

## "THE EMERGENCE OF THE FIRST QALAS AND QORGONS"

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### Abstract

This article is dedicated to the study of the formation and evolution of fortified architecture—qala and qorgon—in Central Asia, from the Lower and Late Stone Ages to the Early Feudal period. Based on archaeological research conducted in modern-day Uzbekistan—Teshik-Tash, Omon-Qo‘ton, Obirahmat, Jonboz 4, Oltintepa, Kuykirilgan Qala, and others—the article analyzes the structural characteristics of the first fortified settlements, their roles in socio-cultural development, as well as their connections with religious practices and societal structures.

**Keywords:** fortified architecture, qala, qorgon, Stone Age, Neolithic, Central Asia, archaeology, Jonboz 4, Kuykirilgan Qala.

### Introduction

Fortified structures such as qala and qorgon form a key part of the material culture of ancient Central Asia. Their origin and development span tens of thousands of years—from the Paleolithic and Neolithic periods to the formation of complex urban centers during feudalism. This article outlines the key stages of architectural development, including construction systems, planning, symbolic meanings, and religious functions.

Paleolithic and Neolithic: Preconditions for Fortified Architecture

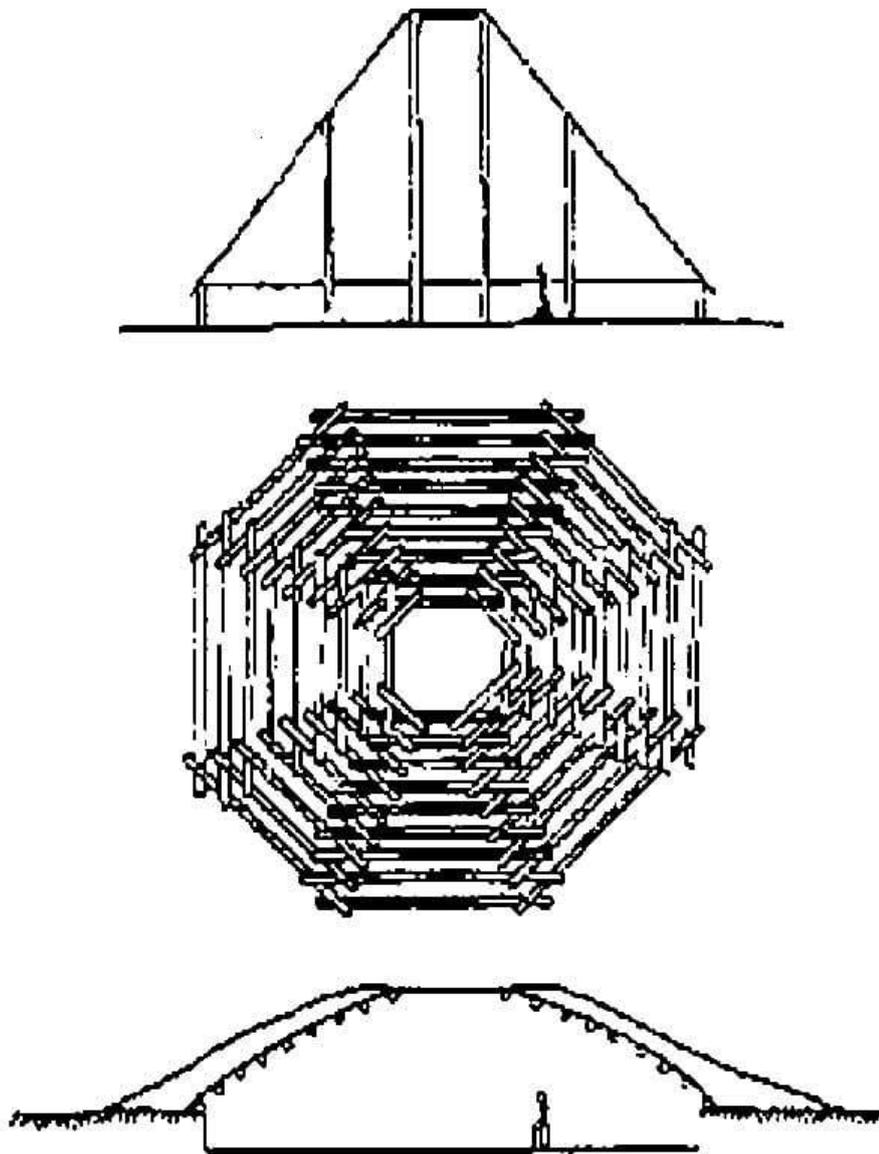
- Lower and Late Stone Age (40,000–12,000 BCE)

