

civilization brightened in this part of the ancient East. So that, there are ritual ceremonies like marriage, child birth, national and religious feasts, endowments, slaughtering and mourning which evidence some signals of the old time beliefs and traditions. The remains of the architectural works and ornamental arts, urbanization, painting, miniatures, writing and handicrafts in the Islamic period in particular from 13th to 17th centuries reflecting the age of the greater Iran's magnificence which even the long dominance of communism was not able to eradicate it entirely; however, today the people and states of the region have already made endeavors to revive its past cultural and artistic richness.

#### Endnote

1. J. Marquart
2. V. V. Bartold
3. This research is part of a review of the best works in the ancient land of Khorasan which is the new perspective of its civilization and art.
4. Tradition of sacrificing a cock was held beside the holy well located in the roof of the mosque and the victim's blood was poured out water. (Mosque of Hazrat Khidr (AS), Samarkand, Central Asia Expedition, 2010).

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for Siavash and his birthday in spring, Rostam and dragon, chess-play and Ferdosi's Shahnameh may be mentioned (Rice, 1993: 98 - 99). Moreover, the scenes of Takhte-Nard playing (Fig.5), battle of Rostam with Div (Fig.6) and the spring feast (Fig. 7) Existed on the wall-drawings of Panjkent which are now kept in museums. The abstract sculpturing in the Kharazm rulers' palaces like the goddess riding a lion and ornamenting Studans are of the most significant

Soqdi paintings remained healthier and captured from Panjkent (Fig. 8). There are some pieces of these wall-drawings available in the Dushanbe national museum resembling much the paintings of Khaje Mountain in Sistan and the Buddhist wall-drawings in the temple-caves of Ajanta in India. The applied colors in all these works are gold, hard blue, red, white, black and partially green which have made of minerals and vegetated materials.



Fig.8. Part of the ossuary of bole and the repaired motif, the region of Bia Naiman. Four motifs probably belonged to the religious personalities completely inspired by Western's style. One of them holds a container for sacrificing. Neighbor of him may be crowned a Zoroastrian priest or a king. The four men standing under small pillared arches. fifth, sixth or even seventh Centuries. Based on author's opinion, these four people are two men in the middle and two women (probably goddesses) on both sides of the men, with a long skirt and crown. Source: Rice, 1993:89.

## Conclusion

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The territory called the middle Asia, in the past, had covered a vast area of the greater Iran consisted of Khorasan and Transpotemia. Different ethnicities with varied races and faiths have lived in this extended land for centuries and created great civilizations and arts. There are the works of the Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Christian and Islamic arts and cultures depicting temple architecture, palaces, aristocratic houses and castles. Other artifacts like wall-drawings, engravings, gigantic sculptures in temples, applied arts and ornaments such as containers, objects and tools and devices reveal the remarkable characteristics of this magnificent civilization. These works are the expresses of a huge civilization and art which have been created centuries before Islam in main parts of the ancient East and have taken the privileged greatness and excellence.

The rich cultural and artistic fields of the expansive territory of Khorasan and Transpotemia after Islam and the new religious measures have made to form and create novel genres of architecture on the basis of the religious performance and new thinking, and have waged evolutions in particular in the architectural ornamentation, paintings and so many artifacts. Continuity and metamorphosis of the Iranian arts and civilization in the Islamic period have been one of the characteristics of the Iranian-Islamic arts and

in Afrasiab has been the Verekhsha, Balalik Tape and Panjkent palaces and other nonreligious places (Frumkin & Grguar, 1993: 199); (Fig.4). The wall-drawings have been for ornaments of the architectural surfaces reflecting application of local and natural colors with exposed black and red colors. The themes of such wall-drawings are varied. The Sassanid painting tradition has lasted for much time locally and in other countries and has inspired in many cases the next generations. The impacts of such art are still observed in the wall paintings of the Safavid palaces in Qazvin and Esfahan after thousand years.

