

“ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN THE BUKHARA KHANATE
DURING THE REIGN OF ABDULLAKHAN II (16TH CENTURY)”

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Abstract: This study is devoted to a historical, social, and cultural analysis of architectural monuments constructed during the reign of Abdullakhan II (1557–1598), the ruler of the Bukhara Khanate in the sixteenth century. The madrasas, mosques, khanqahs, bridges, sardobas, caravanserais, bathhouses, and water facilities commissioned by Abdullakhan II represent a significant stage in the development of architecture and urban planning in Central Asia.

Keywords: madrasa, mosque, khanqah, irrigation facilities, fortress walls and gates

Introduction. The madrasas, mosques, khanqahs, bridges, sardobas, bathhouses, and commercial structures constructed during the reign of Abdullakhan II served not only as religious and administrative centers, but also played a significant role in the development of science and education, the expansion of trade, and the improvement of living conditions for the population. These architectural complexes shaped the urban image of major cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Karmana, Tashkent, and Balkh, and contributed to strengthening the region’s economic and geographical connections.

In the history of Uzbek national statehood, the sixteenth century – particularly the period of Abdullakhan II’s rule in the Bukhara Khanate – has attracted considerable scholarly interest, resulting in numerous academic studies. Therefore, historical sources and scholarly as well as literary works related to the era of Abdullakhan II continue to be actively examined by researchers and introduced into scientific circulation to this day.

Main Part. As is well known from historical evidence, dozens of architectural structures preserved in the territories of present-day Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Navoi, Jizzakh, Surkhandarya, and Kashkadarya regions were constructed directly on the orders of Abdullakhan II. Among them are the Abdullakhan and Modarikhon madrasas in Bukhara; the mosque and khanqah built for the Juybor sheikhs; the Gavkushon complex; the New Chorsu; the Abdullakhan *tim* and trading domes; the Kukeldash Madrasa in Tashkent; the Tosh Machit within the Chashma complex in Nurata; the Qasim Shaykh Khanqah in Karmana; the “House of Abdullakhan” near the Charmgar *chorbog*; and the bridge constructed over the Zarafshan River in 1582 (near the present-day “Sementchi” health resort).

According to historical sources, in the sixteenth century Karmana had a large congregational mosque known as *Chorminor* (formerly located at the site of the Navoi “Matlubotsavdo” office) and a *Toshhamom* bathhouse near the Karmana farmers’ market. Considering that the majority of architectural constructions of the sixteenth century are associated with the name of Abdullakhan II, it can be concluded that these buildings were also erected during his reign.

Abdullakhan II paid special attention to Karmana, as it was his birthplace. His father and grandfather had lived and ruled there. As evidence, we refer to the account of Hafiz Tanish al-Bukhari, who wrote:

“After returning from Balkh and staying for a short time in Bukhara, the capital of his state, Abdullakhan sent his brother Ibodullo Sultan, together with all state officials and dignitaries, to Karmana – his birthplace and ancestral homeland.”

During his reign, urban development and public improvement flourished throughout the country. Not only the khan himself, but also high-ranking officials and wealthy landowners actively engaged in charitable construction projects. Following the proverb “People follow the

faith of their ruler,” influential officials and nobles commissioned numerous prestigious buildings – mosques, *rabats*, bridges, and reservoirs—in honor of Abdullakhan II.

Historical works indicate that from the second half of the sixteenth century, science and culture experienced noticeable development, especially in Bukhara, the capital of the khanate. One significant urban initiative was the incorporation of the Sumiton (Juybor) village, located approximately one *farsakh* (6–7 km) from the city, into Bukhara. A new defensive wall was constructed on its southwestern side. Near the mausoleum of Imam Abu Bakr Sa‘d, the revered ancestor of the Juybor sheikhs, a mosque, madrasa, and khanqah were built, surrounded by a beautifully designed *chorbog* garden. A wide boulevard was laid from Sumiton to the city center, with various trees planted along both sides. According to the author of *Sharafnama-yi Shahi*, the incorporation and development of Sumiton, along with the improvement of Bukhara itself, lasted nearly ten years (1559–1568).

In addition, during the reign of Abdullakhan II, four madrasas were constructed in Bukhara alone (the Abdullakhan, Gavkushon, Fathullah Qushbegi, and Khoja Muhammad Parsa madrasas), along with the New Chorsu (1570) and a bridge over the Zarafshan River near Karmana (1582). The covered market known as the Abdullakhan *tim*, built in the city center, gained fame not only in Mawarannahr but throughout the wider world. Significant architectural constructions – mosques, madrasas, caravanserais, bathhouses, and other monumental buildings – were also erected in major cities such as Samarkand, Tashkent, and Balkh, as well as in Termez, Kulob, and Herat.

Particularly noteworthy are the buildings constructed by Abdullakhan II between 1559 and 1571 (Hijri 966–976) in the village of Sumiton near Bukhara, including a madrasa, mosque, khanqah, and other structures. Historical sources describe these constructions in vivid detail, emphasizing the ruler’s intention to leave lasting and noble memorials for future generations. Skilled engineers and architects selected auspicious times for construction, and within approximately ten years, a magnificent complex was completed, adorned with gardens, fruit trees, and a crystal-clear central pool resembling the waters of Kawthar. The buildings featured lofty portals, spacious iwans, intricate ornamentation, and exquisite tilework executed by master craftsmen. The mosque functioned for daily prayers, students in the madrasa received adequate stipends to pursue their studies in peace, and the khanqah provided daily food for the poor, orphans, and widows.

A splendid *chorbog* garden was also built near the sacred mausoleum, with an extraordinary pavilion at its center. From the city gate to the garden—approximately one *farsakh* – canals were dug on both sides of the road and lined with trees. State officials and prominent figures, including Amir Khalifa and other noble patrons, played an active role in completing and beautifying these constructions.

The sources also contain valuable information on the diplomatic, commercial, and cultural relations of the Bukhara Khanate with Iran, India, Turkey, Kashgar, Russia, and other countries during the sixteenth century.

In summary, during the reign of Abdullakhan II, Karmana became one of the most prosperous and picturesque regions. Numerous irrigation structures were constructed, several of which deserve special attention. According to the eighteenth-century manuscript *Majma‘ al-Arqam* by Mirza Muhammad Bade‘, hydraulic bridges such as *Puli Karmana*, *Puli Mehtar Qasim*, *Puli Chahorminor*, and *Puli Jondor* existed along the lower reaches of the Zarafshan River, serving as water-measuring and distribution facilities.

Based on the construction date of *Puli Karmana* (1582) and the similarity of bricks used in the other structures, the latter three hydraulic installations can also be dated to the second half of the sixteenth century. Historical records indicate that these bridges functioned not only as

crossings, but also as water-dividing and distribution structures regulating irrigation channels in the Bukhara oasis. For example, during the irrigation season, ten out of twenty-one arches of the *Puli Karmana* directed water into canals leading toward the Duoba dam.

Thus, the bridges constructed in the sixteenth century – *Puli Karmana*, *Puli Mehtar Qasim*, *Puli Chahorminor*, and *Puli Jondor* – served as multifunctional hydraulic installations essential to the irrigation system of the Zarafshan River basin. The Abdullakhan dam, located in the Beklarsoy gorge of present-day Nurata district, has functioned for nearly 440 years as one of the most important reservoirs supporting agricultural irrigation.

Conclusion. In conclusion, during the reign of Abdullakhan II, agriculture and animal husbandry flourished in Karmana and its surrounding areas, gardens expanded, and various types of architectural structures were erected. These monuments played a crucial role in enriching national spirituality and preserving the historical and cultural heritage of the region.

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