Contributions to Anthropology, Number 14: Central Asia: A History of Cultures, Arts and Architecture

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Central Asia: A History of Cultures, Arts & Architecture

On the occasion of the Twelfth Central & Southwest Asian Studies Conference

Ardi Kia

Central & Southwest Asian Studies Center
Anthropology Department
Note from the Editors:

This publication marks the fourteenth monograph in the Contributions to Anthropology Series, of the Anthropology Department at the University of Montana. The present issue includes a short history of some of the cultural and artistic accomplishments of Central Asia, as well as the cultural heritage of surrounding entities affected by this region. The series editors wish to thank Ken Price, Director of Printing and Graphics Department at the University of Montana, for production of this edition.
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*(The cover page photo: Wall of scholars, Dushanbeh, Tajikistan, by Susie & Rick Graetz)*

*(Back cover page: Scythians/Sakas Tigraxaudas – Scythians/Sakas with sharp pointed helmets in Persepolis offering a horse, bracelets and fabrics to the king Darius, 6th/5th c. BC. Photo by Ardi Kia)*
Preface

Central Asia, with its westward extension into Southwest Asia, is a vast region rich in history, natural resources, and geopolitical importance. The birthplace of many of the ancient world's religions and empires, it was the home to remarkable centers of learning, and the arena of devastating conflicts. Despite its fascinating past and strategic importance, the region is one of the most neglected in the curricula of American colleges and universities. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the increasing American military involvement in the area, the region's significant strategic importance has reemerged.

The University of Montana has emerged as a national and international leader in recognizing the significance of Central & Southwest Asia, and translating that awareness into a major academic program. The program builds on significant faculty experience and expertise in the region, and includes scholars from numerous UM departments. The program has also organized summer study tours for K-12 teachers to Central Asia, and also hosts annual conferences that bring leading scholars, diplomats, analysts and journalists to the campus. The University of Montana offers an undergraduate Minor and an undergraduate Major in Central and Southwest Asian Studies. Arabic, Chinese, and Russian language instruction are also offered. Faculty exchanges have been organized with universities in Russia, China, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Morocco.
Special thanks to President Royce Engstrom, and all the faculty and staff members who have supported our new center at the University of Montana.

This particular monograph includes two articles, and is written exclusively for educational purposes; it is dedicated to my students, who have been my major source of inspiration and support. A special note of thanks also to Susie Graetz and Rick Graetz, for allowing me to include their photographs, to Ken Price, the Director of Printing and Graphics Department at the University of Montana, for production of this edition, and finally, I would like to thank sincerely my family and all wonderful people of Central Asia who have been so kind and helpful to us during our trips, and made us feel at home.

Ardi Kia

Spring 2014
There were large cities, smaller settlements, a system of fortress strongholds with thick walls and towers and enormous burial grounds. The irrigation system, using mountain streams and springs, helped develop the agriculture economy. Craftsmen also played an important role in the city life. The powerful defenses of towns, its complex architecture and planning structure and fine pottery are evidence of the advanced social life and cultural level of the city.” S. P. Tolstov

Central Asian Cultures, Arts and Architecture: A Brief History

This manuscript invites the reader on a journey through time, to explore the multifaceted history of Central Asian cultures, arts and architecture. Through transcontinental passages such as the Silk Road, Central Asia provided links among the major civilizations of China, India, Persia and the Mediterranean, which in turn influenced the characteristics of the region and beyond. In late antiquity, the urban culture of Central Asia was predominantly Iranian, while the steppes were ruled by Scythians/Sakas and Huns, and from the eleventh century AD on, also by Turks. Central Asia was the site of an active and vibrant civilization for centuries prior to the Mongolian massacres of 1220, 1273, 1276, 1279, 1316 and Timurid massacres of 1379 and 1388.

Various religions and cults including Shamanism, Mithraism, Zurvanism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Manichaeism, Nestorian and Malekites Christianity were practiced. In the eighth century AD, an Arab army conquered a large part of Central Asia and introduced Islam. The arts and cultures of Central Asia reflect these rich and varied traditions. The legendary poet Rudaki led the revival of Persian literature in the
city of Bukhara during the golden age of culture and art of the Samanid dynasty (819 – 999). The next golden age arrived during the reign of the Timurids (1336 – 1405), when the city of Samarkand, was filled with great architecture, art, and literature. The Uzbek Shaibanids occupied large portions of Central Asia in the 16th century. By the end of the 17th century, three small Uzbek khanates were ruling parts of Central Asia through 18th and 19th centuries till the year 1920, from the cities of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand. Russians took control of the region in the 19th century and after years of civil war (1917 – 1924), Soviet rule was established. Based on no historical or cultural foundations, Stalin fabricated five new Soviet states (1924 – 1936), which since 1991, are the independent republics of Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.