The wall-drawings of "Panjkent" in the palaces, temples and aristocrats' houses are of valuable artifacts of the middle Asia. The pictorial language of these wall-drawings proved to be rich and varied in which there are court-mythological scenes. The captured objects from Panjkent, either from temples or private houses, both reflect frequent variety in the field of religious beliefs. Some of paintings extracted from temples support the severe dependence to the

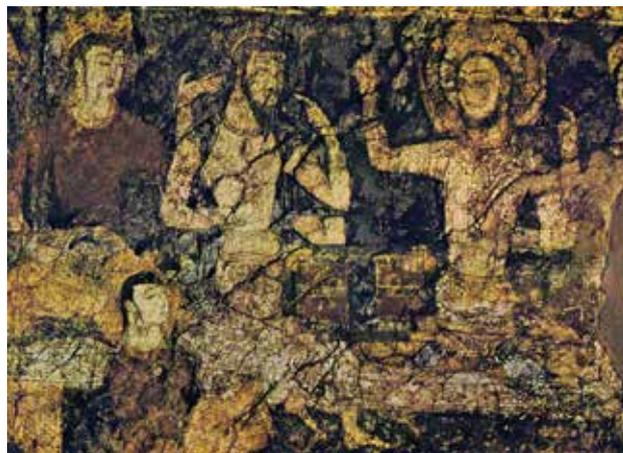


Fig.5. Part of the mural, people are playing backgammon, Panjakent, Tajikistan. Source: Bussagli, 1978: 44.

rites of memorial for ancestors and its ceremonies. The mourning scenes for dead, special guesing of dead and ritual dances have most probably been gotten from those temples endowed to such rituals. Out of the wall-drawings, the mourning ceremony



Fig.6. Rostam fights Dave, part of the Panjakent wall paintings, the seventh century, the Hermitage Museum , Leningrad. Source: Bussagli, 1978: 44.



Fig.7. Part of the mural, Nowruz or spring festival, Panjakent, Tajikistan. Source: Belenitskii, 2011 .



Fig 4A



Fig 4B

Fig.4. afrasiab wall-painting, Samarkand. Source A: <http://meros.org/en/wonder/view?id=32>  
B: <https://commons.wikimedia.org>

works in the Buddhist temple-caves and palaces including wall drawings, engravings and statues, containers and faithful objects, warfare and small statues extracted from graveyards, reflecting the remarkable culture and civilization in an important part of the ancient East which now called the middle Asia or central Asia. In the past time, these regions were called the greater Khorasan and Transpotemia. History of painting and wall drawing in the central Asia dated back to the most ancient era till Paleolithic age such as the rock-engravings of Zarotsai (south Uzbekistan), wall-drawings of Pesjik Tape (south Turkmenistan) which belong to the Neolithic age and frequently evidenced with the Buddhist pictures in the middle Asian paintings.

In the Achaemenian era, besides the court art that has been fully under foreign influence and alienated for people, there was a type of public art which has long resisted strongly against the Greek influence. The Paintings of this period and the Sassanid era with aristocratic-court themes, sometime religious that have mixed with some elements of the nature made coverage of walls and ceilings ornamentally. Since most buildings has ruined, the pieces paintings are now kept in the museums and some of the works have only registered in the historical and archaeological reports. The museum of Samarkand and national museum of Dushanbe have kept some of these wall paintings. The Koushanian period has a special importance in the middle Asian history of art. The critical and key positions of this art situated in Sorkh Kotal – south Balkh – northern Afghanistan



Fig.2. Charminar School, Bukhara, Uzbekistan, Photo: Mohammad Askarzadeh , Archive of NAZAR research center, 2012

and Kalchian - north Balkh (south Uzbekistan). The Koushani art with Buddhist works “AkBashim” and “Agha Tape” have revealed the brilliant art of “Balalik Tape”, “Verekhsha, in particular, Panjkent (Belenitskii,1985: 250-254) . In the Afrasiab region of Samarkand, some wall paintings of the seventh century have been discovered displaying the schematics of those residential housings and a scene of wedding ceremony. The theme of paintings



Fig.3. A view of the ancient city of Kiva, adobe and brick buildings decorated with tiles turquoise , Uzbekistan , Photo: Mohammad Askarzadeh , Archive of NAZAR research center, 2012.

