

## Legends and True Stories about the Samanid Mausoleum

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### ABSTRACT

*This article is dedicated to the ancient tomb of the founder of the Samanid dynasty, Ismail Samani. His architectural - artistic image and related legends and myths.*

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Material culture, especially its ancient samples, have an amazing feature of leaving in the minds and hearts of people of almost all generations images that seem to be in the soul of every person some kind of "milestone", something warm and dear. Therefore, I really like the saying from the famous film - "What is Rome? - this is a dream" and legends, myths are a bright dream in everyone's soul. After reading the book by N.A. Kuhn *Legends and myths of ancient Greece*, the reader on the wings of his dreams is transported to the temple of Apollo, the immortal Troy, flies to the island of Ithaca to Odysseus; he wants to visit the islands of Mycenae, Sparta, etc. (1.).

The same power of emotional impact on a person is possessed by the masterpieces of Central Asian urban planning and magnificent architecture. Samarkand, Khiva, Bukhara, the ancient, basically the ancient Greek city of Termez, the Shokhi Zinda memorial complex (Samarkand), perfect in design and proportions, in architectural decor. The majestic ruins of the Afrosiab settlement, the impressive architectural masterpieces of antiquity Ichan Kal'a, Tuprok Kal'a, Kuikirilgan Kal'a.

The priceless architectural masterpieces of Bukhara, the Poyi Kalon ensemble, the source of the greatest philosophical and religious teachings of Sufism, the Bahovuddin Naqshband ensemble, and others have a hypnotic attraction. That is why they are masterpieces. And here, as in ancient Greece, there is the real and the fabulous, there is reality, there are legends. They are like decor, as a magnificent and necessary finish, an integral attribute of the treasury of human wisdom and skill.

The art and architecture of Central Asia had reached a high level by the time of the Arab conquest (VII century). (2. 126 p.). Palaces, castles, public and cult buildings (temples) were decorated with plot - mythological painting, which, combined with expressive architectural decor and volumetric sculpture, represented a wonderful synthesis of art. The whole system of compositional techniques of architecture of the pre-Islamic period is closely related to previous eras, which influenced the formation of the style and traditions of architecture in the 9th-15th centuries. (3. 31-33 p.). "... Leading masters of architecture were

carriers and transmitters of the experience of generations, but they never confined themselves to this experience, enriching it with discoveries and expanding knowledge by observing the work of their fellow craftsmen” (4. 10 p.).

By the 9th-10th centuries, the power of the caliphate was weakening and cities began to revive, and the development of productive forces and commodity production contributed to the emergence of new trade and craft centers. This period is characterized by the use of baked brick and gypsum in construction, which caused a revolution in urban planning and architecture throughout the Middle East. It was most fully reflected in the architecture of Bukhara, which experienced a flourishing of science, culture and art in the 9th-10th centuries. This was the time of the development of mathematical knowledge, especially applied geometry and the science of proportions.

In the 10th century, many scientists and poets worked in Bukhara: the world famous physician, mathematician, scientist - encyclopedias' Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), the “Father” of Tajik poetry Rudaki, poetry Dakiki ... During the reign of the Samanid dynasty (Tajik family of Ismail Samani) borders cities are expanding, new palaces and mosques are being erected, gardens and flower beds are being laid out.

In the distant past, the most important trade routes passed through Bukhara, such as the "Great Silk Road" between China and the Mediterranean countries. The most ancient city not only in Central Asia, but also in the East, Bukhara is now a city of museums, the appearance of which is determined by architectural monuments, and there are more than 140 of them. But, perhaps, the most notable architectural monument of the Middle Ages is the mausoleum of Ismail Samani (f. 1)., the design and decor of which embodied the artistic worldview and creative ideas of the masters of that time.

As Academician A. Khakimov notes, the architecture of Bukhara in the 9th century “... is an example of plastic and intonational consonance of residential, religious - cult and craft - trade buildings. This is a single ensemble of urban planning components. Symmetry, balance, certain serenity reign in the atmosphere of the city, permeating with a feeling of plastic peace both the dwellings of the Bukharians and public and religious buildings”. (5. p. 101.).