The eastern part of Central Asia was occupied by twenty-five thousand Chinese Qing Empire (1644 – 1911) forces in 1760. Despite the resistance of the ancient Turks, Uyghurs and other ethnicities to this invasion, Chinese occupation in the east, continued throughout the era of the Republic of China 1911 -1949. In 1949, the region was once again invaded by Mao’s Red Army and was devastated during the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976). The following analysis reflects some of the research conducted by prominent archeologists and historians on the traditional Central Asian cultures, arts and architecture and their relations, interactions and communications with the surrounding entities.
Chapter One

Central Asia: Stone Age

(Early Excavations and Discoveries)

Archeology in Central Asia is still in its early stages and the discovery of many more sites is expected. This study includes research conducted by some of the most prominent archeologists, historians and ethnographers, who have conducted extensive research in Stone Age sites of Central Asia.

Stone Age excavation and research in Kazakhstan was conducted mostly by Chernikov and Okladnikov in the upper Irtysh valley to the east and northeast of Kazakhstan.¹ Paleolithic as well as the Neolithic tools found by the archeologists exceeded 15,000 in quantity. In the Illi valley, to the southeast of Kazakhstan, Akishev found large quantities of tools belonging to the Neolithic period (4th – 3rd millennium BC).² Since 1957, expeditions near the Karatau mountains to the southwest of Kazakhstan, led by Alpysbayev, have yielded rich results.³ Kazakhstan’s Sary-su region, the Moinkum desert, Kzyl-Dzhar, and Karaganda regions are a few of the areas where the Stone Age archeological excavation is being conducted today.

In Kyrgyzstan, Okladnikov, discovered Paleolithic sites in the Naryn district on the On-Archa river.⁴ Other Paleolithic sites in the Alay valley and on the Kyzyl-Su river were excavated by Ranov.⁵ Neolithic sites have been identified in the Chu valley to the north of Kyrgyzstan.
The systematic exploration and excavation of Stone Age sites in Tajikestan was started by two scholars Okladnikov and Ranov in 1953. They explored the Kayrak-Kumy region, which has been the richest area for Paleolithic finds. New Paleolithic sites have been discovered in the northwest and southwest of Tajikestan. Recent discoveries of Neolithic sites are more numerous in the Pamir Mountains.

In Uzbekistan, the oldest sites along the shores of the Akch-Darya, belonged to a Neolithic period population of fishermen and hunters living in dwellings of 100-120 people, were discovered by Tolstov. To the north of present-day Uzbekistan, within the ancient region of Kharazm, the site of Dzhanbas-Kala, on the shore of Amu Darya, was the most important site discovered. It contained a great variety of stone tools and stamped pottery. Kharazm’s Neolithic sites of Kavat and Barak-Tam on the shore of Syr-Darya were also inhabited during the Neolithic period.

In 1938, to the south of Uzbekistan, Okladnikov discovered a cave north of the town of Baysun. A mass of Paleolithic tools and other objects, a skeleton with a well preserved skull, surrounded by six pairs of mountain goat horns were discovered. There are several Paleolithic cave sites, containing many stone tools, on the upper Chirchik discovered by Ranov and Okladnikov.

The earliest excavation of Turkmenistan was conducted by Raphael Pumpelly, an American archeologist pioneer who paved the way for further exploration and research within the region. Pumpelly, concentrated his research in the Anau region, twelve kilometers to the southeast of the present Turkmenistan capital of Eshqabad. The oldest finds of the Stone Age in Turkmenistan were discovered and excavated by Okladnikov, on the eastern shore of the Caspian Sea in the region of Krasnovodsk. The radio-carbon
test of the Stone Age Dam-Dam Chesme cave to the southeast of Krasnovodsk, reveals 6030 (+ or − 240) year-old sites.

**Rock Art:**

Rock paintings, drawings, engravings, and carvings, are found throughout Central Asia. In Kazakhstan, the earliest rock art was found in the south and the east. An engraving of animals recorded in Aktobe, south of Kazakhstan, analyzed and elaborated by Senigova, date partly from the 6th and 5th century BC, and partly from the 1st to 3rd century AD. In 1966, Marikovskiy found rock art, mostly of animals, in the Chulak mountains. Some of the paintings and etchings included profile views of dogs, two-headed goats, and even an elephant. In the Tamgaly mountain pass, southwest of the Chu-Ili range, Maksimova discovered over one thousand engravings identified as belonging to the Saka period, 7th to 5th century BC. In Chirchik valley, south of Kazakhstan, especially in the Bostandy district, Alpysbayev identified quite a number of sites with representations of various animals, from the Saka period of 1st millennium BC. Chernikov, in the hills adjacent to the Irtysh river discovered engraving of animals on the rock, believed to be mostly from the 6th to 1st century BC.

