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## THE FEATURES AND LAYOUT OF A BUILDING IN THE OTRAR OASIS

*This article re-examines a multi-room building that was excavated in the 1970s in the vicinity of Otrar (southern Kazakhstan). The building dates from the 14th to early 15th century. Its walls and square floorplan, were constructed of large-sized, fired bricks. According to the author of the publication (S. Zh. Zholdasbaev) the structure was divided into 20 rooms by internal partitions. The central square room was surrounded by various sized rooms and configurations. The building was badly damaged by later period digging, so the internal structures were almost unpreserved. In the original publication, this building is interpreted as a mosque or madrasah. However, no signs of a cultic building can be connected to it. Likewise, in the central region of the Golden Horde in the Lower Volga, several manor houses with a similar layout were studied. Also square in plan, these houses were divided into three sections by meridian walls. The middle part consisted of a suite of rooms with a ceremonial hall in the center. The main entrance was located on the south side and in the northern section is found the place of honor for house's owner designated by a podium with a canopy. On the east and west sides, the hall was adjoined by multi-functional rooms. The main buildings of the richest estates had a similar layout. This similar layout from estates in the Golden Horde was borrowed from floorplans in Central Asia. The manor houses of Khorezm may have served as a model. However, the spatial organization of Golden Horde manor houses was organized according to Mongolian models. The building in the Otrar oasis is probably an example of such houses from Khorezm.*

**Key words:** Otrar oasis, multi-room building, Golden Horde, manor houses, Khorezm, Mongolia, principles of planning, spatial organization.

**Citation:** Emma Zilivinskaya (2021) The Features and Layout of a Building in the Otrar Oasis, Bulletin of IICAS, 32, P. 33-42, DOI:

**Article link:**

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**E**XCAVATION during the 1970s were conducted at the Bayilyr settlement located 4 km southeast of Otrar (southern Kazakhstan). The results were published (Zholdasbaev 1980) and described numerous *tepes* [hills or mounds] (more than 20) of various sizes and heights (ranging from 0.2 to 0.8 m) located on the bank of a canal that flowed into the Arys River. Traces of later pits were also detected in the soil. One of the hills, called Danlybai *tepe*, was completely excavated. This *tepe* revealed structure with a square plan, 25 × 25 m, and 0.6 m high.

Excavations revealed of a multi-room building. The square plan with borders 19 m long was oriented along a north/south axis with a deviation to the west. The building's exterior walls were made of large-sized fired bricks (35 × 35 × 5 cm). Judging from the schematic drawing, the brickwork's outer and inner layers were composed of whole bricks with the space between the courses filled with brick fragments. The walls were 110 cm thick, but their present-day height

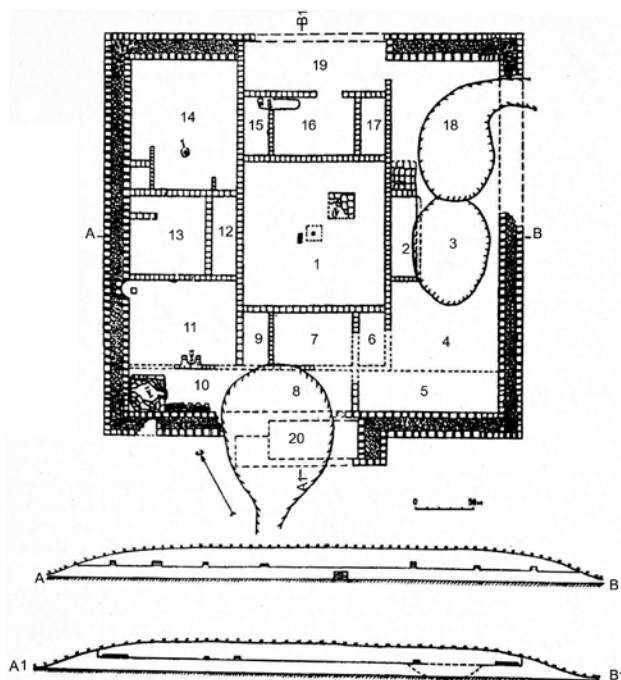
is only one course. The interior partitions between rooms were made of one row of bricks 35 cm wide with a height between one to three layers. The structure's floors were made of adobe.

The building's layout is quite interesting. According to the report's author, it consisted of 20 rooms (Fig. 1). The center contained a square room with dimensions 16.1 × 6.1 m. Accessible from the southwest<sup>1</sup> corner of the room labeled 18; its entrance was marked by a brick step measuring 1.15 × 1.7 m. Inside this room, designated as number 1, at a distance of 1 m from the presumed entrance was brickwork 2 courses in height. Based on the schematic drawing, each side of this brickwork was comprised of four courses, therefore, its dimensions were approximately 1.4 × 1.4 m.<sup>2</sup> According to the author of the report, it

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<sup>1</sup> The text incorrectly states "southeast."

<sup>2</sup> The text indicates an area of 1 m<sup>2</sup>



Ил. 1. Здание в Байылдыре, план  
(Жолдасбаев 1980)

was interpreted as a table for oil lamps, since a *chirag* was discovered beside it (Zholdasbayev 1980: 172-173). The center of room 1 contained a circular structure made of brick fragments. This measured about 60-70 cm in diameter with a height of approximately 80-85 cm containing a hole in the center. The entire structure had a sunken floor with only the raised section with the hole being at ground level. According to the interpretation of the excavators, this brickwork served to support a wooden column which allowed them to assume that “the room had some type of roof” (Zholdasbayev 1980: 173).

