



## ARCHITECTURAL MONUMENTS OF THE ANCIENT CITY

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**ABSTRACT:** - Based on preserved architectural monuments, written sources, archaeological researches, archival and museum artifacts, this article is dedicated to the history of architectural monuments in the historical part of Shakhrisabz, which in the future will allow using the historical and architectural potential of the Kashkadarya region for the development of tourism between countries and nations.

**KEYWORDS:** Kesh, Shakhrisabz, Kitab, Uzunkir, Sangirtepa, Gava Sughd, Nautaka, Barknan.

### INTRODUCTION

The ancient city of Shakhrisabz, located at the eastern foot of the Gissar Range, is considered to be one of the most beautiful places in the East. The city is a kind of an eastern treasure with the richest architectural and cultural heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan.

In 2002, on the occasion of the 2700th anniversary of the city, the book "Shakhrisabz: Millennia legacy" [1], which gives a chronology of the development of the city in its dynamics, was published.

According to scientists and archaeologists, the ancient settlements of Uzunkir and Sangirtepa, dating back to the Achaemenid Empire, are considered to be the most ancient part of the city. During the Campaigns of Alexander the Great the city was known as Ksinippa, in the early Middle Ages - Kesh, and during the Medieval Period (the 14th century) the city had been called both Kesh and Shakhrisabz.

There are over 200 discovered archaeological monuments in Shakhrisabz. The history of

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these monuments covers the period from the end of the Paleolithic period up to the 19th century. The following are the monuments that have significance to the history of Uzbekistan and Central Asia: the Angillok Mountain (belongs to the Paleolithic period), Siypantosh (the Paleolithic and Mesolithic periods), the Uzunkir complex (the Early Iron Age), Kalandartepa (the Hellenistic period), Zindontepa (the Early Middle Ages), Sariqtepa (the Early Middle Ages), Chechaktepa (the place of worship for the Nestorians in the Early Middle Ages), Kirtepa (the cemetery the Nestorians were buried in) and others [2].

The history of Shakhrisabz from ancient times and its medieval architectural monuments were the subjects of researches by famous scientists and archaeologists such as: V.V. Bartold, S.K. Kabanov, V.D. Zhukov, M.E. Masson, G.A. Pugachenkova, E.V. Rtveladze, A.S. Sagdullaev. Among those who significantly contributed to the studies of the history of Shakhrisabz were Z. I. Usmanova, S. B. Lunina, N. I. Krashennnikova, Kh. T. Sultanov and others.

The book “Monuments of past centuries”, a joint work of E.V. Rtveladze, A.S. Sagdullaev, gives a broad historical overview of the region based on the authors’ own observations [3].

Shakhrisabz is a city with rich architectural and cultural heritage that goes back to the distant historical past. For many centuries, the city had been at the crossroads of the most important caravan routes leading from the Central Asian interfluvial area to the countries of the Eastern and the Western world. The city’s favorable geographical position, fertile valleys, as well as vast and numerous settlements around it, became the scene for great historical events.

There are still a number of questions regarding the stages of historical development of Shakhrisabz, also known as Kesh. In written

sources, Kesh is known from the 7th to the 19th centuries [4]. However, according to the field studies in the upper reaches of the Kitab-Shakhrisabz Oasis which were conducted in the last decades of the 20th century, the origin of the city is associated with the period of development of the most ancient cities throughout Central Asia and the city had gone through a difficult historical development path [5].

In the 80s of the 20th century, archaeologists of the Tashkent State University (nowadays called the National University of Uzbekistan) discovered the ruins of an ancient settlement - Uzunkir, equal to an area of 70 – 80 hectares and dated to the 7th-11th centuries B.C. The monument was surrounded by a powerful defensive wall, the remains of which we can still see today.

The earliest mentions about Uzunkir can be found in the Book of Han, the Chinese source of the 1st century B.C. In that book Uzunkir was mentioned as Suse or Sukhe city. The names of Suse, Sute, Sude are associated with the name of the area of settlement of the Sogdians [6].

According to the archaeological excavations and post-excavation analysis, an early settlement on the site of Uzunkir arose as early as the 8th century B.C. In the same century, a defensive wall was built.

The Uzunkir settlement was surrounded by a powerful fortress wall, inside which there was an early medieval fortified fortress - a citadel with interior walls, the corners of which were flanked by towers.

The visual survey of the area indicates on two adjacent hills in the Uzunkir settlement. One can assume that there were two citadels built in different period of time, each located on different hills. The citadels had defensive walls with observation towers. Preserved rampart

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fortifying the city wall of the ancient Uzunkir settlement was approximately 650 meters in area.

The settlement had a double defensive wall. The outer defensive wall, according to the studies, was half the size of the inner one. The outer wall was approximately 5 – 6 meters wide and 8-10 meters high; the inner wall was

8 – 12 meters wide and 10 – 12 meters high. The distance between the inner and outer wall was 5 – 6 meters.

Based on archaeological researches and visual surveys, we have sketched the ancient Uzunkir settlement of the 8th – 6th centuries B.C. (Fig. 1).



Fig.

1.

**The sketches of the ancient Uzunkir settlement of the 8th – 6th centuries B.C. by**

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During field studies, another ancient settlement was discovered nearby Uzunkir. The settlement, called Sangirtepa, was a hill with an area of 84 × 62 meters, about 8 meters high, located outside the city walls, at a distance of 650m southwest of Uzunkir [7].

The area surrounding the Sangirtepa monument was about 3 hectares in perimeter and was fortified with powerful pakhs walls in two rows, each 10 meters wide, and, obviously, the name Sangir - a stone fortress - was given for that reason. The oldest

architectural remains of Sangirtepa date back to the 9th – 13th centuries B.C. [8].