contents compatible with the earlier Islam. Hence, today, in most religious places of the middle Asia like graveyards of sofists and religious figures, the mosques and pilgrim places are witnessing presence of the sacred water and plants around which peoples do their endowments and slaughtering; tie their wants to plants' branches, drop moneys and demands into springs and wells, like the Naghshbandi pilgrim place (Fig.1). In the Khaje Abdullah Droun's graveyard and the Chaharmenar school or graveyard (Fig.2). The KhajeAhrarVali's graveyard and Khanghah and other mosques, graveyards and Khanghahs, in the various middle Asian cities, there are beautiful environments in connection with sacred and old watersheds and plants creating quiet, spiritual and mysterious atmosphere, and since then they have remained standstill within the context of current rituals and traditions among the people. Today, preservation of these values and renovation of these places are of the major and current planning of the newly independent states. Survival and strength of the long lasting culture, in spite of troubles and religious conflicts in the course of time, imply the depth and dynamism of thoughts and beliefs which manifested in the viable and eternal civilization and art. What has lasted permanently in the lives of the middle Asian people with respect to their ancient beliefs and subsequent continuity, rested on the virgin and simple forms of the ideological life remembering the past Iranian environments?

## Arts in the Middle Asia

In the ninth and eleventh centuries which signified by fundamental changes in arts, the ancient traditions together with growth of the paintings and monumental statutes have overlooked. At the same time of the changes, the ornamental style emerged and in the tenth century, the art and culture in the central Asia have particularly characterized gradually by the people inhabited in the region and their effectiveness from neighboring countries. Existence of religious buildings like mosque, school, Khanghah, cathedral or resting places of dervishes and travelers, nonreligious buildings such as residential housings, palace, caravanserai, bazaar and the dual-used religious and nonreligious complexes like graveyard, have rendered a unique perspective to the middle-aged cities of the central Asia. The most remarkable complexes have located in Kiva and Bukhara. (Pugachenkova & Khakimov, 1993: 3). The ancient city of Kiva with clay and brick buildings and tile ornaments surrounding in the ancient castle, display and preserve its past magnificent and represent the tradition and Iranian-Islamic endogenous city (Fig.3).

In the old buildings, palace, temple and house, there has been a tradition to be ornamented with colorful drawings and engravings. Theme of the wall paintings has been varied based on various place, function and beliefs and faith. The remained artistic



Fig.1. Naqshband shrine sacred tree, Bukhara, Uzbekistan, Photo: Shohreh Javadi,

Archive of NAZAR research Fig.2. Charminar School, Bukhara, Uzbekistan, Photo: Mohammad Askarzadeh , Archive of NAZAR research center, 2012. center, 2012.

in the past had been a part of the vast land of Iran and the greater Khorasan territory. In the Tsarist Russian encyclopedia, "Dictionary of Encyclopedia", there is not a term of the middle Asia as an area or a geographical region with a political unit, but we observe two titles of Turkistan and Transpotemia in it (Belenitskii, 1985: 10-11). The Soviet Uzbek scientists call Tajikistan, Kirgisitan and South Kirgisitan as the central Asia. Other world researchers and scientists recognize East Turkistan, Mongolia and Tibet as the central Asia. The term the middle Asia has been fabricated by Russians with a political intention in 1924 in order not to be taken with the central Asia by mistake. Samarkand and Bukhara has been a part of Tajikistan earlier, but the communist Russian policies made it that today these two Muslim and Persian speaking towns situated in Uzbekistan. To see how they had created the middle Asian republics and how the Iranian culture and language solely limited to Tajikistan, and how they had separated Samarkand, Bukhara, Marv and many cities from the Iranian political and cultural sphere, how they had broken the cultural bonds among Tajiks and with the mother Iranian culture by changing the Persian script to Russian, all need to be deeply investigated by researchers in order to disclose those plots and tricks (Ibid: 13-15).

Despite the traitorousness and oppressions imposed in the inhabitants of the region for a long time, most people, especially adults, tend to protect and maintain their beliefs and traditions and, following getting independence and freeing from crisis if the communist-fascist regime, they have attempted to revive their cultural and artistic heritage.

## Religions in the Middle Asia

Historical resources, the remained evidence of the middle Asian tangible and intangible cultural heritage indicate that before the Islamic period, worship of Mehr (sun), Anahita and Zoroastrian rituals have been prevailed in the region. At the same time, Buddhism has been presented strongly so that some of their temples still existed and many artworks and the Buddhist outstanding stonework are kept in the national museums of the region.

The central Asia has been a shelter for followers of various religions and from here, naturally a common faith has been created of all existing faiths. Such a tendency has been expressed in the religious and artistic buildings of Panjkent including two temples which their unusual drawing do neither resemble a fire place nor a Buddhist temple (Rice, 1993: 255-257). Thus, probably, the temples were relating to worship of Mehr and Anahita that had been prevailing at pre-Zoroastrian era. In addition, there had been objects explored either from temple or from private houses both support the existing of frequent variety of religious beliefs (Ibid).

