



HISTORY OF THE SAYID ATALYK MADRASAH

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ABSTRACT	KEYWORDS
This article analyzes the construction history, architectural features, and place of the Sayid Atalyk madrasah in Denau – one of the ancient cities of the Surkhandarya oasis – within the architecture of the Denau bekdom.	Nakshbandia order, Juybari khojas, Sayid Atalyk madrasah, "qosh" (paired) style, khanaqah.

Introduction

The madrasahs, which serve as centers of spirituality and enlightenment in our country, are a source of pride for each region and an integral part of its cultural history. This is because madrasahs represent not only historical figures but also the people's aspiration for knowledge. Among the historical monuments of the Surkhandarya oasis, the Sayid Atalyk madrasah in Denau held an important place in the cultural life of the Denau bekdom.

There are different views regarding the construction history of the madrasah. According to the first, some researchers note that the Sayid Atalyk madrasah was built by the descendants of Khoja Alauddin Attar. This version connects the madrasah with Sheykh Alauddin Attar Valiy, a disciple of Bahauddin Nakshband, the Sufi saint of Transoxiana, and his descendants. In Muhammad Forsoiniy's "Maqomot-i Sheykh Alauddin Attar," it is written that Sheykh Alauddin Attar Valiy was the son-in-law of Bahauddin Nakshbandiy. After the death of Bahauddin Nakshband (1389), he came to Denau to spread the Nakshbandiya order in the Hissari Shodmon region. Thus, Sheykh Alauddin Attar lived in Denau for a total of 22 years. Sheykh Alauddin Attar died in Denau on the 20th of Rajab, 802 AH (March 18, 1400 AD). His grave is also located here. During his lifetime, Sheykh Attar Valiy said, "Whoever loves me, let him take a place at my threshold." As a result, the largest cemetery in Denau is now called "Sheykh Attar Valiy" or "Ostonabova." Later descendants of Sheykh Alauddin Attar are also buried in the cemetery, including his son Sheykh Khasan Attar Valiy and his grandson Khoja Yusuf Attar [1, p. 171]. According to Saloh ibn Muborak al-Bukhariy's work "Anis at-tolibiyin," after the death of

Bahauddin Nakshband, Sheykh Alauddin Attar took his place as spiritual mentor (murshid), and disciples began to gather around him [2, p. 69].

After the death of Khoja Alauddin Attar, his descendants continued the Nakshbandiya order. His son, Khoja Khasan Attar, became famous among the Sufi scholars of Transoxiana and Khorasan. Faxriddin Ali Safiy, in his work "Rashahotu aynil hayot," describes him as "the fruit of his father's tree of sainthood." The Timurid ruler Shahrukh Mirzo greatly respected Khoja Khasan Attar. According to sources, on one occasion, he went out personally to greet the scholar and presented him with a thoroughbred horse [3, p. 137].

In 1995, a book titled "Denau Tarona" by Denau-based historian and writer Nasriddin Ismoilov was published. In it, he writes that the Sayid Atalyk madrasah in Denau was built over 26 years by Sheykh Alauddin Attar's son Khoja Khasan and grandson Khoja Yusuf, and that it is a memorial dedicated to Sheykh Alauddin Attar [4]. Based on the above view, the construction of the Sayid Atalyk madrasah in Denau would date back to the mid-15th century, specifically to the 1440s–1450s, i.e., the period when Khoja Khasan and Khoja Yusuf lived. The inaccuracy of this view will be analyzed further below.

There is also a view among the local population that the madrasah building was built in the mid-19th century during the rule of Abdulkarim dodkhoh. The works carried out by the Denau beks are mentioned in N.A. Mayev's book as follows: "Denau has an Asian-style architectural design and bazaar in an oriental manner; small teahouses are located in its streets, and meat is sold at every step. In the city, there are two madrasahs built by Denau beg Abdulkarim" [5, p. 179]. The fact that these views are not entirely unfounded is also proven by the fact that Mahmud ibn Vali's 17th-century book records the existence of two madrasah buildings in Denau.

The main point we wish to address is as follows. In July 1988, architect T.F. Jukova published the following in the journal "Architecture and Construction of Uzbekistan": "The madrasah building in Denau is a historical monument of the 17th century. The construction of this madrasah is linked to the Bukhara Juybari khojas. It is known that the Bukhara khans always showed great favor to the Juybari khojas. They gave lands, money, and valuable gifts to the Juybari sheykh and tried to establish kinship ties with them whenever possible. One such example: when Imomqulikhan (1611–1642) from the Ashtarkhanids ascended the Bukhara throne, he married his sister to Tadjiddin Khoja Khasan Juybariy and granted him, as a favor, the lands of Pirmast in Bukhara and Denau in Hissar, sealing them as a gift. He also granted 20,000 tangas, several camels, and herds of horses. The lands granted by the ruler were independently managed by the Juybariys, and the owners of these lands were given the title of "otaliq." Tadjiddin Khoja Khasan Juybariy built two madrasahs in Denau at his own expense. Since Tadjiddin was a descendant of the Prophet's family, he held the title of Sayid among the people. For this reason, the madrasah was named Sayid Atalyk after him and was completed during the years 1612–1628" [6, pp. 30–35].