Three rooms adjoined this central room from the north: room 16, measuring  $3.45 \times 2.65$  m, and rooms 15 and 17,  $2.65 \times 1.1$  m each, which flanked room 1. On the southern side was a similar complex of rooms (6, 7 and 9) with the same dimensions. The northern group of rooms could be accessed from room 19 ( $6.2 \times 2.1$  m), which, in turn, could be accessed directly from the street. Zholdasbayev, in one case, calls the entrance to room 19 the main entrance, and in another, an auxiliary entrance (Zholdasbayev 1980: 176, 178). A similar vestibule or an *iwān*<sup>3</sup>, room 20, was located on the south side. Its eastern and western walls contained massive pylons projecting 1.5 m beyond the facade of the building's south wall. This *iwān*

<sup>3</sup> Ed. Note: An *iwān* (Persian/Arabic) is a rectangular-shaped space or hall usually with three sides common in Central Asian architecture, often the part of a threshold.

led to room 8, which then led to the central group of rooms.

Three rooms in the interior extended along the southern wall. Another room (10), in the southwestern corner measured  $4.7 \times 1.75$  m. In the western section of this room was a fireplace ( $1.3 \times 1.3$  m) with a circular fire pit 50 cm in diameter. The pit's hole measured  $15 \times 20$  cm. A shelf 2.2 m long, 50 cm wide, and 40 cm high was built next to the fireplace along the south wall. Further to the east was the vestibule, room 8 which was heavily damaged by a pit from a later period; along with room 5, that measured  $6.5 \times 1.75$  m.

The building's west wing had four rooms. North of room 10, room 11 measured a spacious  $4.7 \times 3.5$  m. It contained a horseshoe-shaped fireplace ( $60 \times 90$  cm) and lay next to its southwestern wall. A circular depression with bricks on its floor was found in the northern corner. Presumably, a *khum* (storage jar) had been buried there. Potsherds from glazed ceramic dishes as well as animal bones were found in the room, which indicated its auxiliary function.

Further to the north were rooms 12 ( $3.4 \times 1.1$  m) and 13 ( $3.4 \times 3.4$  m). In the northwestern corner of room 13, a wall described as a “destroyed back room” was exposed. Room 14 was the northernmost room in this group with dimensions of  $4.7 \times 5.5$  m. A *tashnau*<sup>4</sup> lay in the central part of this room. Fired bricks were found in the room's western and southern corners which the excavators interpreted as a small storage room (Zholdasbayev 1980: 176). Glazed and unglazed pottery fragments were also found in this room.

The opposite east section of the building also had four rooms (4, 2, 3 and 18), mostly destroyed by later pits. However, presumably, the east section layout of the building was mirror-symmetrical to the west side.

Based on the pottery from the main excavation and cultural material from the accompanying excavation trenches, the building dates between the 14th-15th century. The report's author interprets this complex as a mosque or madrasah. In his opinion, “in plan and orientation it is identical to the late religious buildings that are found throughout southern Kazakhstan and Central Asia” (Zholdasbayev 1980: 178), and he compares it with the mosques-madrassahs of the 18th-19th centuries. He considers his interpretation supported by written sources which maintain that many madrassahs and mosques were built in Otrar and other cities. Zholdasbayev writes: “The following arguments favor the theory that this is a mosque. First, at that time it was necessary to disseminate Islam as quickly as possible. The construc-

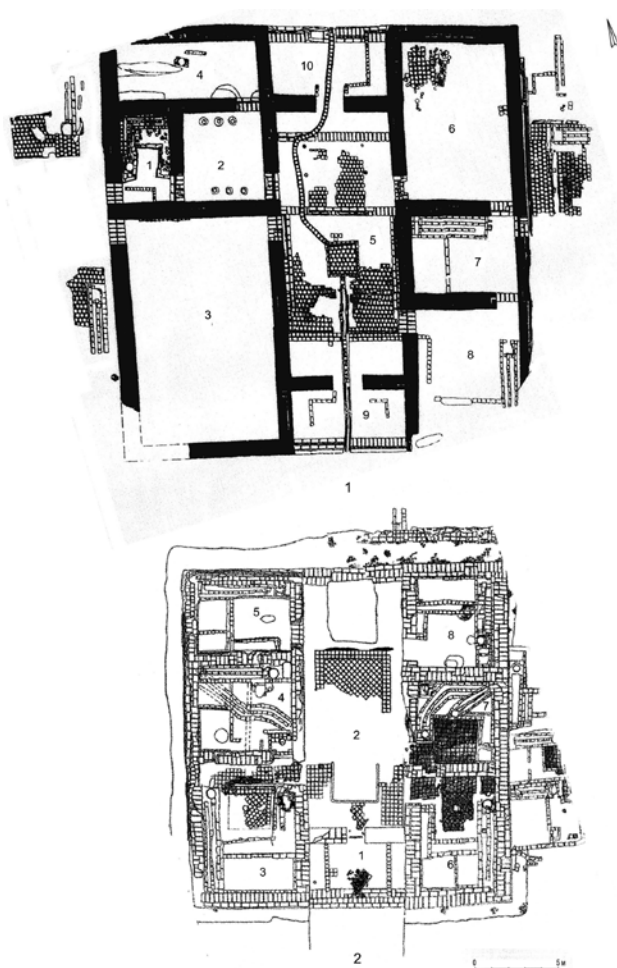
<sup>4</sup> Ed. Note: A *tashnau* was for sanitation purposes used to drain dirty water after washing hands or dishes.

tion plan of the Khoja Ahmed Yasawi mausoleum [in Turkestan, Kazakhstan] provides evidence since this building's plan in Otrar is almost identical. Second, according to its internal layout, yet, despite its smaller size, the Otrar complex is similar to the Central Asian and south Kazakhstan mosque-madrasahs built during the 18th-19th centuries," (*Zholdasbayev* 1980: 181).