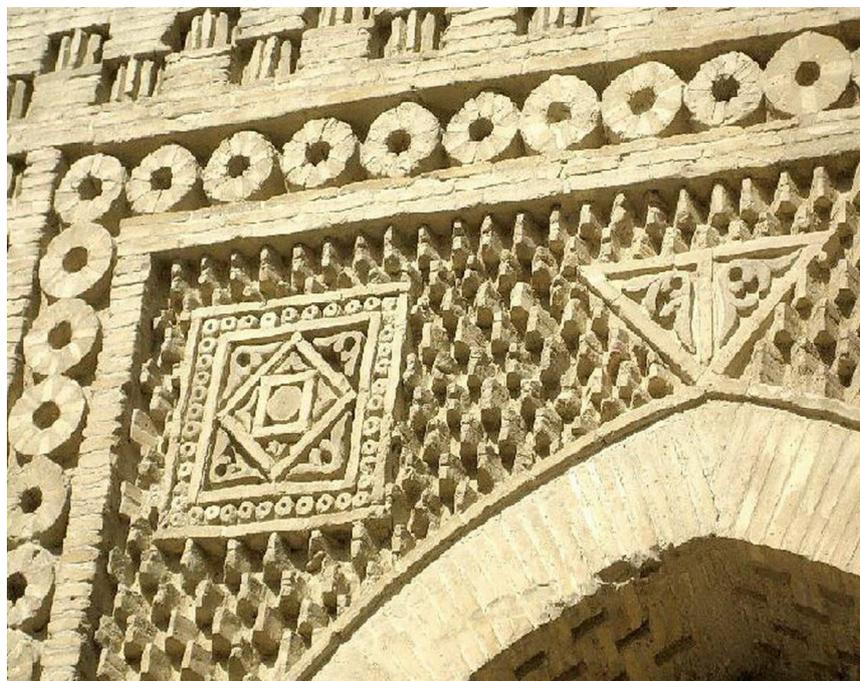
f. 1. Mausoleum of Ismail Samani IX-X centuries Author: Ekrem Canli

As M.S. Bulatov "... On the outskirts of the ancient city of Bukhara, among the greenery of the parks, stands the Samanid mausoleum - to the limit simple and clear in composition, monumental - majestic in its architectural image, expressing the idea of the immortality of the soul and eternal beauty" (6. p. 98.). The appearance of the mausoleum captivates with a clear, pure and holistic expression of the architectural idea, the completeness of the image. Square in plan, strictly centric in composition, it basically contains the shape of a cube with wall planes slightly truncated towards the top and is crowned with a hemispherical dome. With a relatively small size, the building looks monumental due to the well - found proportions that visually prevent the structure from settling.

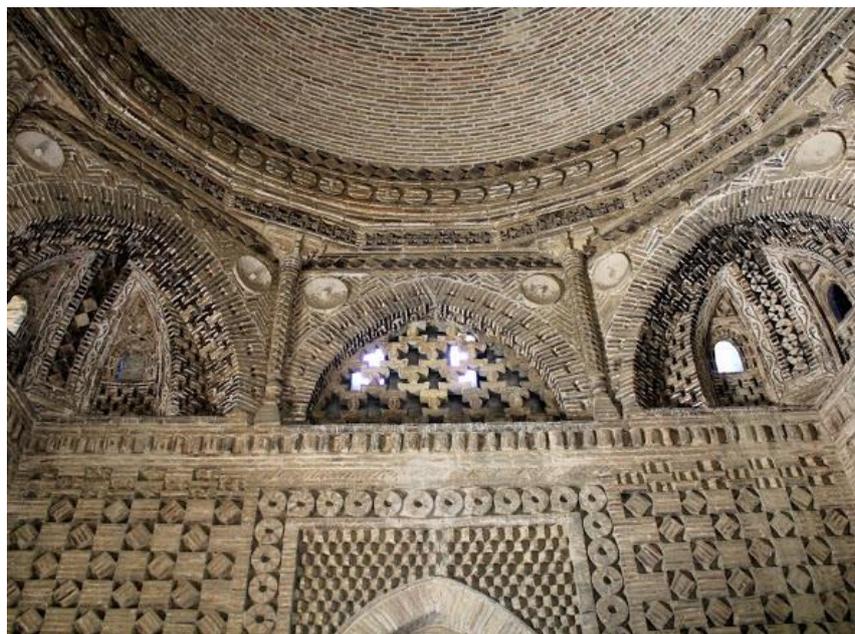
The walls of the building rest on a smooth plinth located on the podium. The purpose of the family tomb is dictated by the volumetric four - facade composition, which, apparently, was determined by its central place in the spatial environment. Four front arches on columns without bases and capitals are framed by the same perceptively shortening arched openings, one of which served as a door, and the others were decorated with a decorative grille made of fired brick. In the upper part of the wall there is a light openwork gallery with carved arches on graceful carved gypsum columns.