Tadjiddin Khoja Khasan Juybariy was a sheykh who had perfect knowledge of the Nakshbandiya order and had great devotion to it. Therefore, it is highly plausible that after the land of Denau was granted to him, he built the madrasah with the aim of spreading the Nakshbandiya order among the local population. The version linking the madrasah's construction to Sheykh Alauddin Attar Valiy likely originated from the local population's association of the building with the Nakshbandiya order. Indeed, during the Ashtarkhanid state, just as in the Shaybanid state, the Juybari khojas who came from the village of Joybor near the capital Bukhara wielded great influence. Imomqulikhan, who ruled the

Bukhara Khanate, unlike his predecessors, managed to put an end to the feudal wars raging in the country and strengthen the central government. In general, historians acknowledge that during Imomqulikhan's reign, peace and prosperity prevailed in the country, and cities and villages flourished. Naturally, spiritual and cultural life improved in Denau, a city in the Surkhandarya oasis, creating a need for the construction of a madrasah.

The choice of Denau's center for the madrasah's construction was not accidental. This place was more favorable in terms of climate and water compared to other areas. The madrasah's bricks were made from soil from the Zahartepa village, and the bricks were fired in large kilns located in that area. The construction of the madrasah employed a style characteristic of Bukhara madrasahs. The depth of the madrasah's foundation is 5.5 meters; several layers of reeds were laid down, and fired bricks were laid in a special manner. The madrasah was built in the "paired" (qosh) form, i.e., with the facades of two buildings facing each other. The first building is the preserved madrasah, the second is the khanaqah. The road passing between the two structures led to the fortress of the Denau bek [7, p. 217].

The construction of architectural structures in this style is characteristic of 16th–18th-century architecture. A distinctive feature of the Sayid Atalyk madrasah and khanaqah is that the madrasah is oriented from north to south. In this arrangement: first, the qibla side (mihrab) of the mosque inside the madrasah adjoins the outer wall; second, such placement is cost-effective and allows for an increase in the number of cells (hujras). The majority of the cells (80%) have their entrances and windows oriented toward the qibla [8, p. 238]. This creates favorable conditions for performing Islamic rituals. The total area of the madrasah is 46×64 meters. The courtyard area is 40×29.5 meters, and it consists of 114 hujras. The hujras on the first floor measure 4.75×2.75 meters, while those on the second floor measure 2.75×2.25 meters [9, p. 159]. The madrasah building was constructed by master Ahmad Muhammad Bukhari. The madrasah comprises 114 hujras [10, pp. 21–23]. It is noteworthy that the number of madrasah cells corresponds to the number of surahs in the Holy Qur'an.

At the Sayid Atalyk madrasah, you first enter an iwan (vaulted hall) covered by an octagonal pillar, then proceed to a domed mosque and a miyonsaroy (lecture hall) arranged in the shape of a "P" on the left and right. Each hujra had a fireplace for heating, and on the second floor, each hujra had a balcony overlooking the street and decorative arches. According to sources, about 400 students studied at the madrasah, and 33 teachers (mudarris) taught them [11, p. 83].

The Sayid Atalyk madrasah suffered great damage during the oppression of Tsarist Russia and later the Soviet government, when construction materials were used for other purposes. During the fight against national independence fighters, the madrasah building was used by the Red Army as a headquarters and a dungeon. Whenever a comrade-in-arms died, they would bury him on top of the madrasah and erect a memorial. The khanaqah building was demolished between 1929 and 1934. The reason was that its bricks were used to construct other buildings. Consequently, the khanaqah's bricks were used to build the public education department, the prosecutor's office, a hotel, the police station, the district committee (raykom), a railway polyclinic, and a school building. Some of the bricks were laid as a walkway from the bazaar to the railway, as Denau is known to be a swampy, damp area [1, p. 170]. After the khanaqah was demolished, the bazaar's location was changed, the road leading to the fortress was closed, and houses were built. Thus, the urban planning style of the 16th–17th centuries was disrupted, and the madrasah was separated from the Denau bek's fortress. The magnificent Registan-type architectural ensemble was destroyed in this way.

To hide the madrasah from public view, its surroundings were deliberately blocked with shops, and it was kept closed. Later, the madrasah building was used as an office of the Voluntary Society for Assistance to the Army, Aviation, and Navy (in Russian - DOSAAF), a pharmacy, and an archive. Representatives of European peoples who had migrated and could not find a place to live were housed with their families in the hujras. They lit fires inside the hujras and cooked food. As a result, the walls of the hujras became covered in black soot and fell into disrepair. The building was also used as a garage for collective farm machinery and as an artists' workshop. The front portal (pishtaq) had eroded, half of the rear portal had crumbled, and the courtyard and hujras were full of rubbish. The central pool, as well as the underground passage (lahm) connecting the madrasah to the Denau bek's fortress, were buried. The inner level of the madrasah courtyard was raised by up to 1 meter and paved with asphalt. This, in turn, led to an increase in moisture, accelerating the collapse of the walls due to dampness.

In short, until the years of independence, the madrasah building was in a very deplorable state. After Uzbekistan gained independence, the "Sayid Atalyk" cultural center was established in 1997 under the international charitable foundation "Oltin Meros" (Golden Heritage). The madrasah was included in the national list of "Immovable Objects of Tangible Cultural Heritage" approved in 2019. In 2020–2021, measures were developed to preserve the building and improve its infrastructure, and the structure underwent current repairs.

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