Yet, there is not a single mihrab in the entire supposed "mosque-madrasah" complex, even though the mihrab is the main, and indispensable, element of a Muslim religious building. For a mosque, the layout of the building is not as important as the presence of a Qibla-oriented prayer niche. Specifically, this is evidenced by the presence and layout of structures such as *namazgoh*<sup>5</sup> mosques, which have only one wall with a mihrab (*Kochnev* 1976) or steppe mosques, known from ethnographic studies, in which the mihrab is indicated by bushes planted in the soil to form of a niche directed toward Mecca. In the author's opinion, the mihrab "was not provided because of the small size of the complex" (*Zholdasbayev* 1980: 178). This explanation seems rather absurd since a mihrab niche can be made even in the smallest room of which there are numerous examples.

Based on the mosque-madrasah hypothesis for this building, *Zholdasbayev* attributes his interpretation to the premises of the building under investigation. In his opinion, the central room is a prayer hall while the small rooms 2, 6, 9, 12, 15, 17 were for students, that is future clerics. Rooms 3, 4, 7 were attributed as being classrooms, and pilgrims were received in room 16. The room with the tashnau served for ritual ablutions before prayers, or a *takhoratkhana* in the Central Asian Muslim context (*Zholdasbayev* 1980: 178). These assumptions are groundless and are *Zholdasbayev's* fantasy. While the rooms that measure  $2.65 \times 1.1$  m and even  $3.4 \times 1.1$  m certainly provide sufficient space for an average-sized person to reside, this is unlikely domestic space. It is equivalent to living in a wardrobe. The only thing that can be agreed upon is that rooms with fireplaces (10 and 11) could be used for cooking.

I also cannot agree that the layout of this building was typical for a mosque and madrasah. No mosque with a similar layout is recorded in either Central Asia or Kazakhstan between the 10th and 14th centuries. Usually, such buildings were single or multi-domed one-hall buildings divided into naves by rows of columns or buildings with an extensive courtyard (*Khmelnitsky* 1992, 60-103; *Khmelnitsky* 1996, 70-128; *Mankovskaya* 1980: 102-121; *Mankovskaya* 2014:



Илл. 2. Усадебные здания на Селитренном городище: 1 – усадьба 1; 2 – усадьба 2 (Зиливинская 2019)

240-259; *Baipakov* 2012: 13-29). Even the modest and small-sized mosque in the rural settlement of Zhalpaktal in western Kazakhstan had a basilica-specific layout (*Maryksin* 2014: 112-114; *Zilivinskaya* 2016: 293-297). Madrasahs in the East were usually characterized by an inner courtyard surrounded by a group of other rooms (*Hillenbrand* 1994: 173-253; *Khmelnitsky* 1996: 260-277; *Baipakov* 2012: 31-37). The comparison with the later buildings from the 18th-19th centuries is, in my opinion, incorrect, especially since specific examples are not given. The statement about comparing the identity of the modest building in Bayildir with the magnificent monumental building of the Khoja Ahmed Yasawi mausoleum-*khanqah*<sup>6</sup> also seems dubious. The only similarity is the central room, but this type of layout was very common for various categories of buildings.

<sup>4</sup> Ed. Note: A *namazgoh* is any location consecrated for prayers by Muslims.

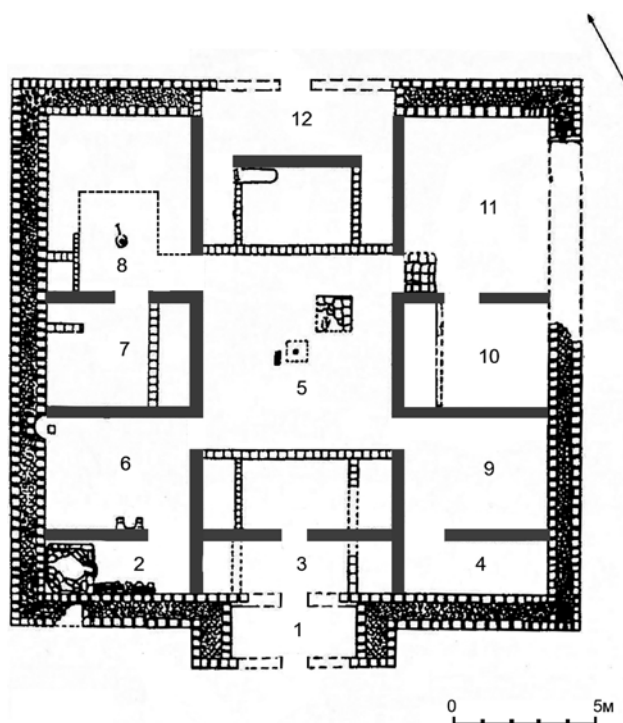
<sup>6</sup> Ed. Note: A *khanqah* (Persian) was a building specifically for gatherings of a Sufi brotherhood (*tariqa*), usually for a spiritual retreat.

Meanwhile, in the Golden Horde region of the Lower Volga, several manor houses have been studied which in plan are actually very similar to this building and date to the same 14th century, that is, the era of the Golden Horde. (*Zilivinskaya* 2008: 8-43, 96-98; *Zilivinskaya* 2014: 120-125).