The small female statues and rites and traditions among the people at the time being, representing the ceremony of worshipping Anahita, the god of fertility, water and plant. The spiritual architecture relating the worshipping places have transformed gradually and consistent with the new faith, but existing rituals and rites we are now witnessing, have had genuine and ancient roots upon which the ancestors' beliefs and traditions could be understood and observed its continuity. Although the Iranian and Turk ethnic groups have had strong presence in Khorasan and Transpotemia from the ninth century and had combined culture and art with respect to their naturalistic, Buddhist and sometime Christian beliefs and rites, but, at the dawn of Islam, They have begun to be resolved; "*sacredness of the nature's elements, in particular, water and plant which had been important and vital for Iranians, reserved their sanctity at light of the new religion and the tradition and rites respecting water and plant have remained alive*". Worship of the nature's elements such as sun, moon and water which had been the same as Mitra and Anahita, lighting goodness, light of sun, streaming water and fertility symbol, had been common in the Arian people inhabited in the region. It has been continued somehow in the Islamic era; so that the Mehr's traditions and rites had merged with the mystic and sofist practices and developed suffering, isolationism, secret rituals and pilgrimage progress. The traditions of endowment, slaughtering and attachment to the female fertility and water goddess have also continued with preserving its old appearance and forms but having the new

land in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan where some researchers recognize as the place of birth of Avesta. Deh-khoda's dictionary in keyword "Kharazm" denotes it as cradle of Arian people. "Kiva" (the center of Kharazm) situated in today's Turkmenistan has already retained its name throughout the Islamic era and until now. (Le Strange, 2007: 479).

Soqd includes the ancient region of Afrasiab (Markand) that today situated in Uzbekistan and Samarkand. The state of Soqdis now the most important state of Transpotamia or Vararud of which its two big cities, i. e. Samarkand and Bukhara recognized for their ancient civilization and outstanding cultural heritage. Achaemenians, Solukids, Ashkanians, Koushanians, Haitians, Turks and Sassanids have reigned in this region (Zamani Mahjoub & Salehi, 2011: 53).

Forgana is a valley situated in the course of Sirdarya where is restricted to China's Turkistan and its surroundings bordered by TianShan mountains. Today, Forgana has segmented in three sections in the countries of Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Kirkizistan (Mosahab, et. al., 2002: 1880). At that time, the capital of the country named Ousrouchna (today's Uratapeh) (KarimianSardashti, 2002: 82).

### •Samarkand

The oldest name for Samarkand has appeared in the book "Iranian Towns" which was in the Pahlavi language or the middle Persian translated into Persian in early Islam. The writing of this book is in harmony with other Pahlavi and the Islamic era resources such as Shahnameh and History of Tabari. The towns and places appeared in the book are: Samarkand, Balkh, Navazak, Kharazm, Marvrud, Herat... (Avarzamani, 2014: 40 - 41).

A coin from Anoushirvan of Sassanid forged in Samarkand now kept in a museum in Armenia (Ibid: 133). Samarkand and its foundation dated back to the mythological era of Keykavous, son of Qubad of Sassanid (Daryae, 2009). This town had been conquered by Alexander in 328 BC and came in history from legacy. In the seventh century, the town had occupied by the Islamic army and become a great cultural center in the Samanid period which had lasted by the Seljuk era. In the seventh century, it was ruined by Mongols and reconstructed in the Timor

period. In twelfth century, Samarkand has doomed and controlled by China; finally, it has fallen in the Russia's hand in thirteenth century (Blunt, 1984: 13-12). Role of the city-garden of Samarkand as one of a territorial landscaping methods is considerable by affecting substantially in shaping the Iranian gardens (Heidarnataj, 2009: 10).

The mosque of Khizr had a history in the ancient period; today it situated in the ancient part of the town (Afrasiab zone) and on the top of a hill and there is a monumental building in the memory if Khizr was told that he stepped down here. According to the Iranian embassy in Tashkent (2012), primarily there had been an idol house; by proceeding of the Islam army, the idols had been broken and that place has become a mosque. Moreover, according to the book of "Kandia" describing the history of Samarkand, before Islam, there had been an idol on top of the town and those people who had come to it, could see it from a far distance, and those people who had gone out of the town, they has stepped down against the idol till it disappeared from the sight. (Samarqandi, 1988).