In the corners of the building and in the openings of the arches of the gallery is peculiar: they are included

in the composition of the wall decor and at the same time serve as supports in the distribution of the efforts of the dome pressing on them, at the corners of which decorative domes are located. The openwork of the gallery is emphasized by the borders of the geometric pattern, among them a strip of pearls stands out; at the top of the dome there is a narrow hatch with a flashlight for ventilation. The free planes of the walls are lined with figured masonry in blocks of two or three bricks horizontally and vertical blocks slightly receding into the depths of the wall, forming a "chessboard" composition. (f. 2 a, b.).



A



B

f. 2. A, b. Interior and exterior of the mausoleum of Ismail Samani IX-X centuries

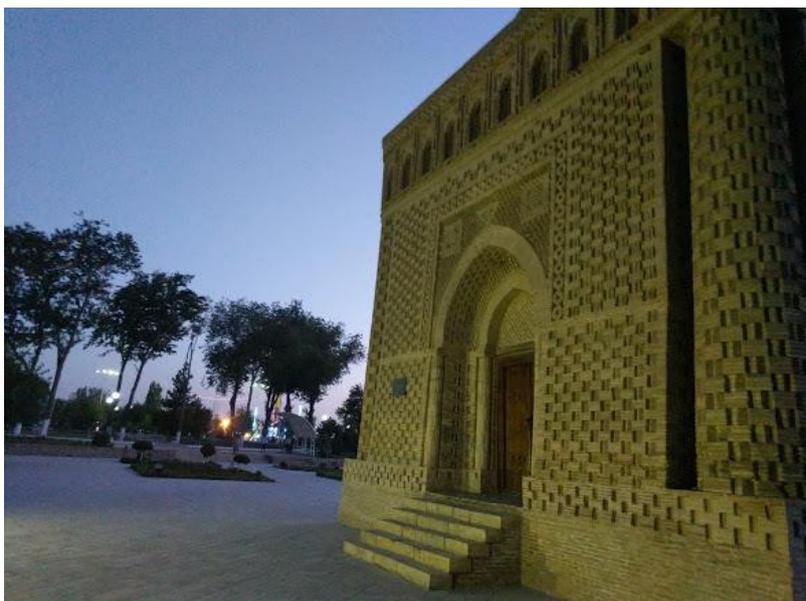
The interior of the mausoleum, enclosed in a square of walls and sub-dome space with a magnificent ornamental decor, creates a special environment. The golden light penetrating through the gratings of the gallery and the arches of the facades emphasizes the sophistication and delicacy of the masonry reliefs. The uniqueness of the architectural and artistic image of the Samanid mausoleum lies in the continuity of ties with the traditions of pre-Islamic Sogdian architecture. This can be traced in the form of slender columns of the upper tier of the gallery arches.

The Samanid Mausoleum is widely known; the opportunity to see this monument attracts numerous tourists from all over the world. In the past, this family tomb served as a place of worship for pilgrims not

only from Central Asia, but also from the Muslim East. Popular rumor surrounded the tomb with many legends. One of them tells that the founder of the dynasty, Ismail Samani, ruled the state for 40 years after his death. Another legend tells: a rich man and a poor man came to the tomb to resolve the dispute - the greedy buy did not give the poor man his honestly earned money. Near the mausoleum, bai (a rich man) suddenly got sick and, giving his staff to the poor man with a request to hold it, hurriedly left.

The poor man with a staff in his hand and tears in his eyes began to fervently plead with the bright spirit of the holy ruler to help him and to convince the stingy employer. And suddenly at this time a voice from the building said: "Your wealth is in your hand". Disappointed with the answer, the poor man struck the ground with his staff in anger. The cane broke, and gold coins fell out. The stingy rich man, it turns out, was hiding his wealth in the hollowed-out cavity of his staff.

Another remarkable feature of the mausoleum is a different play of light and colors depending on the weather and time of day. (f. 3).



f. 3. Mausoleum of Ismail Samani IX-X centuries

The overflows from pale pink to coffee golden amaze with their magnificence.

Interestingly, according to one version, a tunnel existed between the city citadel Ark and the mausoleum, which gave rise to various speculations. And today, a living legend, an architectural miracle of the early Middle Ages - the tomb of the great ruler, the founder of the Samanid state invariably evokes in people a deep sense of admiration for the greatest skill of the architects of the distant past.

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