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THE HISTORY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE UNDERGROUND MOSQUE «KHILVET»¹

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The article presents a schematic overview of the history of archaeological research of the underground mosque «Hilvet». The study is aimed at reviewing and analyzing the archaeological research of the underground mosque «Hilvet», one of the major centers of Sufism, which made a significant contribution to the flourishing development of Sufism and served from the XII century to the first half of the XX century. Different results of archaeological investigations of the underground mosque «Khilvet», repeated reconstruction of the structure created difficulties in determining the exact history of the construction of the object. Specifying the terms and history of construction of such historical monuments allows us to generalize the functional and typological activities of religious underground structures. Expertise and analysis of archaeological data and data on the underground construction of «Khilvet» were carried out using the methods of historical comparison, type-inductive differentiation. The work aimed at revealing the meaning of scientifically refined opinions with an emphasis on methods of comparison and analysis was used in the systematization of data concerning the time and functional activity of the religious underground structure «Khilvet». Based on the results of repeated archaeological excavations that began in the first half of the 1970s and lasted for almost 30 years, it was possible to determine the exact construction date and condition of the original construction of the religious underground structure. The generalization of data from archaeological and historical research works is presented in scientific circulation with differentiation.

Keywords: archaeology, “Khilvet” underground mosque, “Ghar”, Sufism, Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, historiography, religious construction.

ИСТОРИЯ АРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПОДЗЕМНОЙ МЕЧЕТИ «ХИЛЬВЕТ»²

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В статье представлен схематичный обзор истории археологического исследования подземной мечети «Хильвет». Исследование нацелено на рассмотрение и анализ археологических исследований подземной мечети «Хильвет», одного из крупнейших центров суфийского учения, служившего с XII и до середины XX веков, внесший значительный вклад в процветающее развитие суфийского учения. Результаты археологических исследований, проведенных на подземной мечети «Хильвет» разнятся, так как здание неоднократно сносилось и перестраивалось, что создало трудности в определении точной истории строительства объекта. Уточнение даты и истории возведения подобных исторических памятников позволяет обобщить функционально-типологическую деятельность подземных культовых сооружений. Обзоры и анализ археологических сведений и данных о подземном сооружении «Хильвет» проводились методами исторического сравнения типово-индуктивной дифференциации. Отдавая предпочтение методам сравнения и анализа, при систематизации данных, относящихся ко времени строительства и функциональной деятельности религиозного подпольного сооружения «Кылуэт», были использованы работы, направленные на выявление смысла научно выясненных мнений. По результатам неоднократных археологических раскопок, начавшихся в первой половине 1970-х годов и продолжавшихся почти 30 лет, удалось определить точный срок строительства и состояние первоначального строительства религиозного подземного сооружения. Сбор данных археологических и исторических исследований дифференцирован и представлен в научный оборот.

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Ключевые слова: археология, Подземная мечеть «Хильвет», Гар, Суфизм, Ходжа Ахмет Ясави, история, Культовое сооружение

Introduction

«Khilvet» underground mosque (Fig. 1) is an underground building located 140 meters south-west from the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. The name of the underground building is related to the historical secret of the concept of «Khilvet», M. Tuyakbaev cites that the concept of «Khalawat» appeared in the X century. The word «Khalawat» comes from the Arabic word «Khalawatun» - the desire to live alone, at the same time, S. Davydov says that «Khilvet» means «secret» in the Turkmen language (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 41).

The main part of the «Khilvet» mosque is the underground «Cave (Ghar)» and the rooms «Meshit» or «Shildekhana» built above it. «Khilvet» mosques consist mainly of «Ghar» and «Shildekhana» rooms, we can see from the construction of «Aulie Kumshik Ata» and «Kishi Khilvet» (Small Khilvet) mosques, and if «Shildekhana» is partially underground, «Ghar» must be located under its floor (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 42). «Ghar» is a place where Sufis are isolated and pray. «Shildekhana» is a private room where religious rituals are performed for spiritual purification. At first, orthodox Islamic rulers and aristocracy did not recognize the principles of «Khalawatiya» and persecuted them. Therefore, members of the movement need a secret place to preach their ideas and positions, to perform religious rituals and rituals. Community members, who initially used caves and cellars as places of prayer, began to turn their secret places into mosques. From this, it can be concluded that «Khilvet» underground mosques appeared.