Rock art of early history in present-day Kyrgyzstan is of paramount importance. Zadnerprovskiy, discovered and analyzed drawings at the Airymach-Tau site, eight kilometers from the city of Osh, in Kyrgyzstan. A large quantity of profile-view silhouette drawings of horses from this area were identified to be from the first millennium B.C. Bernshtam, discovered horse images engraved on the rock in Aravan area. There are references in ancient Chinese sources indicating the heavenly horses of the Ferghana valley. Scholars working within this area and discovering horse images on
the rock were reminded of the ancient Chinese sources. In the midst of the Ferghana range, over 3200 meters high, the Saimaly-Tash was discovered in 1903. A number of scholars, including Zima, Bernshtam, and Pomazkina, visited, explored, and analyzed the site, which includes well over one hundred thousand drawings, paintings, and engravings of many generations. Saimaly-Tash images include wild animals, hunting scenes, domesticated animals, and human beings. Bernshtam identifies some of the images as being from the Bronze Age, second to first millennium BC, and others from the 3rd to 8th century AD. In Tajikistan, Ranov in the Pamir area, in the Shakhty caves, discovered rock engravings of the Paleolithic era, among which is a human figure with a bird’s head. Rock engravings were discovered and analyzed by various scholars including Litvinskiy, Mandelshtam, and Ranov along the Zarafshan River in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.

**Babas and/or Balbals:**

A symbolic stone entity ranging from flat, engraved outlines of human faces to more elaborate reliefs, widely dispersed throughout the regions of Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Siberia, Caucasus, the Altai, the Tuva, and Mongolia. They have not been found in Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, or Turkmenistan. Grach, believed that Babas or Balbals were the sculpture of the enemies of the region, eastern Huns or Hephtalites, who occupied the region for over one hundred years and were defeated by an alliance between the Sassanid Persian Emperor Khosrow (Anushervan), and Wetern Turk Khaghan Sinjibu in A.D. 567. Kyzlasov, in his analysis, identified Babas or Balbals as the memorial representations of ancestors or deceased people.
The Stone Age excavations conducted by some of the early scholars in the field suggest the fact that the excavation sites are relatively small and scattered in various regions of Central Asia. It is during the Bronze Age that some of the earliest cultures expand into larger entities affecting surrounding regions and even influencing cultures beyond Central Asia.
Beauty of Loulan, Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Museum, Urumqi. Rick & Susie Graetz
Chapter 2

Central Asia: Bronze Age

Central Asia, consisting of vast expanses of steppe land with fine seasonal pasture, was destined by nature for the development of nomadic cattle breeding. Between the seventh and third centuries B.C. the region was inhabited by a large number of Indo European tribes, called Sakas by the Persians and Scythians by the Greeks. Scythians were Indo European tribes of Iranian stock who lived partly on the steppe and the wooded steppe zone of Central Asia, and partly in its oasis zone.

In the fifth millennium B.C. the ancestors of these Iranian tribes separated from the Proto-Balts and the Proto-Slavs. Their first mass migration occupied during the second millennium B.C., and was connected with the rise of animal husbandry, in particular horse breeding. Following their invention of two and four-wheeled horse drawn vehicles their migration reached, the Caucasus, the shores of the Don and Danube rivers, India, Central Asia, the Iranian plateau, Mesopotamia, the Altai Mountains, and even China and Korea.

Early or ancient cultures of Central Asia are divided into different sub-cultures of Timber Grave, Pit Grave, Scythian/Saka, and Hunnic. The transformation of Timber grave and pit grave to family size mounds or kurgans were characteristics of Bronze Age people especially Scythian/Saka/Siberian cultures of eight century to the third century BC. Scythian/Saka kurgans have been discovered and explored in Altay Mountains, the Caucasus, Ukraine, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Siberian Russia, and many parts of
Central Asia. Hunnic culture dates from the third century BC to the six century AD, and some of the later constructed kurgans are identified to belong to this era.

The ancient inhabitants, the Scythian or Saka, were dependent on animal husbandry as the principal source of livelihood. It also determined their mobile way of life. Raising horses, sheep, and cattle, they moved from one pasture to another. The mobility of their pastoralist lifestyle made great migrations possible. Thus, massive waves of nomadic Scythians rolled beyond the boundaries of the Eurasian steppes.

