

## **Modern Mahalla as a Basis for the Formation of Primary Residential Formation**

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**Abstract:** The Article speaks about historical aspect of mahalla concept. Short mahalla genesis giving on. Carry out critical analysis of mahalla on different days of history. Comparison on mahalla and quarter.

**Keywords:** History, mahalla, quarter, primary living formation, critical analysis, design principles, communities of people, unification of houses.

### **Introduction.**

The primary residential formation of cities and rural settlements in the territory of Central Asia, the Near and Middle East, starting from about the 8th century, is Mahalla. Usually mahalla is compared with the European quarter, whose inhabitants in some countries exercise local self-government.

Today, several mahallas are merging to form a residential area. The term "district" can be found in different names, depending on the region and dialect. "In the settlements, the territorial-administrative division was of great importance. Cities are usually divided into large and small, and villages - only into small town-planning units. These town-planning units were called differently. Bukhara was divided into 12 parts or mahalla, Samarkand into 4 arrays, Kokand, Margilan, Tashkent into 4 more parts. Large divisions, in turn, are divided into smaller ones. They are also called differently in different places. In such cities as Bukhara, Samarkand, Karshi - guzars, Kokand, Margilan, Tashkent - mahallas, and in Khorezm - mosques (masjidkavm). In Tashkent, Kokand and Andijan, there were 4 dahas each. In turn, the dahan was divided into mahalla (in Khiva it was called - elat). There is a harmonious hierarchical structure of the city with a clear communication system. On the territory of the mahalla, as a rule, there was a mosque - a kind of social, cultural and spiritual center. And from the beginning of the 19th century, a new phenomenon appeared in Bukhara, and then spread everywhere - teahouse, since then, in all mahallas, teahouse has also become part of the cultural and social center.[8]

So, the word "mahalla" has two meanings depending on the place of use: in Bukhara - it means a large division, and in other cases - a small division.

Mahalla has long functioned as a unique form of local self-government. It has its own unwritten internal rules and is governed by the community. These unwritten rules are equally legal for everyone.

Although mahalla is a small administrative territory, it is a community of people connected by a common way of life, values, traditions and customs. At different stages of history, the functions of the mahalla also changed due to political and social changes.

## Methods.

“The main tasks of the mahalla are to conduct rituals together, maintain and decorate their territory, educate the younger generation in a social spirit, maintain order in society, monitor compliance with all traditional norms, observe customs and punish those who violate them. The administration of the mahalla organized the cleaning of canals, the construction of streets, roads and other public works related to the improvement of the territory. All this work was done together through “hashar”.[10]

An Uzbek explanatory dictionary published in 1981 describes a mahalla as “a part of a city that includes several streets and its inhabitants”. When studying the structure of historical mahallas, special attention should be paid to the location and formation in the urban structure of the city. Previously, when a district was called, the name was also used for an existing street. The reason is that the people living around this street only had access to this main street. We can compare this to the leaf structure. Today, our urban planning is undergoing many changes in terms of the structure of neighborhoods. Many old quarters of the city have been demolished for some reason, and this process, unfortunately, continues. New mahallas are formed in the form of a grid based on new rules.



**Figure 1.** Mahalla “Kamolon”. Street interior

## Old City mahallas - structure and formation.

The Old City Mahalla has been formed since ancient times and consists of buildings and structures of the 19th-20th centuries. Mahalla of the Old City consist of traditional dwellings, narrow streets with serpentine routes. One of the important factors is that cities and especially rural settlements are located in oases where there is a shortage of territory. This leads to an economical attitude to the use of populated areas. We see that older objects are located in many large neighboring guzars. They appear in the form of mosques, madrasahs, mausoleums. Even if we do not find a tree or an irrigation system on a narrow and serpentine road, we can observe that one or another part of the street forms a shadow zone. At the same time, when we leave the narrow streets, between one- and two-story houses, to the square where the mahalla guzar is located, we cannot but notice the importance of the mahalla guzar and the beauty and

grandeur of buildings and structures(Fig. 1). Guzars are located on major streets or intersections. Some of the streets in the old town are dead ends, which to some extent ensures the safety of residents living on this street. Most residential buildings are one-story, and in some cases they appear to be two-story due to the so-called "bolokhona" or "dalons", i.e. attics or verandas (Fig. 2). [3]