The Nasabnama chronicle, written by Maulana Safiaddin, the niece of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, states that Khoja Ahmed Yasawi's father Ibrahim Shaykh himself imamized more than thirty underground «Khilvet» mosques, and Ahmed himself taught more than fifty Khilvet, appointing their imams from among his students.

Archaeological researches in the vicinity of the city of Turkestan, including the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, begin only from the first years of the Soviet era, that is, from the 1920s. However, archival materials and literature contain general descriptions from the writings of Russian officers and other travelers. Between 1922 and

1927, several research expeditions were organized under the leadership of the Central Administration of Archives and Sredazkomstaris for the Turkish republics. Archival documents show that these studies were limited to taking architectural measurements and taking pictures of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, taking measures for repair work, and did not pay attention to the construction of underground mosques.

The D. Nechkin archaeological expedition, established in 1922–1923 on a special assignment of the Central Department for Archives of the Republic of Turkmenistan, is photographing the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi with architectural dimensions. Based on this, measures were taken to remove the monument for protection and carry out repair work. The expedition included A. Semenov, A. Schmidt and engineer S.Orlov (Mironov, 1926, p. 28).

In 1925 B. Denike and engineer M. Loginov during the archaeological expedition of the cities of Zhetysay and Turkestan, did not go further than taking architectural measurements and taking photographs of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Mironov, 1926, p. 30). The work of these archaeological expeditions is limited to making architectural measurements and photographs, taking measures for preservation and repair of the monument. As a result of this expedition, in 1924 research was carried out on the foundation of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi (Umnyakov, 1926, p. 30). The first archaeological study of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi was conducted in 1928 under the supervision of M. Masson. A special article and monographic work by M. Masson was published about this (Masson, 1929, p. 21–68). However, none of these works report archaeological investigations of the underground «Khilvet» mosque.

It is partially found in the works of foreign scientists related to underground spiritual and religious places. Sufi tradition in the studies of foreign researchers such as M. Brokesap (Brokesap, 1987), P. Froese (Froese, 2005), M. Kemper (Kemper, 2009), E. Tasar (Tasar, 2018) in the Soviet period related to the religious situation in Central Asia and Kazakhstan, conclusions and



Fig. 1. «Khilvet» underground mosque.
Рис. 1. Подземная мечеть «Хильвет».

data about underground mosques and holy places were specially considered.

In the territory of Kazakhstan, there are many underground religious buildings in the Mangistau region. Many of the underground buildings in the Mangistau region are connected with the name of Beket ata. «The largest number of monuments and places of worship in Kazakhstan are located here» (Koshim et.al, 2020, p. 33–41). Similar to the underground mosques of the Turkestan region, underground mosques in this region served as mosques and «Ghar» rooms.

The study of the history, functional function and architectural features, the spiritual potential of religious buildings and sacred sites, including underground mosques, as a material cultural heritage of Kazakhstan, will allow our country to conduct a historical analysis of the spread of Islam and the specific features of the development and formation of religious traditions.

Full-fledged comprehensive research in the field of domestic historical science on the history of spiritual underground mosques in Kazakhstan, their functional activities, and architectural specifics has not been conducted. Nevertheless, they occupy a special place in the history and cultural and spiritual life of our country.

In the course of research work on underground mosques, which are historical and material cultural heritage, it is necessary to collect historical written data and legends, and conduct their scientific examination. Comparison of the collected material with historical data, obtained historical, social, and cultural information makes it possible to identify the spiritual and cultural potential of underground mosques.

Currently, an important issue is determining the scientific, technical, economic, social and organizational conditions necessary to protect underground mosques in Kazakhstan from natural and anthropogenic damage that are registered, not removed, and their connection to a tourist site. For this purpose, the study of the history of underground mosques in the country, adequate promotion of the collected scientific data and data becomes an urgent issue.