The central house of estate 1 at the Selitrennoye archaeological site (identified as Saray, the Golden Horde capital near modern Astrakhan) has almost an exactly square floorplan with dimensions  $23.8 \times 24.2$  (Fig. 2.1). Its remaining walls are constructed of two rows of large-sized mud bricks ( $50 \times 22 \times 7$  cm), one row with headers and the other stretchers. The building is divided by two southern walls that separate three rows of rooms. In the center of the middle row is found a large rectangular hall accessible from the courtyard through vestibule rooms on its northern and southern sides. L-shaped *sufas*<sup>7</sup> extend along the walls in the vestibules. In the northern and southern parts of the hall, the floor is higher than in its central section. A podium paved with fired bricks was built on the northern platform of the floor with remnants of wooden pillars that previously supported a canopy. The hall floor's center section was also paved with brick and a square pool constructed in its center. Water entered the pool by a channel that ran from the courtyard through the southern vestibule under the floor paving and exited through a similar channel running to the north.

On both the east and west sides, the central hall was surrounded by rooms with various functions. In the northwestern section of the building was a group of three living rooms (1, 2, 4), which were connected via a passage, as well as to the central hall and courtyard. To their south was an extensive, non-residential room (room 3), whose floor was paved with fired bricks. Two passageways led to the hall and outside the building. The western row of rooms consisted of an identical non-residential room with a brick floor to the north (room 6) and two rooms with *kans*<sup>8</sup> and *sufas* (room 7, 8). All three rooms were connected by passages running along the eastern wall that formed a single block. This eastern block was connected to the central hall by two passages from rooms 6 and 8 adjacent to room 7 on both sides. Room 7 was connected to the outer yard. Thus, the rooms surrounding the central hall in phase I comprised four separate sections.

After 20 or 30 years, the house underwent numerous alterations. The empty rooms were sub-divided



Ил. 3. Здание в Байылдыре, план с элементами реконструкции

and turned into living space. Some of the rooms were connected only with the central hall while the other part was only connected to the street. From the 1360s – 1370s, the estate fell into disrepair; the hall was abandoned, and the pool was filled with refuse. From the 1380s - 1390s, the estate was totally destroyed, replaced by an extensive necropolis on its site.

The mudbrick house labeled estate 2, located in the same area of the city, had a similar layout and was built in the same style (Fig. 2.2). The building was square, but somewhat smaller ( $20 \times 19.5$  m). The rooms were arranged in three rows with the only entrance in the center of the southern wall that led to a vestibule paved with fired bricks and with raised *sufas* extending along the meridional walls. A large reception hall ( $14.4 \times 5.9$  m) lay to the north of the vestibule and the floor was decorated in a brick pattern. A podium, formed from a tightly packed mass of earth, was built near the northern wall.

Three living rooms were situated along western and eastern sides of the rooms. They were grouped as follows: two northern rooms (rooms 5 and 8) were isolated and connected only to the central hall; the southern and middle rooms were adjacent and also connected to the central hall. Room 3 to the southwest, and room 6 to the southeast were the most ceremonial amongst these residential room. Their walls with *sufas* along three sides were covered with white plaster. The floors were paved with brick patterns af-

<sup>7</sup> Ed. Note: A *sufa* is a raised platform, or shelf that often lines walls in domestic dwellings in Central Asia.

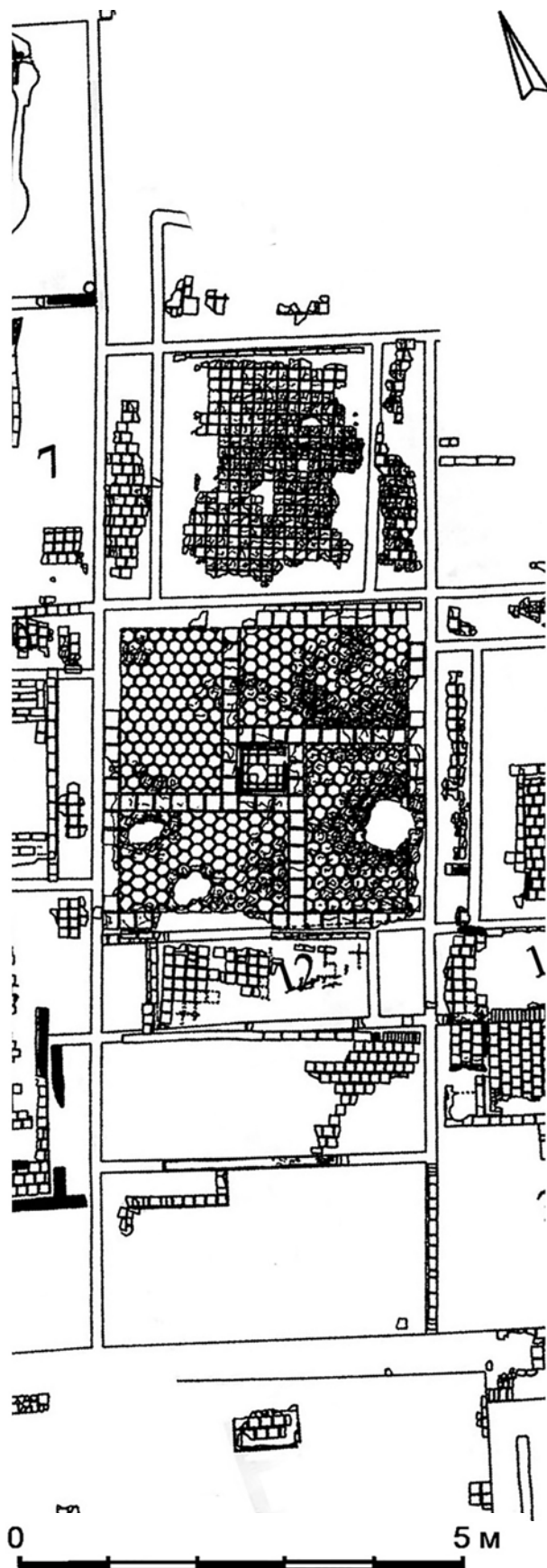
<sup>8</sup> Ed. Note: A *kan* is a traditional heating system in peasant houses in Eastern Turkestan and Northern China.