A major wave of Scythian/Saka migration began in the late eighth century B.C., with the invasion of the kingdoms of southwest Asia and Asia Minor. According to an inscription written by the Assyrian king Esarhaddon (681 B.C. - 668 B.C.), the Scythian tribes appeared in southwest Asia around 670 B.C., where they contributed heavily to the military divisions of some of the southern kingdoms.25

**Historiography of the Scythians: Herodotus and Strabo**

Scythians were among the earliest people to master the art of riding and wherever they went they astonished their neighbors by the civilization they created. According to the Greek historian Herodotus, the Scythians spoke Iranian languages and migrated from the Altai Mountains at the eastern extreme of the Eurasian steppe. The historian Strabon who described the nomadic tribes from Mongolia to Ukraine as Scythians, classified some of them as: Dayes, Massagetes, Saki, Assian, Passians, Toharss, Attasians, and Khoresmians.26 The Naqsh-I Rustam inscription of Achaemenid Emperor Darius I (6th c. B.C.) lists three Saka tribal confederations:

1. the Saka Haumavarga, in Ferghana, who converted to a settled form of life.

2. the Saka Tigraxauda in the region beyond Syr Darya and in Semirechye.
3. the Saka Tayaiy Paradraya.

Many archeologists agree that in addition to a common language, other cultural similarities unified the Scythians/Sakas as a people.27 European scholars and explorers such as Sven Hedin28, Aural Stein29 and Albert von Le Coq30 have written extensively on the prehistoric Indo-European mummified bodies discovered in the eastern parts of the Eurasian steppe and the western parts of the Altai Mountains. They did not, however, pay any attention to the mummies of Xinjiang.

In the late 1980s, Chinese scholars resumed excavation of some of the archaeological sites of Xinjiang province. Two experts, Dolkon Kamberi and Wang Binghua, conducted extensive field work in the area and discovered a number of additional mummies. Since the mid-1980s, hundreds of ancient mummies around the cities of Khotan, Niya, Qiemo, Kumul, Kroran, Turfan, Loulan have been unearthed.

The C14 testing conducted by Chinese scholars has identified the origin of some of these mummies as ranging between 4000 B.C. and 2000 B.C. The Grande Dame of these ancient wonders belongs to a female from 3800 B.C. known as “The Beauty of Loulan”, a woman with reddish hair and unique fabric covering her body.31 Another of the well-preserved mummies of the first group is known as “The Cherchen Man”, distinguished by his long brown hair and sophisticated clothing.32 This earliest group of mummies are all Caucasian and their DNA matches closely with the Bronze age population of the Eurasian steppe who lived in a vast region extending from the Altai Mountains to the shores of the Black Sea. Han Kangxin, who has examined 302 of these mummies, has confirmed the similarities of the earliest mummies of Xinjiang with the other mummies unearthed in other regions of Eurasia.33
Most recently, in Yanbulaq, on the edge of the Taklemakan Desert, in an ancient cemetery, twenty-nine mummies were discovered. The C^{14} dating identified the origin of these mummies as between 1100 B.C. and 500 B.C. This second group of mummies included twenty-one Mongoloid mummies, and eight Caucasoid. This indicates that by this time, the Xinjiang region contained both Mongoloid and Caucasoid populations, and even a mixture of the two groups. The DNA from the second group confirms this conclusion.\(^{34}\)

**Yuezhi (Yueh-chih)**

In his writings, Herodotus refers to a seventh century B.C. mass migration of the Scythians from the east, which resulted in their invasion and occupation of southern Russia.\(^{35}\) He refers to those Scythians who remained around the Altai Mountains as the Detached Scythians. Some scholars suggest that the Yuezhi (Yueh-chih) people mentioned in Chinese history books are the Scythians who emerged many centuries later as the ancestors of Tokharians and Kushanids.\(^{36}\) Chinese historian, Sima Qian, mentions that until the advent of the third century B.C., Yueh-chih and the Tung Hu tribes were the dominant powers of the eastern parts of Central Asia.\(^{37}\)

**Xiang’nu Empire and Chinese Historiography: Ban Gu & Sima Qian**

According to two Chinese historians, Ban Gu\(^{38}\) (d. A.D. 92) and Sima Qian\(^{39}\) (d. 86 B.C.), a powerful confederation of twenty four tribes was established to the northwest of China, known as Xiang’nu (Hsiang’nu or Huns). For over a century the emperors of China, sent annual gifts of silk, fabrics, handicrafts, rice, gold and money to Xiang’nu, as bribes to prevent the Huns from invading China. In the second century BC, Chinese Emperor Han Wudi (141 B.C. – 87 B.C.) embarrassed a series of campaigns against
Xiang’nu. He sent an envoy to the king of the Yuezhi, to the northwest of China, to form an alliance against the Xiangnu. Instead of an alliance, however, the emperor received a report that the king of Yuezhi had been killed in a war against the Xiangnu. According to Chinese sources, the Yuezhi tribe split into three groups: one group fled to Tibet, and the second group entered the Parthian Empire from northeast. The third group of the Yuezhi headed west towards Europe.