The variety of research results related to the identification of the history and activities of the underground mosque «Khilvet», the years of construction, repeated changes in construction, and difficulties in determining the exact period of improvement. Only thanks to years of archaeological research work, it was possible to draw accurate conclusions. Determining the

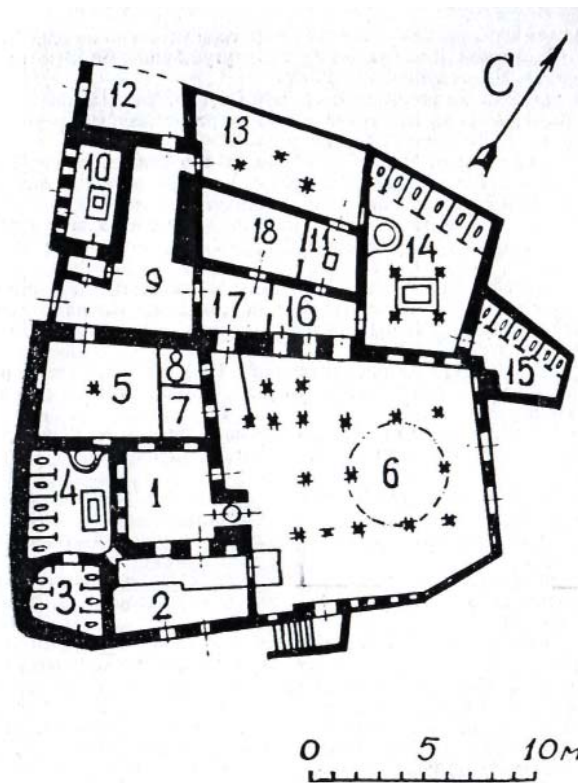


Fig. 2. The A.L.Schmidt's layout of the «Big Khilvet» mosque. 1940 y.

Рис. 2. Макет мечети "Большой Хильвет", выполненный А.Л. Шмидтом. 1940 г.

history and dates of construction of underground mosques allows us to accurately summarize the typological function of these structures.

Analysis and analysis of historical data on the underground mosque «Khilvet» was carried out using historical comparative and historical-typological, inductive methods. Priority was given to methods of comparison and analysis, aimed at revealing data on the period of activity and construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet», the content of scientifically formulated facts.

There is reason to believe that the first archaeological studies of the underground mosque «Khilvet» began in 1940 with the layout, designed by the architect (in the scientific literature, once a sculptor, once an archaeologist, once a traveler) A. Schmidt (Fig. 2). This is due to the fact that archaeological studies of the underground mosque «Khilvet» are almost entirely based on this layout. As you know, the creation of the layout of the capital construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet» was not without archaeological research. In the work of E. Smagulov, F. Grigoriev, A. Itenov «Essays on the history and archaeology of middle-century

Turkestan» «before the destruction of the great sword in 1940, the architect A. Schmidt developed a model of the interior made of wood and papier-mache (Fig. 3). It can be used to determine the appearance of a mosque in the first half of the twentieth century (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p. 138).

The correctness of the layout is confirmed by the oral data of old-timers that the underground mosque «Khilvet» operated until the 1940s, and secondly, in the book of the famous Russian orientalist V. Gordlevsky «Concept of the history of the Turkestan sanctuary «about «Khilvet»: «until the first half of the twentieth century, followers of the path of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi instead of his worship gathered thousands (up to twenty thousand)» (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p. 136) - provides information. The search for articles and a written report by A. Schmidt on the conducted research has not yet ended in vain. According to the layout, the underground «Khilvet» mosque has an area of 20.5×11.5 m² and descended from the northeast to the southwest (Senigova, 1977, p. 47).

However, as a result of archaeological research conducted in subsequent years, the remains of the walls of the original construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet» were discovered, which revealed a discrepancy between these walls and the layout developed by A. Schmidt. As it is proved that the construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet» consists of several stages (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p.138).

A thorough archaeological study of the underground mosque «Khilvet» began in 1972–1973. In 1972-1973, the Institute of History, Archeology and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences of the Kazakh SSR together with the Ministry of Culture of the Kazakh SSR conducted archaeological studies of monuments in the protected area of the Khoja Ahmet Yasawi memorial complex in Turkestan. Among the religious structures in which archaeological excavations are conducted are «Small Khilvet», «Childekhana» and «Big Khilvet» (Senigova, 1977, p. 42).

M. Tuyakbayev writes that such historical sites as «Small Khilvet», «Big Khilvet» were demolished in 1942, and the bricks were used to build a fat plant in Turkestan (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 42). However, evidence of the reconstruction and operation of the underground mosque «Khilvet» by the Sufis in the Soviet period is not found in the scientific literature. In the report of



Fig. 3. The A.L.Schmidt's model of the interior of the «Big Khilvet» mosque. Made of wood and papier-mache.