fixed with *ganch*<sup>9</sup> mortar. In the floor's center was a tashnau, surrounded by a border of turquoise-colored tiles. The rooms' internal structures were arranged symmetrically and this principle was maintained throughout the estate's existence. Rooms 4 and 7 located in the middle of the rows functioned as both residential and auxiliary space as evidenced by the numerous ovens and *tandoors*<sup>10</sup> found within them as well as their modest decor. Initially, their layout also had a mirror-symmetrical arrangement, but later the interior was rebuilt several times, and this symmetry was broken. Rooms 5 and 8, in the northern section of the house, were comprised of ordinary residential space and mostly neglected. Unlike estate 1, the central hall remained an organizing center connecting all the rooms until the structure's abandonment. Several rooms were extended with mud and wooden walls that adjoined the eastern wall of the main house. These were probably servants' quarters.

The similarity of the layout with the Selitrennoye manor houses allows a completely different interpretation of the Bayildyr building plan and its functional purpose. First, it should be noted that not all one-row-wide brick walls need be internal partitions. In particular, the existence of rooms with a wall width of about 1 m seems doubtful. Only corridors that connect rooms usually have this width, but here these types of walls connect nothing. Most likely, some of the narrow walls are sufa walls or other internal structures. Based on this interpretation, we can study the layout of the Bayildyr building, which had 12 rooms (Fig. 3).

The main entrance was on the south side. Two 1.5 m long pylons were constructed in the center of the south wall, which formed the east and west walls of an iwan (room 1). From the iwan it was possible to enter the vestibule, room 3, in which 1.1 m wide sufes were built along the meridional walls.

Then extensive room 5 was divided into three zones. In the floor square in the middle with a 6.1 m side. In its center, a brick structure with a hole extended under the floor. The previous interpretation as a base for a column supporting the roof is completely unconvincing. Examples of fixed columns constructed in this way are unknown to me. They are usually placed on a flat platform of a sunken foundation or on a base. This structure is most likely a water-absorbing basin, or tashnau, made not from a ceramic vessel, but of fired brick fragments. A tashnau with a brick



Ил. 4. Центральная часть усадебного здания 3 на Селитренном городище, план (Зиливинская 2019)

<sup>9</sup> Ed. Note: *Ganch* used in the Central Asian context denotes building material used as plaster, mortar, or a levelling coat in construction found on monumental buildings particularly to decorate surfaces.

<sup>10</sup> Ed. Note: A *tandoor* is usually a dome-shaped oven made from ceramic and plaster used for cooking and/or heating.



Ил. 5. Центральный зал усадебного здания 3 на Селитренном городище (Зиливинская 2019)

basin in the floor center of a main hall was investigated in a palatial building in estate 3 on the Selitrennoye site. A similar tashnau was constructed in the hall of manor 4, although not in the floor's center (*Zilivinskaya* 2019: 125-126, 129, fig. 132, 135, 141, 146). The southern section of room 12, as in the Selitrennoye houses, may be a section of floor from another level or another design, and sufas were made along the east and west walls. An honorable seat for the estate's owner could always be found in a hall's northern section in such buildings. It is possible that a podium was also made in this building, on both sides of which contained passages leading to the northern vestibule (room 12).

On the east and west sides of the central suite were four rooms with various purposes. On The building's west wing is better preserved. The southernmost room had a small, narrow room (2), the western section of this room contained a large cooking oven. A narrow sufa was built next to it that served as a counter for dishes. The next room, 6, also had a fireplace and a submerged khum. It is likely that both rooms were used for cooking and food storage.

Further north lay room 7 with a 1.1 m wide sufa attached to its eastern wall. The section of the wall parallel to the room's northern wall probably also supported a sufa. The northernmost room in this group was the spacious room 8. In its southwestern corner, the two mutually perpendicular walls containing "storage rooms" have been preserved. The wall run-

ning along the main western wall is most likely for the western sufa. A tashnau built in the floor; was shifted slightly to the south relative to the center of the room. Since a tashnau is usually located in the center of the floor, and not in front of a fireplace, as stated in the report (*Zholdasbayev* 1980: 176), it can be assumed that the sufa in the room was U-shaped, attached to the western, northern and eastern walls of the room. A cellar could indeed have been built in its southwest corner.