In A.D. 93, the Chinese alliance with eight of the Xiang’nu southern tribes defeated the Hun tribes, and pushed them westward. Hunic tribes migrated from Central Asia to eastern and central Europe. Led by Attila in A.D. 445, they took Gaul and Rome. The death of Attila in A.D. 453, and the internal conflict that ignited following his death, weakened the Huns.

The economy of the Huns was based on herding, and as with the other nomadic groups in Central Asia, their animals included horses, sheep, cows, goats, camels and yaks. Trade played an important role in their everyday life, but some of the artifacts found in their kurgans are identified as war trophies.

**Bronze Age Funerary Sites of Central Asia: Kurgans**

A characteristic feature of the landscape of the steppes from the Altai Mountains to Mongolia, southern Siberia, Ukraine, and the shores of the Black Sea, was the kurgan, an earth and stone mound erected over ancient graves. The population of Central Asia was no longer only composed of hunters and fishermen. Central Asia was rich in deposits of copper, and it was the site of an industrial and agricultural revolution. The people had access to metal tools, instruments and arms and were engaged in agriculture and stock breeding. It is within this segment of time that according to many scholars the collective
Andronovo Culture, covering various regional cultures of the Bronze Age over a long period of time emerges. The dwelling sites of the Andronovo period in Central Asia usually comprised of ten to fifty inhabitants, in the form of huts. The burial places consisted of groups of tombs surrounded by megalithic granite slabs, sometimes several hundreds of them. Most of the kurgans served as graves for the Scythian/Saka kings and queens. Many also included burial plots for family members of rulers, horses, dogs, and even cats.

Unfortunately, the majority of these kurgans were looted over time, but those that were spared contain numerous gold and silver objects. At Tolstaya Mogila, the graves of a young queen and a child remained undisturbed. The queen’s entire costume once gleamed with gold: large gold plates were fastened to her headdress, and all her clothing including her footwear, was sewn with little gold plaques or platelets. The Queen’s neck was jeweled with a massive gold piece weighing 478 grams and depicting seven little lions attacking a young deer. On her temples the queen wore large gold pendants depicting a goddess. Massive gold bracelets adorned her wrists, and her fingers were covered with rings. The skeleton of the child was covered with gold plates that all but obscured his clothing.

Very rich mausoleum complexes of the royal leaders of Scythia were unearthed in the Tagisken and Uygarak cemeteries on the lower reaches of Syr Darya, and in the Chilik kurgan, and the Issyk in Kazakhstan. At Pazyryk, in the Altai Mountains, Russian archeologists unearthed five thousand objects of wood, textiles, felt, leather, and fur preserved in ice.
In 1924 and 1925, eight kurgans containing the remains of Hun warriors were excavated in northern Mongolia.\textsuperscript{48} Wool fabrics, tapestries, embroideries, silk cloths, pottery, jewelry pieces, along with leather and bronze pieces were discovered in these burial mounds. Scholars found elements of shamanistic practices, as well as strong evidence of the Huns’ close ties to Mongolia, Soghdia, eastern Europe and the Near East. Many more burial mounds in the Tien-Shan territory have not yet been excavated. Three major kurgans in Hissar, in Tajikistan also have not been excavated. Some of the larger burial mounds extend over ten meters high and one hundred meters in diameter. On the Black Sea steppes, the kurgans of Kul’ Oba, Solokha, Pyat’brat’ev, Tolstaya Mogila, and Chertomlyk are some of the well-known burial mounds, which have been excavated.\textsuperscript{49}