Рис. 3. Макет интерьера мечети «Большой Хильвет», выполненный А.Л. Шмидтом. Изготовлен из дерева и папье-маше.

the senior inspector of the authority for religious customs affairs under the Council of Ministers of the Kazakh SSR P. Galikhaidarov dated September 20, 1948, it is stated that the underground mosque «Khilvet» was demolished in 1932–1933 (SA RF, ф. P-6991, д. 414, л. 132). This was the first demolition of the underground mosque «Khilvet» in Soviet times.

In Soviet time, the underground «Khilvet» mosque was demolished and seized for the construction of a building materials creamery (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p. 138) T. Senigova was unable to conduct large-scale archaeological excavations, as the presence of other extensions above the underground mosque, built and operating in the Soviet period, prevented the full excavation. Only by digging 3 trenches in an easterly direction along the north-east wall and 3 trenches in a northerly direction to determine the direction of the main wall and the A. Schmidt of this wall. Having determined that it corresponds to the layout developed by A. Schmitt, based on the examination of ceramic dishes found during excavations of the interior of the underground mosque «Khilvet», the building was built in the XV–XVI centuries, «he concludes (Senigova, 1977, p. 58). During these archaeological excavations, research is also conducted inside the «Ghar» premises (Fig. 4, 5, 6). About it T. Senigova: «at the bottom there is an entrance to the underground room - «Ghar»

is made in the form of an oval well (hatch) with a diameter of 75x90 cm and a depth of 1.10 cm. Then there is a long corridor surrounded by a box wall, with four brick stairs. The corridor leading to the «Ghar» is oriented to the east, like a mihrab, and ends with an arch of 12 baked ceramic (brick) slabs. The width of the arch is two bricks (55 cm). Corridor 40 cm depending on the main size of the arch tapers to 50 cm up until it expanded. «Ghar» has a square shape (1.34×1.34 m) and is crowned with a dome; the floor is lined with baked bricks. Two opposite walls of «Ghar» have one recess lined with bricks in the corner. Groove height 50 cm, width 30 cm. Opening depth 25–27 cm. (Senigova, 1977, p. 48–50),– gives a definition.

Incomplete archaeological excavations of the external walls of the object by T. Senigova did not allow us to accurately determine the period of construction of the building. Analyzing the findings during archaeological excavations, T. Senigova mistakenly concludes that the age of the building is the XV–XVI centuries. Vessels typical of the XV–XVI centuries found inside the building are probably evidence that the underground mosque «Khilvet» has not stopped its activity since that era. Analyzing the archaeological excavations carried out in 1972–1973, in 1979, archaeological research was carried out by E. Smagulov, and A. Schmidt found that the layout of the Big Khilvet complex is created



Fig. 4. The door of the underground room – «Ghar».
Рис. 4. Дверь подземного помещения – «Гар».