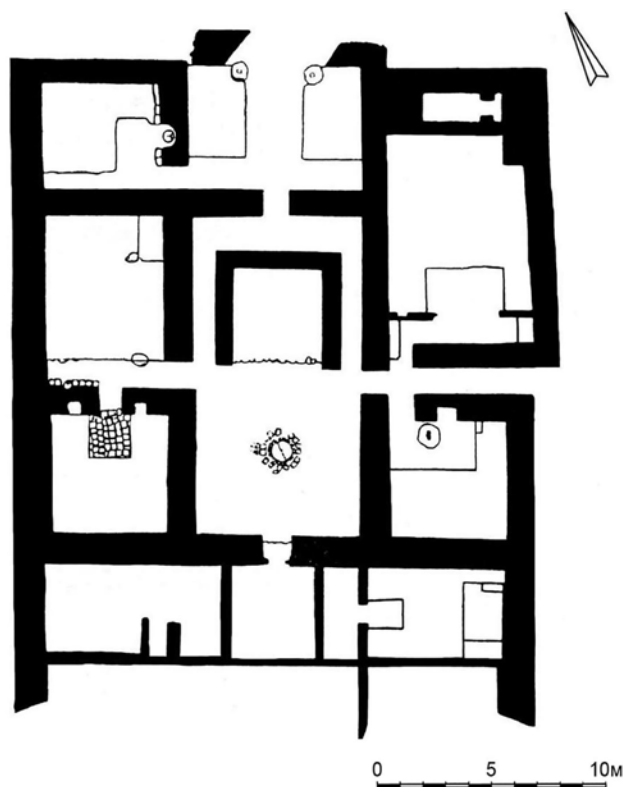
The east wing of the building was severely damaged by later digging, but most likely, at least during its first phase, it was mirror symmetrical to the east one. The rooms' interiors have not been preserved. Only a sufa was known to be attached to the western wall in room 10.

Unfortunately, no data exists on the passages connecting the rooms. The publication does not indicate the sections from the inner walls' height, so we can only assume the location of the doorways based on the layout's general logic (assuming that it was symmetrical) and in comparison with the Selitrennoye houses in which the residential block of rooms were connected to the central hall. Southern rooms 2 and 4 could not have had exits to the vestibule (room 3) since their sufas extended along the eastern and western walls. Consequently, passages could have been made in their northern walls. In room 2, the passage could only have been located in the eastern part of the northern wall, therefore, in room 4 the same would

be true, except it would be in the western wall. Passages are most often sliding. Rooms 6 and 9 were very likely connected to the hall (5) by sliding passages along their northern walls. In rooms 7 and 10, *sufas* were built along the walls separating them from the hall, so the doors in them most likely opened to the northern rooms. Rooms 8 and 11, in turn, could be connected to the central hall by sliding passages along their southern walls. In this layout, therefore, two residential blocks lay on each side of the hall, consisting of two rooms.

Golden Horde houses with a front hall located on a building's central axis appear in manor houses of this type including the most prestigious of buildings (Zilivinskaya 2019: 140-141). In the Lower Volga region, these kinds of multi-room buildings, which are actual palaces, have been investigated. One such palace excavated at the Selitrennoye site is the largest known manor building from the Golden Horde period (Zilivinskaya 2019: 126-128). This multi-room house had outer walls made of fired bricks with half-timbered interior walls. Due to its partial destruction, its dimensions can only be roughly estimated. It was 32.5 m long and its width probably did not exceed 40 m. The central section was occupied by a suite of ceremonial rooms starting from a wide entrance with steps (Fig. 4). The doorway led to the lobby that contained L-shaped *sufas* followed by a distribution vestibule connected via two passageways into the central hall.

The hall's plan was rectangular and extended along a north-south axis which measured 15.8 × 9.4 m. Its southern section had a raised platform paved with bricks on lime mortar. In the hall's center section were narrow *sufas* extending along the walls. To the north was another raised platform larger in area than the southern one. From the east and west of this platform, passages led to the northern rooms. *Sufas* surrounded the decorated floor on all four sides; in the center of the floor was a large *tashnau*<sup>11</sup> (Fig. 5). The floor was paved with two types of tiles. First, were large square slabs placed as a border along the edge of the floor, a square bordered *tashnau* lay in the center with paths running from the corners of the square that formed a cross-shaped design. The space between these paths was filled with hexagonal brick tiles with the space around the *tashnau* laid with ordinary bricks. The walls of the hall were decorated with large mosaic panels consisting of gilded polychrome figures. Two more rooms lay to the north of the hall, and probably on the south side as well, which would have been the vestibule and *iwan*.