## Results.

### Old city mahallas – social life.

In the traditional development of the city, when the son grows up, his parents build new living quarters for him, without leaving their territory. Such a transformation of housing is carried out at the expense of available free space or through the construction of galleries and attics. Dwellings built on such plots consisted of inner and outer courtyards. The outer



**Figure 2.** Old city residential house. Dalon.

courtyard is located at the entrance and is mainly occupied by the living room and recreation room. Utility rooms and bedrooms are located mainly in the courtyard. The fact that parents and children have been accustomed to living side by side for many years ensures the strength of family ties.[4]

### Old City mahallas – housing construction (Fig. 3).

In old city houses, wooden half-timbered frame walls were used as a constructive solution. This, in turn, ensured the seismic resistance of the building. In those days, clay and straw were mainly used for plastering. These materials were inexpensive because they were local, and the straw also prevented the plaster from cracking and made it more resistant to precipitation. The roofs were mostly flat. They are also plastered with straw plaster. These roofs were also used for drying fresh fruit in summer.



**Figure 3.** The interiors of an Old City residential house.

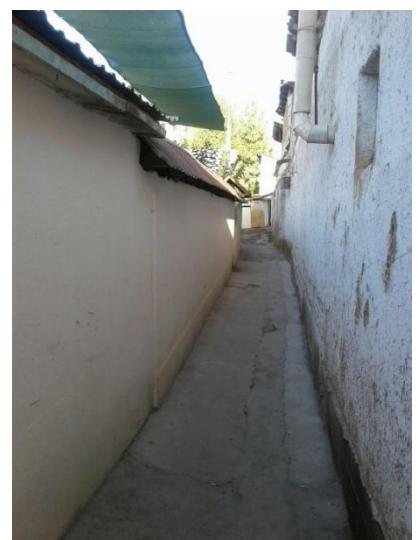
### Transport and pedestrian system of the old city mahallas.

The issue of transport occupies a special place in the areas of the old city. Since the streets are narrow, winding, their width is often observed within 3-5m. It turns out that only one car can usually drive through the streets. If one homeowner parks his car on the street, the road will be almost closed, preventing a second car from passing (Fig. 4).

In fact, areas that should have been green spaces or gathering places served as car parks in many cases. This situation is both uncomfortable and pollutes the air and creates inconvenience for residents. If you allocate a territory at the entrance to the microdistrict and equip parking, then the above problems will be solved. People would walk home and take a good step for their health.

### Landscape of the old city mahallas.

In older urban areas, landscape issues are also a particular problem. It is known that due to the narrow streets of the quarter, they did not have the opportunity to build a network of canals and plant trees. If any ditch or canal flows through the neighborhood, a section of the canal or canal is planted with greenery. In addition, the territory of the teahouse, the territory in front of the mosque has been landscaped to some extent, and the territory has been turned into a small recreation area. In



**Figure 4.** Old City mahallas narrow street

such areas, "houses" - pools were built, which were also used as a source of drinking water. In the historical districts of cities, we can observe this. There are similar districts in Tashkent. For example, we can still see the presence of such devices in the vicinity of the old city around the Kamalon mahalla, Samarkand-Darvoz, Chigatai and the Khazrati Imam complex. But, unfortunately, it is no longer possible to use water as drinking water, as before. We see that many canals or basins dry up due to dehydration or are completely buried. This is, of course, the result of the growing water shortage in Uzbekistan.

Since the old city blocks also have a clean drinking water supply system, there is no need for such pools, so we see them being replaced by modern drinking water fountains.

Unfortunately, the coastal zone of the canals flowing through the Old City area is illegally occupied by the inhabitants of this area and the industrial enterprises located here. In addition, waste from houses and industrial facilities pollutes water. A positive solution to the problem could be the creation of recreational corridors for the population by freeing coastal areas from illegal devices (Fig. 5).