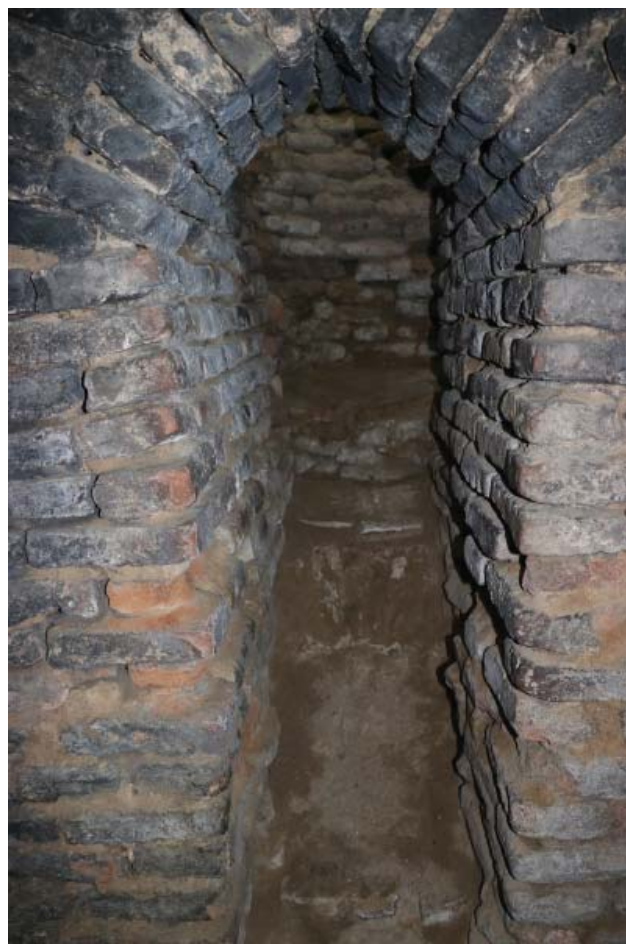


Fig. 5. The corridor of the underground room – «Ghar».
Рис. 5. Коридор подземного помещения – «Гар».



Fig. 6. «Ghar» has a square shape (1,34×1,34 m) and is crowned with a dome.
Рис. 6. «Гар» имеет квадратную форму (1,34×1,34 м) и увенчан куполом.

through diversified premises, which consist of two stages of construction.

During the archaeological excavations conducted in 1979, it is noted that the underground mosque «Khilvet» is located underground for almost half the height of the entire wall. However, the question of whether the underground «Khilvet» mosque was originally built as a partially underground structure or whether the walls were partially buried in the ground due to the growth of the cultural layer that remained around it was not answered. But this study claims that the «Ghar» room of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, who, after reaching the age of the prophet, went underground and spent the rest of her life there, could have been minted in the XII century». According to folk legend, the oldest room is «Khilvet», and it is there that the mosque «Ghar» is located, which is believed to have lived before the death of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, and is located under the floor in the corridors. That is, its construction can be attributed to the XII century» (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p.141).

During an archaeological survey conducted in 1979, E. Smagulov reported that the roofs of the Great Hall where the General Assembly is held, which is the main room of the underground «Khilvet» mosque, were supported by sixteen columns (Fig. 7) and that the columns were relief Turkestan ornaments, the original columns of which are currently located in the exhibition in the Tashkent Art Museum of G. Pugachenkova «On carved wooden columns of the XIV–XV century Turkestan» (Pugachenkova, 1948, p. 40–53), referring to his work.

The second stage of construction was built into this great hall, so the entrance door was placed on the west wall of the Great Hall. The second stage of construction includes rooms. This part mainly consists of utility rooms. As it was established during the excavations of these rooms, the structures of the second stage were not built at the same time. This is because the floor level in each room is different than in written research reports.

In the article «Religious buildings» of E. Smagulov, F. Grigoriev, A. Itenov, the underground mosque «the room has a domed roof», – expressed the opinion (Smagulov, Grigor'ev, Itenov, 1999, p. 141). The domed Dome of any of the Middle Ages is a sign of history. The origin of the central mausoleum of Central Asia from the temples of the East is associated with the fact that some religions found in Asia are prepared for the

Eastern origin of the construction of Khorasan, Maverannahr and widespread Islam, domed structures, mausoleums, if a complex study of social and ideological aspects is carried out (Baitenov et.al, 2019, p. 80–93).

In 1982, the underground mosque «Khilvet» was repaired by the institution «Kazkaitazhangyrtu». According to the data from the departmental archive of the institution «Kazkaitazhangyrtu», «during the study of preliminary design work in 1980, it was found that only the remains of the walls of the «Shildehana» room were preserved. The project was developed based on the layout of A. Schmidt, made in the 40s, for restoration work. According to this project, restoration work was carried out» (Kazkaitazhangyrtu ... қ. I: 1). It seems that even after the archaeological research carried out in 1972–73, there were no significant changes in the underground mosque «Khilvet». After all, there are no significant differences compared to the documents of the research carried out by the institution «Kazkaitazhangyrtu» for design work and the records of T. Senigova who conducted archaeological excavations in 1972–1973. According to the layout, eighteen rooms were indicated, but only two were preserved until the start of reconstruction. The walls of the rooms were also demolished, but they were rebuilt under the auspices of unknown sympathizers. The restoration project, carried out in 1982, included the south-eastern wall, and 8 previously built rooms were restored according to the layout (Kazkaitazhangyrtu ... f. I: 1).