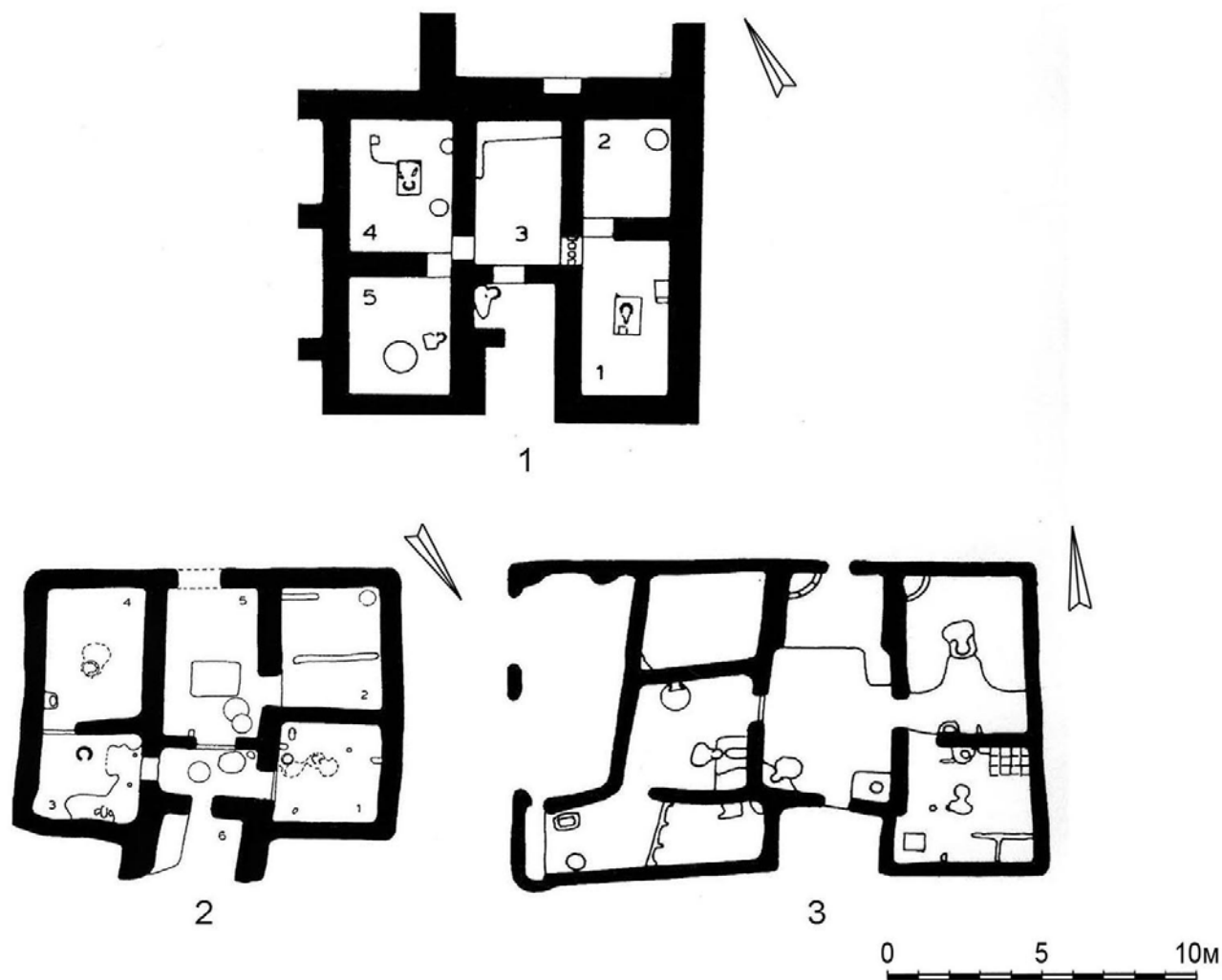
Ил. 6. Здание на городище Акчий, план (Заурова 1977)

Rooms arranged in rows along a north-south axis adjoined the ceremonial section of the palace from the west and the east. In total, about 35 residential and auxiliary rooms were examined. In addition to the usual rooms with a *sufa* and a *kan*, a home bakery with several *tandoors*, a pantry with millstones for grinding grain, a bathroom, and a children's room, or nursery, were found. The nursery was identified by the many children's drawings that were scratched on the plastered walls. The rooms were connected to each other via corridors and attached vestibules.

Palace buildings of a similar layout with a central main hall were examined at the Akhtuba archaeological site in southern Russia (Plakhov 2008). Similar buildings are also known in Central Asia. Specifically, is the palace complex from the 14th-15th centuries on the Akchiy archaeological site (Fig. 6) in Kyrgyzstan (Zaurova 1977: 106-127). It seems to me that our building from the Otrar oasis can be compared with such buildings.

The building layouts with a central hall from the Golden Horde examples generally have many comparisons within Central Asia, the place from where it was probably adopted (for more on this see, Zilivinskaya 2019: 154-165). Several houses with a similar layout have been excavated at the archaeological site at Krasnaya Rechka in Kyrgyzstan (Kozhemyako 1967: 53-90; Baipakov 1986: 154). These houses were

<sup>11</sup> Ed. Note: A *tashnau* is a drain for water with an absorbing well under it.



Ил. 7. Усадебные дома Хорезма: 1 – дом № 2 в урочище Дарьялык-куль; 2 – дом № 2 в урочище Айгельды; 3 – дом № 18 в поселении Акча-Гелин (Неразик 1976)

owned by wealthy elites and date to the 10th-12th centuries. In plan they are almost perfectly square. The structures' entrances lead to a small vestibule, which is connected to the hall with a narrow corridor. Sofas were extended along the walls of the hall, and the walls were decorated with carved alabaster panels and plaster painted in various colors. Along the building's perimeter are residential rooms, also facing the central hall. The author of the excavation report interpreted the hall as a ceremonial room for the reception of guests (Kozhemyako 1967: 85, 86).

There are similarities between Golden Horde houses of this type and the rural manor house of Khorezm from the 12th-13th centuries. (Nerazik 1976 74-81, 89-90, 94-96). Among these buildings, E.E. Nerazik described houses with a central hall and houses with a central corridor (Nerazik 1976: 182-183). The first type is represented by houses with a centric plan whose basic composition comprised a square or rectangular central hall. The manor houses

of Khorezm had a central hall that usually did not exceed the size of its other rooms. Functionally, it served as either a distribution vestibule, corridor, or utility room with fireplaces. Based on its proportions and room locations, the houses "with a central corridor" more resemble the Golden Horde houses (Fig. 7). Walls divided them into approximately three equal parts. The rooms' middle line was marked by a very elongated, wide corridor with entrance vestibules on each side. The remaining rooms, as in the Golden Horde houses, were located on both sides of this corridor and connected to it, making their structure identical with the above example. The rooms labeled "corridors" by Elena Nerazik were identical in their location and proportions as their "central halls." This inaccuracy of defining a wide elongated central room as a corridor was noted by Sergey Khmel'nitsky. He suggested calling these type buildings, three-part plan houses (Khmel'nitsky 1997: 100-103). These include houses of the Kavut-Kala oasis (No. 1, 43, and