The current evidence in the mosque and some rituals performed there could reveal its great old age dating back to pre-Islamic period and when there had been a temple erected. "Construction of small statues of Anahita in the land of Afrasiab had been common by which usually the God had been shown with a pomegranate in its hand" (Rice, 1993:90).

Old Penjkent, a small habitable town of Soqidian had been of the most important ancient centers of the central Asia located in a mountainous region and in the coastline of the Zarafshan River and bordered with Samarkand. Penjkent had been previously in Tajikistan, but today it is in Uzbekistan. From fifth and sixth centuries, QalaShahi, the main city or town and suburb and graveyard had been a massive township surrounded by earth fill.

### Geopolitics of the Middle Asia in the Period of Communism

Larger portion of the central Asia is a nice land of the Persian speaking people including Tajikistan and Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan republics which

of Khorasan and Transpotamia had situated on the Silk Road. This cultural-geographic road was the pathway of compromise, exchange of ideas, thoughts and culture and art. This strategic way has been tying the civilization spheres of Iran, India, China and Mesopotamia and played the role of the world linkages of 2nd century to the year of 576 (Afshar, 2010).

In the sixth century BC, significant part of the central Asia had been occupied by the Achaemenian powerful state. In the third century BC, the Greeks' government had fallen and in the fourth century BC, the Alexander's army conquered there. Since then, rise of Ashkanians (in the southern Turkistan, Iran and part of Mesopotamia) and also emergence of the occidental Greek dynasty, later Koushani dynasty, in addition to the occidental, expanded its reign to large sections of the region (from Transpotamia in the north to Indus rivers and Ganges in the south), and Kangiu state (Kharazm, Sokdian and the northern areas) was included. From cultural-historical view, this time was the beginning of establishment and development of the ancient local traditions which had been blossomed by two factors: first, the internal social achievement, and second, its encounter with the Greek states dominated in Iran and India (Pugachenkova & Khakimov, 1993).

From the fifth century AD and at the time of Sassanid, it had been for the first time that we encounter in a part of the middle Asia with Turks Turkish-speaking people who had proceeded to Amodarya. By arriving this new wave, the region's circumstances have witnessed changes anthropologically, culturally and politically and found new names.

Following arrival of Islam to Iran, in a short time, the greater Khorasan and Transpotamia went under the Islam's umbrella that their inhabitants were the guardians of Islamic civilization against assault if invaders (Taqavi, 1994). In the third century, the entire region was called Khorasan and there was no name of Transpotamia and Turkistan was out of the region too, and now it is on the side of China. "Guy le Strange" wrote about Khorasan: "in the older Persian, it means oriental. In general, in the early middle ages, this name called on all Islamic states in the east of the Desert of Lut to the India Mountains. Thus, it was included all Transpotamian lands in the

northeast except Sistan and Qahestan in the south. Khorasan, in the Arabs period, included Nishabour, Marv, Herat and Balkh" (Le Strange, 2007: 4-8). The Arab geographers, like Ibn Khardabeh, Ibn Hoqal and Estakhri in the Middle Ages called all the eastern parts of Iran as a place where the sun rises from. But this name in our time called for the eastern states of Iran (Grousset & Masse, 2002: 30). After the tenth century, Transpotamia was called the lands beyond the river before; the land where has been named "Varazrud" in the language of Farsi Dari:

*If you do not know the language Pahlavi, know that the Varazrud is called in Arabic Transpotamia*

and main localities and cities have been registered as Soqd, Samarkand, Bokhara, Khojand, Ousrouchna (Uratapeh in Tajikistan); (n.p., 1965: 13).

## Ancient Regions in the Middle Asia

In the old geography of the middle Asia, 16 areas have been mentioned according to "Vandidad"<sup>1</sup>- Irianveje 2- Soqda (Soqd) 3- Moru (Marv) 4- Bakhzi (Balkh) 5- Nisaya (Nesa) 6- Herayo (Herat) 7- Vaikerta (Kabul) 8- Avrud (Ghazni) 9- Vahrekan (Gorgan) 10- HerHuvati (Rokhj) 11- Eitoment (Vadi Helmand) 12- Rega (Rey) 13- Shakhra (Shahrud) 14- Varneh (Gilan) 15- Hept Hindu (Punjab Hindu) and 16- the states along with the river (Ranhe). (Avarzamani, 2014: 13- 14). Marv and its village is now in the central Asia for which detailed historical and geographic research has been done. The oldest ruin of the old city is KaferGhaleh (Barthold, 1993: 78-79). Following emerging the new Safavid government in Iran, Marv (with its village) was often under threat by Bukhara and Kiva Uzbeks' invasion, and the Turkmens' as well. Hence, Iranian trade with Transpotamia through the arc road of Herat was under way, and Herat became the most important trading center in central Asia (Ibid).