In 1997, the design and engineering institution «Kazkaitazhangyrtu» conducted a full-scale external inspection of the building of the underground mosque «Khilvet», as a result of which deviations from the construction design system were revealed. According to the departmental archive of this institution, «it was found that the distances of the main columns, the joints of the rafters, the composition of the roof and the geometric dimensions of the walls were not observed» (Kazkaitazhangyrtu ... f. I: 1).

The next archaeological excavations of the underground mosque «Khilvet» were carried out in 1996 at the expense of the «Azret Sultan» State Historical and Cultural Reserve-Museum under the leadership of archaeologists E. Smagulov and M. Tuyakbayev. M. Tuyakbayev's article «Archaeological research in Big Khilvet» notes that determining the age of the «Ghar» room

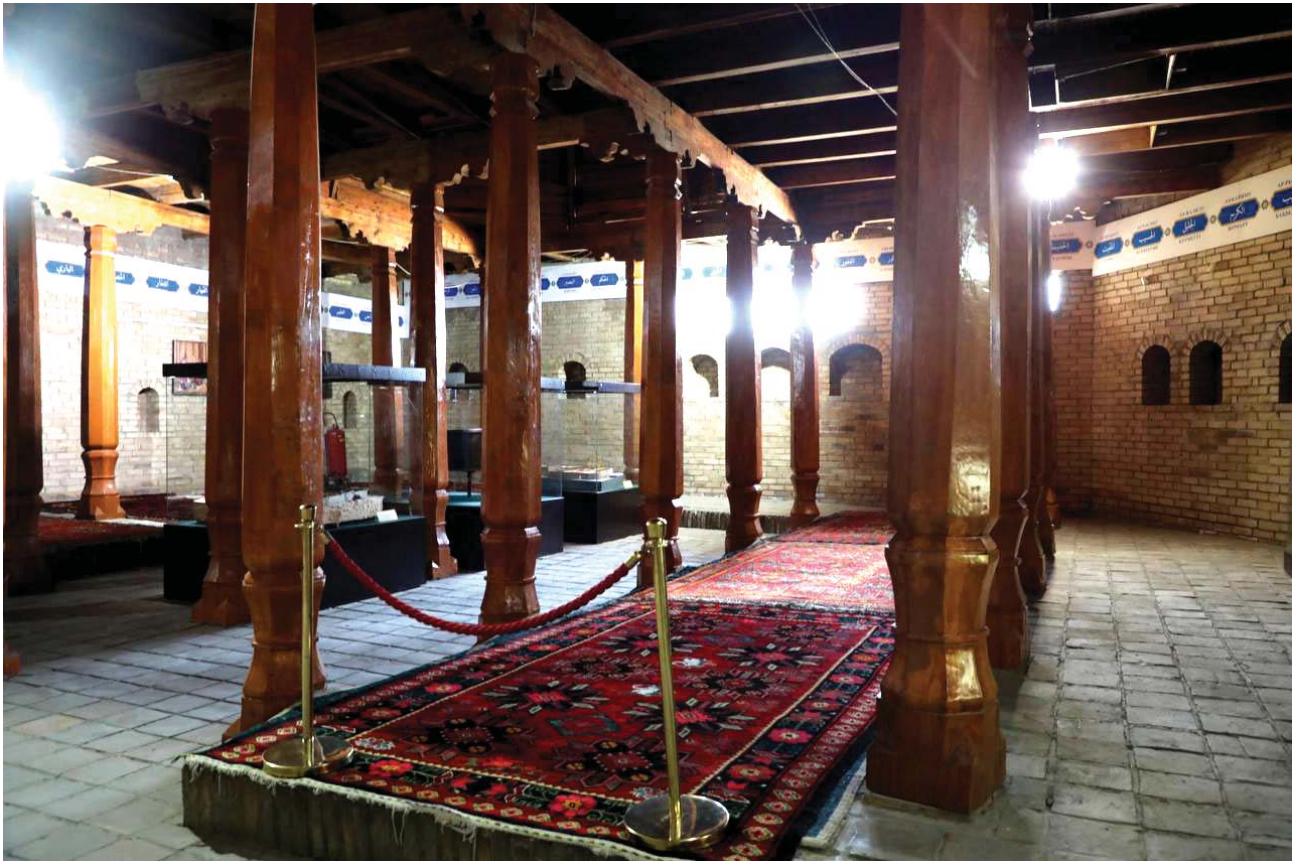


Fig. 7. The main room of the underground «Khilvet» mosque and columns.