\textbf{Bronze Age Scythian Art of Jewelry Making}

Across the Eurasian steppe from the Altai Mountains to southern Russia and Ukraine, so-called “animal style” jewelry was prevalent and widespread. These pieces of jewelry depict wild and domesticated animals. The wide use of this powerful decorative style reflects the cultural unity of the Scythian world despite its widespread dispersal from the Altai Mountains to southern Russia and Ukraine.\textsuperscript{50} One of the most fascinating discoveries of the twentieth century was a warrior’s costume that was found in a Scythian/Saka kurgan near Issyk, about 40km east of Almaty in the 1960s. The warrior costume was made up of over 4000 separate gold pieces, many of them in the shape and form of animal motifs. The Scythian/Saka warrior’s costume included a headdress, two feet high, with pointed arrows on top, snow leopards and two-headed winged mythical animals covered it.\textsuperscript{51}
Animals and birds – standing, running, or in flight - with exaggerated or accentuated horns, paws, hooves, jaws, beaks, and ears were the favored subjects of the era. The gold and silver figures depicted animals including reindeer, horses, ibexes, snow leopards, on necklaces, bracelets, and earrings. Jewelry making was the most popular art form between the 8th and 3rd century B.C.

Today, some of the most impressive pieces of Scythian art can be found at the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, Russia. These include the solid gold pieces discovered between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Scythian/Saka art pieces were created in a variety of materials including leather, felt, bone, bronze, iron, and silver. The tombs of Pazyryk the in Altai Mountains yielded many well-preserved articles of clothing covered with embroidery from the 8th to the 3rd century, B.C. No subsequent moment in the history of Eurasian nomads was as uniform as the ancient period, when a sense of cultural and artistic unity transcended local differences.

Belief Systems of Early Cultures of Central Asia - Shamanism

The earliest belief system of Scythian/Saka tribes was a distinct form of shamanism. Shamanism is one of the oldest belief systems in the world, which holds that spirits reside not only in human beings but also in animals and nature including mountains and waterfalls. Traces of the shamanism practiced in Central Asia survived among various nomadic and semi-nomadic groups down to the 20th century.

Pottery Cultures and Shamanistic Preparation for “life after death”

Another concept central to shamanism was that of “life after death.” It appeared to pre-occupy many individuals, who prepared themselves for a journey to the world of spirits after death. This concept left a profound impact on the worldview and material culture of
the people of Central Asia. Many pieces of pottery found in graves contained water, food, personal and favorite belongings, and in the case of royalty, treasure and personal jewelry, of the deceased king, or queen, who wished to use these objects after their death. While the wealth of towns located on the plains of Central and Southwest Asia attracted invaders, some of the secluded valleys and mountain regions provided areas of refuge where old secular, religious, and artistic traditions survived for centuries, even millennia. The artistic subjects in the prehistoric and ancient eras were often animal figures. There are no texts interpreting the meaning of these animals in early ancient times, however, it is believed that the popular animals often used by the artists represented or symbolized deities and various powers of nature. Lions, leopards, ibexes and falcons were often depicted. This style of art was referred to as “Animal Style” by many scholars in the field. Many pieces of ‘animal style’ jewelry, both gold and bronze pieces, were made and preserved for personal use and these have been found in funerary sites: graves, tombs, or kurgans.

The transition of early settlements into settled villages was accompanied by the production of the finest painted pottery. Starting in the fourth millennium B.C., Central Asia accumulated five thousand years of pottery tradition, one of the longest and most fruitful ceramic traditions in the world, along with the Chinese and pre-Columbian achievements. Some of the most compelling pottery has been found at Susa in southwest Iran, where animal forms and abstract shapes were entwined together. Some prehistoric sites were partially excavated following the end of the Second World War. The oldest piece of pottery dated to the eighth millennium B.C. and was discovered
between 1965 and 1974 by Philip Smith from the University of Montreal, at Tepe Ganje Dara, in Khuzestan province, in present day southwestern Iran.

The early phase of prehistoric pottery cultures included a polychromatic stage, wherein color was used as a decorative device. This phase was replaced gradually by the widespread availability of the potter’s wheel. Multi-colored pottery gradually gave way to grey, or solid-colored pottery. The early polychromatic stage emphasized the aesthetic aspects of color, whereas the use of the potter’s wheel emphasized greater delicacy and refined shape. Prehistoric pottery pieces were made in a variety of sizes for daily use and some of them were found in graves and kurgans, where they held items necessary for the afterlife. The majority of the pottery pieces found took the form of vases, cups, beakers, teapots, flasks, and pitchers.