### •West Turkistan

West Turkistan included Soqd, Forqaneh and Kharazm that integrated with Balkh (large part of today's Afghanistan and south Tajikistan) (Rice, 1993: 72). "Kharazm" is an ancient and large

that reveal the land's significance and authority. Shapour Ravasani in his book "the East Peoples' Unity" (2009) has variety of passages concerning the most ancient civilizations and inhabitants of Iranian plateau to Syria, Egypt, Mesopotamia and India. Rahim Velayati in his book "Study of Archaeological Background of the Middle Asian Countries" has excerpts from the archaeological historical and geopolitical perspectives with pictures of the explored objects from field explorations, and has uncovered to us the unknowns about this vast land and its rich civilization and art. In the book "Iran and Turan Boundaries Based on Shahnameh" written by Hossein Shahidi Mazandarani with an introduction by Fereydoun Joneydi (1999), they have described the Kiani and mythological kings of Iran and the events related to religions, ideologies, cultures and traditions of the people, geographical boundaries, history and the critical events which all have happened in a land where had been for a long time a part of the ancient East and constituted the cultural Iran. Accordingly, today, it is called the Middle Asia and the cradle of a fruitful civilization and a memory of the Iranian greatness and magnificence. Saeed Nafisi in his book "the Prehistoric Social History of Iran and Beginning of History" (2007) has hinted some matters in this field.

Several valuable topics in the book of "Iranians, Romans and Greeks" (Wiesehofer, 2010) includes the ancient history and old east or an advocacy of a world history, also pictures of the East from the Romans' view and pictures of West from Parthian's view in the Augustus and Greeks, Romans and Byzantium periods in the Iranian tradition. It also noted to the controversial cultural relationship between Iranians and Greeks. Bartold has argued in the standings of Iran, Iranians and Iranian civilization in his introduction to the book "A Glance to the Historical Geography of Iran" (1993), and then he has described major cities and locations of Khorasan and Transpotamia which are mainly focused on the history and geography of the Islamic era.

The mentioned sources contain matters regarding the importance of Khorasan and Transpotamia Landor greater Iran which had more applications for a field analysis of samples during a research trip to

the middle Asia in Aug 2010. The findings obtained in a one-month trip accompany with 30 researchers of several disciplines such as architectural, archaeological, perspective architectural, painting and art research in the postgraduate and doctoral levels. The consequent was a comparison of the field findings with the literature that was made new findings. There is also a new pictorial documentation created with appropriate quality.

## Questions

In spite of variety of ethnic inhabitants of the great Khorasan and Transpotamia and emergence of considerable events caused expansive changes in the political, economic and social systems, has this region have ever maintained its unique cultural identity? And to what elements have its identical strength depend on? Could it be the common cultural identity of the land's inhabitants seen a continuing factor of its identity? Which are the important common cultural features in the art and civilization of this land?

## Status of Khorasan and Transpotamia in Geography of the Greater Iran

The land of Iran was the cradle of civilization for centuries. The lights of science and knowledge have been lit from the Iranian land to all over the world. The political hegemony in the East and the economic superiority in the world was in the Iranians' hands (Barthold, 1993: 3). A major portion of the Eastern history should be sought in the greater Iran.

Many researchers have acknowledged that the early position of Arians was Iran in the middle Asian territory and Pamir plateau (Taqavi, 1994: 24). Sometime, it is said that the Arians' place was India and its original name had been "Atiavarta" which meant the land of Arians India at the time of Sassanid had been called "Khuzestan" (Shahidi, 1986: 196). Iran, India, Transpotamia and China had been of the first origins of the world civilizations and the center of the wonders of human thinking (Nadjafi Barzegar, 2009: 151). The extended land

## Introduction

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Iranian civilization was of the most brilliant one in the ancient world that has lasted by the time and situated in a large area of Asia. If we leave contemporary Iran aside, its age reaches to 5 thousand years and to the Pre-aryan era. The divided section of Iran, which has been called earlier the greater Khorasan, and Transpotamia, now situates in the middle Asia and is a significant point in the East where, with a great area, has inhabited variety of ethnic groups with different beliefs in its heartland (Grousset, 1967).