Рис. 7. Основной зал подземной мечети «Хильвет» и колонны.

is the main goal of archaeological excavations (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 42–48).

During the excavations, it was found that the construction time of the «mosque» and «Ghar» was of two types. This is due to the fact that the mismatch of the walls of the current underground mosque with the walls of the «Ghar» indicates that the mosque room was rebuilt later or on the site of a demolished building. The written report on this stressed that «first of all, the direction of the walls of the «Ghar» and the walls of the Mosque room located above it is somewhat inconsistent, with an oblique angle to one of them (about 15 degrees). Even in the layout of A. Schmidt, these walls do not coincide exactly in the same way. The south-western wall of the mosque passes over the «Ghar». The discrepancy between the walls of the «Ghar» and the walls of the mosque room indicates that the two buildings are not related to each other in terms of construction time» («Azret Sultan» ... f. 6: 1).

The main archaeological work was carried out on the outside of the «Ghar» wall. During the initial survey work for excavation (pit) at a depth

of more than one meter, the place of the wall knocked out of the reeds is found. The construction volume on this wall is about a meter less than the current wall of the «mosque», but it is parallel to the current wall, that is, it is inclined about 15 degrees from the «Ghar» wall». The topmost «Ghar» flap is about a meter below. From here, the fired ceramic floor of the mosque room is also tilted by 15 degrees. The conclusion from this shows that the wall of the mosque, forged from reeds, was also laid after the construction of «Ghar». This is stated in M. Tuyakbayev's article «Archaeological research in Big Khilvet», which» indicates that the wall of reeds is the site of a former mosque from the current «mosque», but was built after the «Ghar» room (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 42–48). This article claims that on top of the «Ghar» there used to be a structure in the shape of another square or circle, and later a «mosque» was built instead, possibly built in the XV century.

The above evidence suggests that the underground «Khilvet» mosque may have been rebuilt from burnt ceramics during the time of Amir

Timur during the construction of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. M. Tuyakbayev's article «Archaeological research in Big Khilvet» states that «the reconstruction of «Khilvet» from burnt bricks is connected with the Timurid period, the construction of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi. In those days, in addition to the mausoleum, in the direction of «Pilgrimage (ziyarat)» included «Khilvet» and the residential building of Ahmed Yasawi (now the site of the «Zhuma (Friday)» mosque, located near the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi) and the burial places of his relatives. Amir Timur was also interested in places associated with the name of Yasawi, and intended to make a full pilgrimage. During the pilgrimage, you could see the pathetic «Khilvet», built of reeds. Thus, the current floor level of the mosque «room rose 80 cm higher than the original, and the «Ghar» went deeper by another meter. The wall of the well (hatch) «Ghar» is additionally lined with nine rows of ceramics. This can be easily determined by the image of the well (manhole) shown during the explosion. The walls of the square in front of the entrance to the «Ghar» were raised by nine more rows of brickwork and surrounded and reinforced with logs on four sides. Rafters were also installed over the entrance arch, thus trying to reduce the weight from above» (Tuyakbayev, 2000, p. 42).

Despite the fact that the age of the buildings on the «Ghar» was determined in the course of previous archaeological research, the actual issue remained determining the time of construction of the «Ghar» premises. To achieve this goal, in 1996, archaeologists conducted excavations on the outside of the «Ghar» wall. During the excavation, fragments of pottery were found in the soil outside the wall. Examination of parts of the finds shows that they are characteristic of the X–XII centuries. In addition, the walls of «Ghar» have dimensions of about 24×27 cm. large ceramics were widely used in the XI–XII centuries. This was reported by M. Tuyakbayev «dimensions 24×27; 25×26; 26×26 cm. such bricks that will be in the XI–XII centuries. Central Asia, it is known for its numerous ritual and memorial structures. The same bricks were used in the construction of the walls of the first stage of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi, which differ from the bricks of the second stage, created specifically for the mausoleum between the XIV and XV centuries. At the first stage of construction,

they demolished the old buildings that were part of the territory of the future mausoleum, and used them to build the lower parts of the walls. This is the reason for the anomalies of bricks of the first stage of construction «Khilvet» from 24 cm to 27 cm» («Azret Sultan» ...f. 6, p. 2), concludes.