Sites in Samarkand, such as near the kindergarten lake and the "Dynamo" area, yielded primitive burial-dwelling forms from the Mousterian complex (associated with the Valdai glaciation). Crude dugouts and hearth-like pits indicate the earliest stages of organized shelter and temporary fortifications.

- Neolithic Period (4th–3rd millennium BCE)

The widespread use of ceramics with open, arched, and wavy patterns is linked to cultural influences from the Altai, Iran, and Mesopotamia. At Jonboz 4, a large "chayla" (hunter-fisherman communal house, 290×17 m) housed up to 100–125 people, centered around a ritual hearth—indicating early social organization and cultic practices.





*"The Structure of the Jonboz 4 Qala"*

#### Late Copper and Bronze Ages: Formation of Fortified Architecture

- Large Settlements of the 5th–4th Millennium BCE

Settlements such as Kora-Tepe, Kuksur, Oltintepa, and Namozgohtepa were home to hundreds or thousands of people. Ceramic workshops, stamp kilns, and double-row housing emerged. Oltintepa featured a stepped tower (28 m high), resembling a Mesopotamian ziggurat—evidence of growing social and religious hierarchy.

- Rise of Statehood (2nd–1st millennium BCE)

A peak occurred in the 9th–7th centuries BCE with the appearance of “perimeter-fortified cities” such as Vara, Qal’a-i Qir, and Kuzali Qir. Surrounded by 7–12 km-long walls, these cities featured labyrinthine layouts, watchtowers, and slits for observation and ventilation—showing advanced urban planning and symbolic defense of both population and livestock.

#### The Emergence of Early Fortress-Cities

- Kuykirilgan Qala (4th–3rd centuries BCE)

A quadrilateral fortress (200×170 m) with double walls, embrasures, and a central square. Its layout and function represent a typical **qala** system with administrative, defensive, and ritual aspects. Likely served as an observatory or fire-temple (proto-ziggurat) with religious significance.

- Toprak Qala (1st–6th centuries CE)

A walled complex (500×350 m) featuring three arches, a central fire-based structure, and radially spreading streets. It reflects early centralization of authority and cultic rituals symbolized through its architecture.

Early Feudal Period (5th–8th Centuries CE)

- Post-4th century CE:

Following the collapse of centralized systems, tribal administrative centers called feudal ko'shks (fortified palaces) began to appear. These were surrounded by earth embankments, fortifications, water intake systems, and food storage—indicative of an emerging feudal authority structure.

- Arks and Residential Complexes:

By the 5th–7th centuries, cities were divided into three zones:

1. Ark (citadel),
2. Shahrstan (residential/trade area),
3. Rabad (outer craft and artisan zone).

In Afrasiab (5th–6th centuries), several palace structures with wall paintings were discovered, associated with the ruling dynasty (dated via liturgical and epigraphic evidence).

Conclusion

The evolution of fortified architecture in Central Asia reflects a transition from spontaneous housing in the Stone Age to complex fortified cities (qala and qorgon). This process was marked by:

1. Technological Progress – from earthen shelters to brick walls and towers;
2. Social Institutionalization – from communal dwellings to centralized urban power centers;
3. Cultural Synchronization – with neighboring regions (Mesopotamia, Iran, Hittites, Greeks) through shared architectural motifs and technologies;
4. Urban Specialization – with planning segmented by function;
5. Feudal Transformations – emergence of fortified palaces and centralized administration.

Ultimately, fortified architectural systems laid the foundation for the urban legacy of Central Asia, influencing the development of early medieval cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Panjikent.

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