The prehistoric remains were a historic period and magnificent Islamic era in the territory implies greatness and authority of peoples and civilizations of the territory; the invaluable civilization and art inspired from ancient beliefs based on naturalist notions of the Iranian prophet, Zoroaster's period, and then the Islamic civilization and art of which we are already witnessed. Following independence of former Soviet republics that constituted a major part of the greater Khorasan, local governments has much attempted to revive their cultures and arts in order

to reestablish their ancestral brilliance and dignity. Despite the pressures imposed during communism, Iranian friendly and Islamization in this region are still strong. Presence of the Tadjiks, Uzbeks, Turkmens and Kazakhs with various cultures and beliefs but similarities in traditions and rituals with an Eastern color imply their lasting cultural continuity from Parthians, Sassanid authority, and even earlier, in the Khorasan territory where have gone on its survival in the Islamic period.

The aim of this study is to remark factors of arts and civilizations of this land including the ancient Iranian-Islamic heritage which their importance has not been known even the motherland, and elements of shaping and continuity of identity of the land. To enter into this domain, it is necessary to introduce some important and marked points of the geography, history and culture of this land, as basis for further studies, which have remained unclear somehow due to different narratives

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## Background of Study

“The first historical knowledge concerning the middle Asia and its people has been provided to us by “Herodotus”. For this, the most ancient resources are also available from which Avesta, the Zoroastrian holy book, and different Achaemenian King’ tablets and, Bistoon tablet, the most important one are among them. Another ancient source is the Greek physician’s “Ketziar’s memoirs” which was contrary to Herodotus’ and being overlooked at his own time. In the 20th century, Marquart has called it as an ancient epic heroic text and Bartold has undoubtedly introduced it being influenced by “Balkh-Seat” culture” (Belenitskii, 1985: 80 -79).

In introduction of the old geography, there were a description of culture and art, name of towns, current religions and artifacts and architecture of the middle Asia and there is a passage of the book of “Khorasan

and Transpotamia” (Belenitskii, 1985). In which it has introduced concisely the historical era of Iran and Koushanians period. The pictures of the book, mostly black and white, have lack of desirability. The translator’s criticism on the author’s conclusions possesses remarkable notes that are pointed out in this paper.

Another book titled “the Ancient Arts of Central Asia by the Islamic period” wrote by “Talbot Rice” (1993) has offered a history of ethnics settled in the middle Asia introduced the ornamental-applied arts and wall paintings in the Buddhist temples and early Christian churches. The pictures of the book are also black and white and poor quality. “Nader Karimian Sardashti” in his book “Ousrouchna” (2004) has noted from historical and geographic viewpoints to the great and historic land of Ousrouchna in Transpotamia (today’s Uratapeh), its old situation in the Achaemenian and Sassanid era, in the Islamic period and Uratapeh

# The Lost Parts of Iran

## Art and Civilization in the Greater Khorasan and Transpotamia – Middle Asia

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### Abstract

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From a long time, large segments of the middle Asia have been accounted for the vast Iranian and the greater Khorasan territories. In this geographical-cultural region, Iranian and Turk ethnics had inhabited with different rituals and beliefs where they have created magnificent civilization and art in the ancient period and the Islamic era, despite much more disastrous events in the course of time crippled by the inhabitants of the territories, their cultures have remained strongly and consistently. Even though the communist domination in the region had caused heavy plights, but it could not make them totally uncultured; so that the peoples, especially elders and adults have retained their beliefs and traditions. On the other hand, after getting independence and freeing from fascism, they have rapidly taken steps to revitalize their cultural-artistic legacies. The cultural stability in these territories implies its rich background which, like other parts of the motherland, has already fed by roots of cultural identity in spite of harsh political, social and economic transformations, and has been steadily able to survive as a segment of the Iranian cultural integrity. This study reviews the most characteristics of the territory's history of culture.

### Keywords

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Khorasan, The greater Iran, Transpotamia, Art and Culture, Geography, Ritual and belief.