While issues such as coastal areas, swimming pools, drinking water are reflected in the Old City area, we are seeing non-standard landscape solutions in the courtyards of residential buildings in



**Figure 5.** Old City mahalla – Coastal zones of the channel

the Old City. The traditional courtyard landscape, unfortunately, is poorly preserved today. We see that sheds, pergolas, fruit trees, as well as basil and flower bushes played the main role in shaping the landscape of traditional courtyards. Under the pergolas, sufas or trestle beds were built, on the pergolas a vineyard providing shade.

For the territory of Uzbekistan, where it is warm or hot for almost nine months a year, the right solution is to have summer spaces in the yards. Sheds and pergolas made it possible to protect summer spaces and residential buildings from the bright rays of the sun. In addition, planting many fruit trees in the yard allows households, especially children, to eat any fruit at any time. This is, firstly, a finished product grown at home, and secondly, an environmentally friendly product (Fig. 6).

Unfortunately, in recent years, the introduction of elements of European landscape architecture



**Figure 6.** Courtyard of an Old City house.

has in many cases taken on a negative character. For example, instead of fruit trees providing shade, our yards are now occupied by conifers or greenery shaped by creative topiary art. Also, lawns and various flowers now adorn the yards of our houses. Although they attract people's attention with their beautiful appearance, in some cases the disappearance of trestle beds, and the fact that fruit trees are not located above the level of the yards, cannot be considered a positive thing.[6]

As you know, the primary residential formation of European cities in the historical parts is the quarter. Based on the name itself, it follows that the quarters mainly have a quadrangular configuration. The line of demarcation of quarters is the street. Public life takes place within the quarters, and the street divides, thereby alienating the quarters from each other. In Asian mahallas, the street almost never divides them among themselves. The boundaries of mahallas run along the roofs and rear facades of houses. In other words, the houses of residents of different mahallas do not go to one street, a dead end and other interyard spaces. This determines the democratic nature of the mahalla, despite the fact that blank walls of duvals and facades of houses with rare windows overlooking the street stretch along the streets.

The natural and climatic factors of regions with a hot climate and increased dustiness dictate the absence of a main entrance from the street. The inhabitants of the houses enter the dwelling through small gates, often next to the blind gates, first into the yard, and only then from the yard they get to the aivans and other living quarters. The windows overlook mainly the courtyard, where the air temperature in summer is several degrees lower than on the street. It is extremely rare for windows to go outside, and even then mostly from the second floor. The construction of the so-called colonial part of the cities of Central Asia was carried out according to the principle of a European quarter and therefore poorly considered regional factors.[3]

### **Infrastructure and engineering networks of the Old City mahallas.**

In addition to creating some conditions in the quarters of the old city, there are still disadvantages. For example, if infrastructure and engineering networks are provided in some

quarters of the Old City, then in others the issue remains unresolved. For example, most mahallas in the Old City of Tashkent still do not have sewer networks. In narrow streets, rainwater flows are also a problem. In addition, the issue of waste disposal is waiting for its solution. The above points show that environmental protection in the Old City area should be given serious attention.

The cities and villages of our country are becoming more beautiful, modern buildings and structures are being built. Of course, this is good, but over the past few years, under the slogan of modernizing the Old City, many neighborhoods have been demolished. As a result, large areas of traditional buildings have completely disappeared from the map of the city.[4] The Old Town territory is, on the one hand, a town-planning technique created by our ancestors on the basis of centuries-old traditions, and on the other hand, it is also objects of interest as objects of tourism. From this point of view, we need to carefully preserve it as a rich architectural heritage for future generations and present it to the attention of tourists as an open-air museum.