Turning from material culture, we will address the reasons for the early migration of various Indo-Iranian tribes from the northeast regions of Central Asia to southern Russia and Iran. These early tribes were seeking grazing lands for their animals and cattle. Horses, sheep, goats, yaks were central to their livelihood. Other factors, including a population explosion, control of grazing and water rights, as well as early invasions from the east, and a gradual change of temperature, also contributed to the mass migration of early Central Asian tribes.
Chapter 3

Mass Migrations and Establishment of the First Empires

When and how extensions of the Scythian/Saka tribes—specifically the Medes and Persians—reached the Iranian plateau, is still an open question. Some scholars believe that the original homeland of the Iranians lay in Middle Asia, from which some of the tribes reached the Iranian plateau between the 9th and 8th centuries B.C.. Other scholars hypothesize that the Iranian tribes occupied vast steppe areas of Eurasia in the early second millennium B.C. and that, subsequently, some of them left for Iran via the Caucasus, while many others, who were also of Iranian stock, remained in the Eurasian steppe. Regardless of the exact date of their arrival and the location of their original homeland these Iranians had already developed complex and sophisticated social institutions, cultural traditions, and economic practices. They engaged in both pastoral and agricultural modes of life and were thoroughly acquainted with metals, reared horses, and used chariots.

The Iranian world was divided between the nomadic Scythian/Saka northern zone and the southern Persianized zone. As a result of a series of explosive and expansive migrations from north and northeast toward the south and southwest, the establishment of a number of powerful and historically significant empires occurred between 728 B.C. and A.D. 651 including:

- The Median Empire 728 B.C. – 553 B.C.
- The Achaemenid Empire 553 B.C. – 330 B.C.
- The Parthian Empire 247 B.C. – A.D. 224
**Achaemenid Empire and the First Central Asian States**

The largest of these empires was the Achaemenid Empire, established by the emperor Cyrus, which extended from the shores of the Indus River and Hindokush Mountains in the east to the Balkans in the west. The empire political philosophy was based on the oath or commitment that Cyrus made with his people and is written on a cylinder, found by the middle of nineteenth century in Babylon (Iraq today): On the cylinder Cyrus writes: *I am Cyrus. King of Kings, King of Babylon, Sumer, Akkad, Son of Camboujiah, The great king, King of Anshan, Grandson of Cyrus, Descendant of Cheshpesh, The great king, I announce that I respect the customs and religions of the nations of my empire and never let any of my governors and subordinates look down or insult them until I am alive, I will never let anyone oppress any others, I will never let anyone take possession of properties of the others by force or without compensation, I declare that everyone is free to choose a religion, People are free to live in all regions, I denounce slavery and my governors have to prohibit exchanging men and women as slaves within their domains.*

As far as the treaty that the Achaemenid Empire extends into, the Inscription of Behistun found in the western Iran of today, includes five elaborate written columns carved from solid rock that describe the extension of the empire. The detailed inscription begins with an introduction from the emperor Darius:

*"I am Darius, the great king, king of kings, the king of Persia, the king of countries, the son of Hystaspes, the grandson of Arsames, the Achaemenid." The sixth section of the first column then lists the countries under the rule of Darius: “Persia, Elam, Babylonia*
Assyria, Arabia, Egypt, the countries by the sea, Lydia, Greece, Media, Armenia, Cappadocia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Chorasmia, Bactra, Sogdia, Gandhara, Saka, Sattagydia, Arachosia and Maka: twenty-three lands in all. With this declaration, the Central Asian states, of Parthia, Chorasmia, Bactra and Sogdia or Soghdiana clearly were established by the Achaemenids as distinct provinces with their own governors.

_Achaemenid Empire Capital Cities and Megalithic Architecture_

The history of architecture of this region goes back more than six thousand years old. Other architectural remains of this period also offer a glimpse into the social structure and political organization of the Iranian plateau and adjacent regions in Central Asia. Architectural remains varied from simple peasant huts, tea houses, and garden pavilions, to the most majestic structures reflecting power, personality, rivalries, taste, and status. The first major monumental structures were mountain-shaped temples such as Temple of Chugha Zanbil near Susa, and royal funerary sites, such as Scythian Kurgans at Pazirik. The first dynastic capital was built by Medes in 612 B.C. in Ecbatana (Hamadan) in present day western Iran, after they overthrew Assyria.

The Achaemenid Empire, established its first capital in Pasargade, in Fars province, in modern day southern Iran. A huge artificial platform with enormous stone pieces and tall slender stone columns, signified the beginning of an era known as the megalithic period in architecture. In Pasargade, there are three palaces, each enclosed by its own large masonry walls. The central room of the main audience hall covers an area of 230 X 131 feet. Initially, precious metal plating partially covered the painted columns. The columns
were painted green, blue, red, and yellow. Cyrus was buried in Pasargade, and his megalithic style tomb crowns six stages that decrease in height as they progress upward.

The palace of Darius in Susa is built around a central court, 116 X 118 feet. Susa was a powerful fort and a flourishing administrative city with a large civilian population, in the heart of the satrap of Khuzestan. Many of the art objects discovered from the Achaemenid excavation sites have synthesized the motif of animals, and are either naturalistic or stylized animal forms.