Also in 1972–1973, archaeological excavations were carried out in the north-western part of «Khilvet», where no excavations were carried out due to the construction of outbuildings. However, since this part of the building is an additional service part built in the XVIII–XX centuries, according to the decision of experts, it was suggested that it has no historical or architectural value.

In 1999, the Turkestan branch of the Kazkazitazhangyrtu institution excavated the north-western part of the building. But this year, only the layer that is characteristic of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries is revealed.

In 2000, archaeological research will resume. In the course of this research, it was discovered that the north-western part of the building was reconstructed in the XIX century according to the layout of A. Schmidt.

According to the archaeological research of T. Senigova, conducted in 1996 in 1972–1973, the construction of the «Ghar» is characteristic of the XII century it was argued that the prevailing opinion that it was built was a hasty statement that part of the underground mosque «Khilvet», which was considered the first, actually belonged to a later construction.

After analyzing the results of the above-mentioned archaeological studies, we can see that the underground mosque «Hilvet « was studied by archaeologists at different levels. Analyzing the research data and written reports, we can draw the following conclusions. Archaeological studies conducted in different years by T. N. Senigova and E. Smagulov showed that the date of construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet» in the XV–XVIII centuries is a mosque that was rebuilt over an ancient mosque minted from reeds in the XIII–XIV centuries. The first underground mosque «Khilvet» was a building consisting of only two rooms. These are: a round room for making «dhikr» on «Ghar» and a mosque with a square-shaped mihrab. Over time, the underground «Khilvet» gradually expanded to its current size.

Based on the analysis of archaeological research, our article fully proves that the «Ghar» and the underground circular mosque built on top of it were built in the XII century. This is evidenced by fragments of ceramic objects found during the excavation of the Ghar room, and square-shaped ceramics, approximately 24x27 cm in size, with the walls of the Ghar. Scientific expertise has established that the found ceramic objects belong to the X–XII centuries, and ceramics measuring 24x27 cm are widely used in other historical monuments of Central Asia and Kazakhstan dating back to the X–XII centuries, was discovered on the basis of an analysis of archaeological research.

The underground mosque «Khilvet» was studied by archaeologists at different levels. Analyzing the research data and written reports, we can draw the following conclusions. Archaeological studies conducted in different years by N. Senigova and E. Smagulov showed that the date of construction of the underground mosque «Khilvet» in the XV–XVIII centuries is a mosque that was rebuilt over an ancient mosque minted from reeds in the XIII–XIV centuries. The first underground mosque «Khilvet» was a building consisting of only two rooms. These are: a round room for building «dhikr» on «Ghar» and a mosque with a square-shaped mihrab. Over time, the underground «Ghar» mosque gradually expanded to its current size.

In connection with the construction of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi in the late XIV and XV centuries, the former «Khilvet» was demolished and rebuilt in its place from burnt ceramics. The floor level has undergone significant changes due to the fact that several

repairs have been carried out on this part, which is built of brick.

It is known that in the second half of the XVI century, Khan Abdullah II made repairs to the portal and roof of the mausoleum of Khoja Ahmed Yasawi and built a bathhouse and a madrasah. It is impossible not to make repairs and take into account the opinion of the representatives of the major local religions, seeing in this visit the north-western wall of the underground mosque «Khilvet», which was knocked out of the rubble. Therefore, we conclude that the Northern Economic part of the underground mosque «Khilvet» was founded in the last quarter of the XVI century with burnt pottery.

In conclusion, the underground mosque «Khilvet» was built underground in the first version, which was transformed into a semi-underground mosque under the influence of subsequent construction and repair. The underground mosque «Khilvet», as the main center that created the conditions for the widespread and successful spread of Sufism among the Turkic peoples, is a unique religious structure that has its own influence on its widespread spread.

Thus, in the course of our research, it was established that the underground mosque «Khilvet» was built underground in the original version, and then transformed into a semi-underground mosque under the influence of several subsequent construction and repair works. In addition, earlier in archeology, it was concluded that the main part of the underground mosque «Khilvet» was built in the XII century and since then has become the main center that contributed to the widespread spread of Sufism among the Turkic peoples.

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