginations of ancient Turkic peoples. One can see information on neighbors' relations as well. In addition, there are moral and spiritual thoughts on everyday domestic and social relations, family and marriage issues in the works "Hairat-ul-Abror" and "Me'zon-ul-Awzan" by the great poet Alisher Navoi. For instance in his works "Hairat-ul-Abror", Navoi wrote the following on mahalla: "So, mahalla itself is a small town..." [5], thus, even in medieval centuries urban and rural population lived within certain mahalla. By late XIX – early XX century, scholars and travelers started researching the ethnic composition, lifestyle and economic activity of local population. A number of researchers, who visited the country during this period, provided information on one or another aspect of certain issue. For instance, while discussing the Uzbeks' lifestyle, namely community relations among neighbors, status of women, marital relations in 70's of XIX century of the example of Uzbeks of Zerafshan region, A.D. Grebenkin partly mentioned the neighbors' relations as well. For instance, based on local population's lifestyle, senator count K.Kpalen wrote "Chairpersons' activity had national social nature, and they controlled the community based on only traditional customs" [7] in his reports on audit of

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Turkestan Territory. V.A. Shishkin's article "Ташкентский махалля" ("Tashkent Mahalla), which was written on the history of Tashkent City, history and toponymy of their mahallas and quarters, A.I. Dobromyslov's "Ташкент в прошлом и настоящем" (Tashkent, in the Past and at Present), N.G. Malliutskiy's work "Тошкентский махалля и мауза" (Tashkent Mahalla and Mavze (Quarter)) are of great importance amongst historical information related to late XIX – early XX centuries for discussion of the issues under our study in one or another way [8]. In particular, sources mentioned in the authors' works provide substantial information of the far past of Tashkent City, its then existed mahallas and quarters, their location and historical toponymy. G.P. Snesev, who described the Uzbeks' traditional male gatherings, i.e. gap-gashtaks held at mahallas as first forms of people's community, emphasized their great social importance. In addition, in a fundamental research work titled "Quarter Community of Late Feudal Bukhara City" by O.A. Sukhareva, which is devoted to the mahalla population of Bukhara City, an attempt was made to analyze comprehensively the lives of mahallas of Bukhara City in late XIX – early XX centuries. While describing each mahalla in the city, the author discusses its administrative management, and specific characteristics of its activity. When necessary, she describes the duties of mahalla members in following customs and ceremonies [9].

3 ARCHITECTURAL SOLUTIONS OF MODERN MAHALLAS

Mahalla is a method of self-governance, which is inherent to our people's traditions, customs and values. In ancient times, mahalla centers were considered as a special public place, where elder's and water supervisor's administration, mosque, improved choikhonas with a pool and clay *supas* (beds) functioned. There were local mosques, schools and madrassahs, pools, choikhonas, trade stores and improved bazaars in urban mahallas in central districts. Mahalla centers, where low-income population lived, had only small pool, and some-times, small improved choikhonas. Local centers with improved, green surrounded pool and mosque were of great importance for local people for their joint prayers as well as discussion of issues related to that mahalla's wedding and mourning ceremonies. Results of study of mahalla's service facilities show that there was need for creation of additional mosque and small centers by XX century. As usual, mahallas had centers with artisanship and trade enterprises and cultural center, which were called as *guzars*. Guzars were located on highways or their crossroads. There were various public places at guzars, including large mosque, madrassah, caravansary, choikhona, ironworks, hairdresser's room, mill, butcher's room, trade stores and small bazaar [10]. These guzars served to passerbys and neighbor mahalla population. Guzars performed a vital task of uniting the mahallas into single territory. Mahalla's area varied depending on the city's structure. Population's density in territories near the city center was 350-400 persons per ha, and mahalla's area was 1-2 ha. In suburban areas, mahalla's area sometimes was 15-20 ha. As a rule, mahalla centers were located in the heart of mahalla's common territory or near the transportation stops of main highways. There were mahalla committee, choikhona, store elders' room, storegae room for items rented out during weddings and ceremonies, and a kitchen for cooking of national meals at the mahalla center. Certain departments in the structure of center, department for items (tableware, furniture, etc.) rented out for weddings and ceremonies had

existed for a long-time [11]. Mahalla Committee implemented the community activities at the mahalla center based on the self-governance system. Mahalla Committee included representatives elected from amongst the population, including women's councillor, elder, community guard, etc. Mahalla Committee was chaired by the elder. In addition to cultural activities, mahalla's duties included improvement of mahalla's territory, organization of community works for construction or renovation of population's houses, rendering of aid to certain families in difficult situation or conduction of weddings and other large ceremonies. In addition, mahalla had paid a great attention to upbringing of young generation. Mahalla issues had been discussed at people's meetings. Various professionals, including doctors, teachers, lawyers, who lived in that mahalla were involved in the Mahalla Committee's activity. Mahalla's people helped each other in everyday life and celebrated holidays together. Elders enjoyed special attention and respect in mahalla's life and people consulted with them on the issues of lifestyles, educating, and upbringing. Due to respect to elders, special elders' room was formed at mahalla centers, which was often located in combination with choikhona (tea-house) [12]. Due to study of evolution of architectural and composition system of mahallas in Central Asia from historical viewpoint, uniqueness of mahalla centers and their structural composition has been identified. Results of research show that community and trade centers on the territory of mahalla had emerged in the centuries-long process of rational distribution and "natural selection" of service outlets construction in populated areas. During evolution of mahalla system, service outlets, which suit the urban population's lifestyle, have been important from early days to our days. At present too, mahalla centers serve as a functional and compositional center for population, as it has served in the past. Often, mahalla centers are situated on crossroads of footpaths and transport road. Mahalla centers are distinctive for their convenience, multi-purpose nature and broad coverage [13]. Here, harmony of functional characteristics and compositional solution is reflected. Such centers facilitate satisfaction of primary needs in everyday life of population and families. Location of mahalla centers is linked to urban construction and its functional tasks. While mahalla centers, which do not have trade outlet, constitute empty, semi-open composition from architectural viewpoint, trade outlets located along the footpath constitute the core of city center [14].

4 CONCLUSION

Central Asian nations' millenia old historical and spiritual evolution, core of national statehood, roots of a great culture, spiritual heritage, national identities and rich customs are wide used in the course of building a new society. Oriental democratic values, which rely on the idea of unity, which reflects the Oriental philosophy and religion of Islam, and priority of public opinion have been taken as a basis on this path. Principles of justice and truth are relied on in the course of building the new society. Necessary opportunities are created for people to demonstrate their talents and needs and implement them. Each person's fate, life and social role and willingness to work with a potential are taken into account in this process. It should be also noted that further improvement of population's living standards, improvement of functional, planning architectural and artistic view of mahalla centers in territories, and study of mahallas as part of research work and

increase of efficiency of area use are associated with more comprehensive consideration of urban development standards. It was established during the research that structural composition of mahallas in Central Asia is divided into following 3 parts: mahalla – bazaar, simple mahalla, and mahalla-quarter. Main mahalla buildings in mahalla-bazaar: guzar, trade buildings, choikhona and others (dense); houses are located in simple mahalla (moderately dense); houses, gardens and backyards are (sparsely) located in mahalla-quarters.

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