### **The current state of the mahalla.**

Currently, three types of city parts coexist in Uzbekistan: the feudal Islamic, the recent socialist, and the city of a market economy that is now emerging(10)

For all their differences, mahalla lives in each of them - in its entirety or in the form of centers or fragments. There has always been such a dual mahalla. This place of the community has been transformed along with generations of its inhabitants. Having united the mahallas into districts, the city authorities managed these administrative units. With the strengthening or weakening of states, the regions prospered, collapsed, or disappeared altogether. The mahalla, which was part of them, retained the ability to revive.

Since the 19th century mahallas were cut by new streets with transport, and they began to be called quarters in the European manner. Quarters as blocks of houses between new streets gave little, while the mahalla was realized more and more important for the individual, his family, community, city and state()

Mahalla reproduces itself spiritually as part of society and materially as part of the city. With this place in the life of society and the city, she confirms that there is nothing more permanent than temporary. What is the secret of mahalla's constancy?

In the middle of the twentieth century, architecture and urban planning in the territory of the former USSR was put on the rails of unification and standardization. During these years, there has been widespread construction of residential areas in cities and rural areas practically according to uniform standards, where the planning structure of residential areas and the residential buildings themselves differed little from each other both in the North, in the European part of the country, and in Central Asia(1)

In publicistic materials, and in professional architectural and urban planning studies, it is noted that "... there was a complex process of reorganization of urban and rural settlements in the Soviet republics of Central Asia. In the reconstruction of the old cities and villages of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, they broke with the previous organization of building, largely due to the backwardness of life and religious prejudices. If the old buildings were characterized by narrow crooked streets and dead ends between high clay duvals, then in the new settlements wide, straight, well-maintained streets arose with houses facing their windows not into the courtyard, as before, but onto the streets. Such were the views in those years. Weak consideration of a whole complex of natural, climatic, social factors led to the emergence of a number of settlements, urban areas and so-called "demonstrative" villages that do not meet the real requirements for regional housing and the planning structure of residential formations.

At the end of the twentieth century. surveys of the Tashkent Zonal Research Institute for the Experimental Design of Residential and Public Buildings (TashZNIEP) and the Central Asian Research Institute for the Theory of Architecture and Urban Planning (SredAzNIITAG)

confirmed the schematism of such areas and the non-compliance of the planning decisions of multi-storey residential buildings with a whole range of objective and subjective factors.

TashZNIIEP stated that in the apartments of these microdistricts in summer the temperature is several degrees higher than outside. The heat of the "chilla" period, that is, from the end of June to the beginning of August, turns into a test of survival for them; in traditional mahalla housing, a system of transitional spaces helps to endure the heat. Residents spend morning, evening and night in the yard, noon - indoors.

In traditional mahalla housing, a system of transitional spaces helps to transfer the heat. Residents spend morning, evening and night in the yard, noon - indoors. Room - ("khona") - "aivan" - pergolas ("ishkom") above the sufa, near the hauz - courtyard ("sahn") - these are the spaces of the Uzbek mahalla house. With its compaction of the second floor, a shady and ventilated courtyard - "soyabon" is erected above. Summer spaces are 2-3 times larger than the spaces of rooms(10).

In general, a comprehensively balanced urban planning policy is needed. Historical cities and towns are subject to reassessment, taking into account social, demographic, natural and climatic, engineering and technical factors in order to organize a rational living environment for the inhabitants of our cities and rural areas.

There are about 20 historical cities in Uzbekistan, and most of the 33 million people of the republic live in mahallas or consider the environment of mahallas native to them. Over the past 30 years, the mahalla has changed the way we look at the city and the way it is reconstructed. This new understanding needs to be anchored in the urban planning of tomorrow.

It is necessary to preserve and develop the regularities of the planning organization of the historical cities of Uzbekistan on the basis of mahallas, which took shape over the centuries and were the living flesh of the city. Tashkent, Samarkand and other historical cities were formed within the radial-centric plans with a radius of 1200-1500 m. Urban centers and mahallas developed within this optimal walking distance.

