

Afrasiyob -History Created in the Darkness

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ANNOTATION: Afrasiyob is an ancient ruin of the city of Samarkand. Its area is 219 hectares. As a result of archaeological excavations conducted in Afrasiyob, very valuable information about the history of ancient Samarkand was found. The city of Afrasiyob was surrounded by walls and protected by moats. According to the information of historians, there were 4 gates of Afrasiyob, and archaeological excavations are still being conducted in the monument today.

KEYWORD: Afrasiyob, Smarakanve, M. E. Masson, W. L. Vyatkin, "archaeological reserve", Bernard P., Grene F., M. Rostislavov. "City on Black Water" or "Lands around Siyob".

Afrasiyob - this name appears in historical sources in relation to ancient Samarkand only from the 17th century. Ancient Samarkand was called "Smarakanve" in Sughd sources. After the conquest of Samarkand by the troops of Alexander the Great in the 4th century BC, Greek authors mention it as Marokanda in their diaries. Marokanda is Greek translation of "Smarakanve". After the Somanies came to power in Movarounnahr, Smarakanve began to be called ancient Samarkand from the 9th century. Samarkand appears as Semizkent in literature written in the Turkish language in the XI-XV centuries. From the 15th century, the name Samarkand was used in Persian and Turkish sources. The general area of Afrasiyab covers 219 ha. The north of this place is bounded by Siyob ditch. From the south, it was joined to Samarkand, which was called the "old city".

Preliminary excavations were carried out by Major Borzenkov (1874), lieutenant colonel V. V. Krestovsky (1883), orientalist N. I. Veselovsky (1884-85, 1895), V. V. Barthold (1904) and V. L. Vyatkin (1905; 1912-13). In 1919 M. E. Masson, W. L. Vyatkin continued his excavations in the places where he had started his research and opened the ruins of the Somanite palace (IX-acp). In 1925, 1929-30, **V. L. Vyatkin continues excavations in Afrasiyab and collects a lot of material about its history in different periods. However, the archaeological excavations conducted in Afrasiyob until the 1930s gave very little information about the history of ancient Samarkand. On July 13, 1966, a special decision of the government of the Republic was adopted** in order to organize a comprehensive archaeological study of Afrasiyob. According to this decision, Afrasiyob was declared an "archaeological reserve". In order to satisfy the needs of the population due to the difficulty of supplying the city with water, a canal was dug by Dargom in the first years of the city's life. Traces of this channel were opened and explored in the south of the current city avenue, in the place where the statue of Alisher Navoi stands. This channel goes through Registan Square towards Hazrat Khizr Mosque. According to historical sources, at the southern entrance to Afrasiyab, a concrete aqueduct was built over the moat of the city, and a large ditch was passed over it. This stream was called "Juyi ar-ziz" ("Lead Stream"). Here the stream divides into three parts and goes through the city to the Siyob

stream. Excavation work in Afrasiyob increased on a large scale, especially after the establishment of the Institute of Archeology of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan in Samarkand. After Ya. G. Ghulomov the supervisor to archaeological works were G. V. Shishkina and Sh. Tashkhojaev. In the following years (from 1989), French archaeologists Paul Bernard and Franz Grene were involved in the archaeological research of Afrasiab. French archaeological mission, archaeologists of Uzbekistan M. Isomiddinov participated in the study of Afrasiyob in cooperation. The results of the joint research of Uzbek and French scientists clarified a number of issues related to the history of ancient Samarkand. For instance, Under the city's defensive walls dating back to the VI-V centuries BC were discovered more ancient remains of a wall built from guvalak. This historical find proved that Samarkand belongs to the middle of the VIII century BC; another part of the city they uncovered remains of the magnificent palace of the Samarkand ikhshids in the shape of a murabba (70x70) dating back to the 8th century.

Archaeological research in Afrasiab is continues. (Vyatkin V. L., Gorodishche bylogo Samarkand, Samarkand, 1926; Shishkin V. A., Afrosiyab — a treasure of ancient culture, T., 1966; Afrasiyab, Sbornik, vyp. 1, T., 1969; Bernard P., Grene F., Isomiddinov M., Basic results of the Uzbek-French expedition 1990-1992, ONU, No. 3-4, 1994; Isomiddinov M., O date osnovania Samarkand, ONU, No. 5, 1997.). As a result of archaeological excavations in Afrosiyob unique examples of majestic paintings were explored by V. Vyatkin (1913). During the next period of excavations (1965-68), Uzbek archaeologists managed to open about 30 palaces, many of these rooms were decorated with murals and patterns. Among them the paintings in the large (11x11 m) and small (7x7 m) rooms are relatively well preserved. In one of the rooms, a man and a woman are depicted sitting in front of an arch. The paintings on the walls of the large room are significant for their richness of details and preserved Sughd inscriptions. The paintings on the walls of the room depict the wedding ceremony, the reception of the ambassadors of foreign countries by the ruler of Sughd, the adventures of these ambassadors on the road, encounters with wild animals, hunting scenes, and mythical creatures. The analysis of preserved paintings made it possible to think about the ideological artistic direction of the medieval fine art, the artist's working methods and tools, detailed household scenes, ethnic scenes of that period. The artist divided the wall into 3 parts, separated the 2 outer parts with a narrow pattern border, and painted the main part with a thematic image, reflecting the events as if watching from above. The painting on the wall of Afrosiyab is subordinated to a single content: in the center stands the ruler of Sughd, Varkhuman, according to tradition, the artist depicts him in a larger view than others (height of the entire wall, 5-6 m), acknowledges the greatness of the ruler, and gives him eternity, heroism.

The wall of Afrosiyob shows the development of majestic painting in Central Asia before the Arab conquest, and Samarkand was its center. According to the article written by M. Rostislavov, "the excavation was not carried out according to the originally thought out plan, but rather irregularly". The dictionary meaning and history of the name of Afrosiyob scientists have not come to a clear opinion on the issue. They have expressed different opinions. The opinion that comes a little closer to the truth is given by the famous Sogdologist V.A. Livshis from Leningrad. Afrosiyab is a combination of the words "apar" and "shavar". It means "the city on the black water" or "the land around Siyyab".

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