In 1986, as a result of archaeological excavations at Sangirtepa by the expedition of Tashkent State University named after Mirzo Ulugbek, a unique Zoroastrian temple with a hall in the middle, an altar and auxiliary premises were discovered. The temple was one of the oldest places of worship in Central Asia [9]. Among findings there were also the remains of large multi-room buildings made of

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mud brick, various tools, and ceramics, made both on a potter's wheel and by hand.

On the basis of archaeological excavations and researches, the Sangirtepa Hill surrounded by a double defensive wall was sketched (Fig. 2).



**Fig. 2. The Sangirtepa Hill by N. Gilmanova**

During the Seleucid Empire and the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom, Uzunkir fell into decay, and by the end of the 3rd and beginning of the 2nd centuries B.C. a new urban center was formed where nowadays Kitab city is located.

Preserved remains of the ancient wall found along the Aksu-Darya River in the mid-60s of the last century indicate that the area of the urban center exceeded 40 hectares. The design of the ancient wall was very close to the Uzunkir's rampart and the wall was built of rectangular mud brick of a smaller size with all the inherent architectural elements of the

ancient era (internal compartments, high plinth platform, loophole and pilasters). These constructions distinguish the ancient wall from the walls of Uzunkir. For unknown reasons, the city was abandoned and arose anew on the site of the current Kitab.

A citadel, called Kalandartepa, was erected in the center of the city. It was 12 –15m high. The area of the citadel was almost 1 hectare.

The occupation debris of the citadel contains a huge number of artifacts of the 3rd – 2nd centuries B.C., indicating the time of the beginning of the construction of the citadel. In the archaeological layers of the platform of the

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citadel, layers of the ancient and early medieval period of the beginning of the 10th – 12th centuries A.D. were discovered.

Nowadays, most of the remains of the ancient and early medieval city are under modern residential and urban buildings. The main building material was a large square mud brick and pakh. Marble bases, which served as the base of wooden columns, can also be found.

Obviously, the new ancient city in the area of modern Kitab took place in 329-327 B.C., when the troops of Alexander the Great crushed the Achaemenid Empire including Sughd. The Hellenes opened roads to the Sughd region of Nautaka, which means “new village” or “new land”. According to scientists, the etymology of this word is associated with powerful or large structures, which suggest that the name Nautaka could be associated with the construction of a huge fortress Uzunkir or other cities fortified with a powerful fortress wall.

In those distant days, one of the regions of Sogdiana was known as Gava Sughd, which meant “Sogdian settlement”. This information is contained in one of the parts of the Avesta [6].

After the collapse of the Empire of Alexander the Great, the ancient Kesh began to develop on the site of Ksinippa.

In the first half of the 7th century Kesh had flourished.

At that time, Kesh temporarily became the capital of Sogd. According to written sources and coins inscriptions, the names of three rulers of Kesh were Dichzhe, Shishpir and Akhurpat.

Early medieval Kesh occupied almost the same territory as in the ancient period. Some parts of the architectural structures were also used

in the Early Middle Ages. This mainly applies to defensive structures.

The palace of the ruler Dichzhe was built at the end of the 7th century western from the former citadel. Its ruins were discovered under the fortress of the Kitab bek, who in the 18th century only adapted a powerful early medieval fortress with a hexagonal layout with an area of 2.5 hectares. The corners of the early medieval citadel were flanked by towers with interior walls.

Kesh got mostly famous during the Arab conquest. Since 777 almost the entire territory of Kesh became the center of an anti Islamic revolt led by al-Muqanna, which was brutally crushed. This defeat led to complete destruction of the city center and the decline of Kesh-Kitab for a very long time, up to the 10th century.

According to Arabic medieval sources, public and administrative buildings in the 10th century were almost ruined and no longer reconstructed, and the territory of the city did not exceed the existing medieval Kesh, although it was intensively populated [6].

Based on archaeological evidence, on the Balandtepa or Zindontepa Hill there was an early medieval settlement that had been settling down until the 8th – 9th centuries, and on the territory of the Balandtepa Hill the traces of settlement of the 12th – early 13th centuries can be found. According to researchers, this territory was an integral part of the city of Kesh and here, perhaps, one of the most important parts for Muslims was located - the mosque and zindan, which is repeatedly mentioned in Arabic sources.

In addition, on the route of this road there was the village of Barknan with the same name of the outer gate of the city of Kesh. Obviously, Barknan was a prominent village located on the caravan route.

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The village of Barknan was adjacent to the city of Kesh, and the Barknan Gate overlooked southwest to the trade route leading to Nasaf and Termez.

The nearest and the most significant settlement on this caravan route in the 9th – 10th centuries was the city of Kesh, which existed on the site of the present Shakhrisabz. Near Kesh, the caravan route was divided in two directions: one led to Termez and the other one led to Nasaf.

All data suggests that the village of Barknan was located near current Shakhrisabz, which was a satellite city of Kesh in the 10th century.

The archaeological excavations indicate that the first settlement on the site of Shakhrisabz-Barknan was formed back in the 5th – 6th centuries B.C. [10]. Obviously, it was the early medieval Kesh with a fortified castle, in which, according to some information, there was a Zoroastrian temple. An unfortified settlement was located around the castle, which had been increasing until the 10th century.

By the 11th – 12th centuries, it stopped existing and new Kesh moved to the place where the present Shakhrisabz is located. The name Barknan was no longer used. From this period, Kesh had become developed cultural and economic center.

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