Here we can talk about the presence in urban art of such a concept as "urban planning step", which is clearly manifested in Tashkent, Samarkand and Bukhara. The size of this "step" in each city differs from each other. This is dictated by the specifics of the relief and other factors of the territory of the settlements. The center of Bukhara, for example, grew from the Registan Square to the Lyabi-Khauz ensemble at 1500 m, and then at the same distance to the suburban Namazgokh mosque. In Tashkent and Samarkand, the center is more static, and most mahalla and guzar centers are concentrated 700 m from it. In Tashkent, as well as in Khujand, a wall passed within this radius, dividing the inner and outer city. At 700 meters from the center of old Tashkent is the cult center of Hazrat Imam. The wall is gone now, but the streets and centers along it remain.

There are also concentric streets in this radius in Samarkand. In mahalla and guzar centers along these streets, a truly local urban life has been preserved to this day. In Samarkand, since the era of Temur, radial streets have been pronounced. At the beginning and end of them are centers of urban significance, and in their middle are mahalla centers isolated from these noisy streets, for example, Yomini and Mirzo Pulod (XV-XIX centuries) on Penjikentskaya street of Samarkand. Parallel to the noisy radial streets - also at a distance from them - there are quiet mezhmahalla streets. There are such duplicate streets in the northeast, east, south and southwest of historical Samarkand. When approaching the walls of the city, these streets merged with the main radial streets. Only in the late Middle Ages, streets were cut through the walls directly into the city mahallas, opening them to life in new peripheral areas.

## **Discucion**

These patterns of development of urban and mahalla centers that exist in historical cities should determine the conservation and reconstruction activities in them. During the Soviet period, the

threat of demolition of the mahalla kept the population from reconstructing their houses. The government decision to give citizens the right to own land and transfer it to private ownership provided guarantees for the initiative of homeowners. Mahalla exists, and it can be fully restored only together with the entire historical city, which is commensurate with the modern urban area and, as such, should be preserved in the new city highway network.

For this, it is necessary to reorganize the management of the historical city, to promote the city authorities to invest, provide grants and loans for the economic revival of the mahalla by individuals and cooperatives. The mahalla's policy of "self-preservation" consists in the reconstruction of fragments of the historic city by the private sector and entrepreneurs. The revival of historical cities will direct the opportunities of residents and entrepreneurs to activate the economic potential of the mahalla.

In master plans and detailed planning projects for cities and towns, land use in the historic city should be reviewed in order to move the city-wide functions beyond its boundaries, leaving the functions inherent only to the historic city. A common disadvantage is the concentration of functions in the core of the historic city and the underestimation of the rest of its territories.

Historically, life "fled" from the centers of cities: it left the citadels, shakhristans and even suburbs-rabads for the sake of new territories in search of viable forms of the city there. The historical city is a pedestrian system in which different centers are located at certain and regular walking distances from each other. Experience of the 20th century showed that punching highways through historical cities does not solve their transport problems, and poor-quality building of these highways irrevocably destroys historical cities.

The solution is to bypass the historical city by public transport, the mahallas of which should become a predominantly pedestrian zone, served by a tactfully thought-out system of local passages. The ongoing restructuring of residential buildings is leading to overcrowding. It is important to reduce the population in the already overcrowded historical cities. So, in two-thirds of the housing stock of old Samarkand, families often live in one room. The use of new building materials is also subject to control: "Euro-styles of the "elite" houses" are destroying the traditional scale and appearance of historical buildings.

Monitoring can be facilitated by mahalla committees and their traditional decision-making mechanisms. Residents of the mahalla should be oriented towards the implementation of the measures laid down in the general plans of cities to: restore the original morphology of historical cities; the establishment of levels of protection of monuments and the historical environment; restoration and reconstruction of monuments and valuable residential buildings; providing a traditional perception of the historic city.

### **Conclusion.**

We are at a new stage in the revival of the mahalla. The task is to apply the principles of mahalla development in modern cities and rural settlements. Careful attitude to the historical districts of our cities and villages, which still remain episodic interspersed in the fabric of residential development, require careful treatment of them as monuments of housing construction.

The use of the principles of a traditional Central Asian residential building in newly built residential areas of cities and villages is an urgent problem of modern regional urban planning.

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