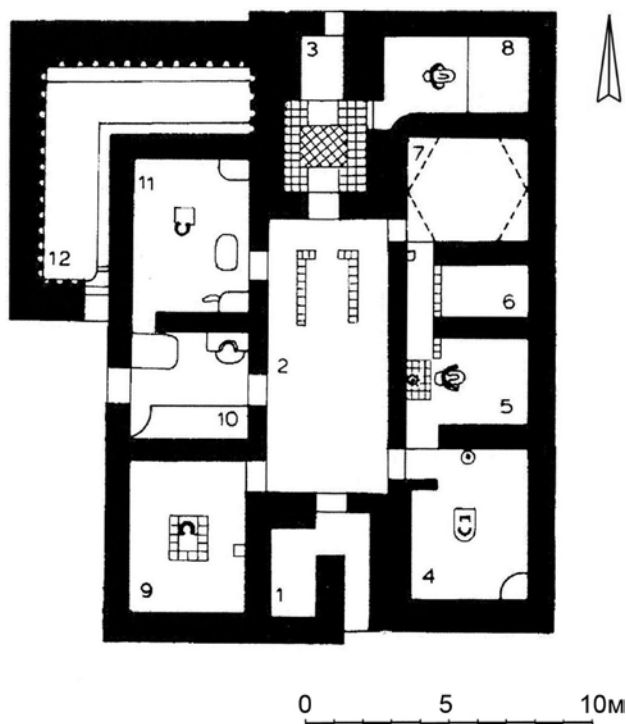


60); the house designated No. 2 at the large residential complex in the Daryalyk-kul area; and houses 2 and 18 at the Aigeldy site of the Akcha-Gelin settlement (Nerazik 1976: 77-79, 94-95, 97-99, 133-134; Khmel-nitsky 1997: 100-106).

Despite their distinct similarities in layout, there are several differences between the Golden Horde and Khorezm houses, such as the use of different building materials (mud brick as opposed to *pakhsa*, or rammed earth) and different interior designs. But the main difference is the perceived organization of the building space. In the Golden Horde, manor house entrances faced south and their central axis ran along a north-south line. The manor houses of Krasnaya Rechka had their main entrances on either the west side (house No. 1) or the northeast or northwest sides (houses No. 3 and 5) (Kozhemyako 1967: 55, 77, 85). In the rural estates of Khorezm, the corridor had a north-south or northwest-southeast orientation; but the main entrance of the two were either from the southern and southeastern sides (house No. 60 at the Kavat-Kala oasis, house No. 1 at Daryalyk-Kul, house No. 18 at Akcha-Gelin); or north and northwestern sides (house No. 43 at the Kavat-Kala oasis, building No. 2 at Aigeldi) (Nerazik 1976: 74, 79, 90, 94, 97, 133). In house No. 41 at Kavat-Kala, the corridor extended in a latitudinal direction with the main entrance on the west side (Nerazik 1976: 79).

The central room's function was also different. In Khorezm, the central hall or corridor was used as a utility or distribution room, while the guest room (*mekhmonkhana*) was located in one of the side rooms. In the Golden Horde, the central room served as a ceremonial space and representative part of the building, or a hall for large receptions although ceremonial rooms were also among the other rooms for lesser events. Perhaps, these small halls were similar in purpose to the *mekhmonkhana* of Central Asian houses. As for the central hall, in all manor houses, the main entrance was on the south side with the owner of the estate's seat (designated with a *sufa* covered by a canopy or ceremonial *iwan*) was placed on the north side.

Such spatial organization in residential buildings was a typical Mongolian tradition. Even today, Mongolian yurts are still placed with a door to the south, and their northern section is considered the most honorable (Zhukovskaya 1988: 16). The ceremonial halls of palace buildings in Mongolia had a similar structure based on the ceremonial receptions described by William of Rubruck and Marco Polo (*Puteshestviya v vostochnye strany* 1957: 159; *Marco Polo* 1999: 133-135). In Mongolian palaces, the entrance was on the southern side, and the raised platform where the owner of the house sat was on the north side. Guests and family members sat in places



Ил. 8. Усадебный дом № 43 оазиса Кават-кала в Хорезме (Неразик 1976)

along the sides. According to Rubruck, the center of the hall had a representative fountain in the form of a tree made of precious metals pouring forth wine. Marco Polo described a golden bowl supplied by a barrel of wine. Thus, the spatial organization of the ceremonial hall in the manor houses of the Golden Horde corresponds to that of the Mongolian royal palaces. Construction techniques and architecture of these Mongolian palaces adhered to Chinese traditions (Minert 1990), while those of the Golden Horde followed Central Asian traditions.

Indicative was the redevelopment in one building with a central corridor at the Kavat-Kala oasis (house No. 43) during the Golden Horde period (Nerazik 1976: 80-82). In pre-Mongol times, the building's main entrance was on the north and led to an ornately decorated vestibule that connected an elongated distribution hall. In the hall's southern section was an exit to the courtyard proceeding through a small vestibule. Between the 13th-14th centuries, the structure was rebuilt with the passageway traversing through the front northern lobby and the building connected with the street only through the small and narrow southern lobby. In the hall's northern section, a U-shaped structure with fired brick walls was erected (Fig. 8). Elena Nerazik interprets this structure as the "place of honor" for the house's owner (Nerazik 1976: 82). The assumption is that this U-shaped wall imitates the ceremonial *iwan*. A similar structure was discovered in the ceremonial hall of the Akchiy estate

(Fig. 9). Thus, taking the Central Asian layout for its basic design, the Mongols reworked it and adapted it to their ideas concerning building structure and the spatial organization of rooms intended for official celebrations.

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- Therefore, during the Golden Horde period, manor houses with a central hall designed for receptions and various official events were built not only in the central region of the Golden Horde of the Lower Volga, but also on the territory of Khorezm.
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