The Achaemenid capital was moved to Persepolis by Darius in 518 B.C. Persepolis was a ceremonial capital, composed primarily of a group of palaces and possibly temples, intended to celebrate festivities, especially Nowruz, or the Persian New Year. Its scale, visible still today, exhibits the magnitude, power, and wealth of the first superpower of the ancient world. In order to have access to the Persepolis platform, one has to climb up a majestic double stairway twenty-two feet wide, diverging and returning on itself. The stairs were carved from enormous single blocks that sometimes even included a part of the side wall, and wide enough for horse riders to incline to the upper platform, without dismounting the horse, and facing the “Gate of All Nations” guarded by colossal human-headed winged bulls. On the platform, spaces between buildings formed courts, each with its own garden. Across the court stood the so-called “Hall of a Hundred Columns”, and the name of the two other palaces beyond Apadana palace as indicated on their entrance walls, were Tachara and Hadesh. The walls of the buildings were polished to mirror brightness, and relief sculptures as sharp as if cut in metal, were decorated the interior and exterior walls. The Persepolis sculptural wall friezes are grouped; and spacing is planned, controlled, and rhythmical. The rows of sculptures depict representatives of
twenty-eight satraps (provinces) of the Achaemenid Empire, from the Nile to the Oxus, from the Aegean to the Ganges, in full-figure profile bringing a variety of gifts on the occasion of Nowruz, to their emperor. The emperor is seated on the throne supported by representatives of all the nations of the Achaemenid Empire. Thousands of rosette ornaments decorate the edging of the friezes. Persepolis covers an area of 1,300,000 square feet, larger than any Egyptian temple or medieval cathedral. The construction of Persepolis took more than one hundred years, but the style is unified and consistent. The palace of Darius in Susa is built around a central court, 116 X 118 feet. Susa was a powerful fort and a flourishing administrative city with a large civilian population, in the heart of the satrap of Khuzestan. Many of the art objects discovered from the Achaemenid excavation sites have synthesized the motif of animals, and are either naturalistic or stylized animal forms.

The Apadana palace of Xerxes, son of Darius, in Persepolis is two hundred fifty feet square, with a central room of one hundred ninety five feet square with thirty-six columns, elegantly tapered, seven feet thick, sixty feet high, and crowned by ten foot capitals. The reception hall is large enough to hold ten thousand people.

Persepolis remains one of the wonders of the ancient world: a remarkable structure, unparalleled in any other part of the world.

Nowruz in Persepolis and Central Asia

One of the sculptural reliefs repeated on the walls of Persepolis is the symbol of the lion (Leo) slaying the bull (Taurus). The moment that these constellations were at their zenith coincided with the Spring Equinox on March 21st. The Persian New Year signaled the beginning of Spring. Today, Nowruz is celebrated in many different countries both in
Central Asia and the Middle East. The third capital of the Achaemenid Empire was Susa, built by Darius, on a platform of 820 X 490 feet, in 521 BC. ⁶⁷
Kurgan, Eastern Kazakhstan, 7th – 4th c. BC. Rick & Susie Graetz
Chapter 4

Satrap of Parthia and Parthian Empire

Arsaces, the founder of the Parthian Empire (247 B.C. – 226 A. D.), proclaimed himself king, and expanded his empire to Central Asia and the Near East. Prior to the establishment of the Parthian Empire, descendents of one of the Macedonians, Seleucus, known as Selucids ruled small scattered kingdoms in Central Asia for a short period of time. One of the successors of Arsaces, founder of the Parthian Empire, was Mithradates I. In 171 B.C., Mithradates established his capital at Nisa, outside Ashqabad, in present-day Turkmenistan.

Nisa and Parthian Art

Nisa, the first Parthian capital city, contained a royal palace, necropolis, and several temples. One of the temples was built and supported by four large square piers and round pillars to support the roof. Larger-than-life-size statues of men and women were placed between the pillars. The Soviet scholars who excavated the area found many valuable objects from a royal house adjacent to the royal palace. The objects uncovered included silver gilt statues representing deities and mythological and imaginary beasts; bronze and iron weapons; painted pottery; fluted glass vessels; and ivory objects. The most interesting group of finds included the bronze legs of a throne in the form of a gryphon’s claw holding a spray of leaves, and several magnificent rhytons. Rhytons were drinking cups in the shape of an animal horn, made of metal or clay. The finest of these were embellished with jewels and polychrome glass incrustations, as well as with friezes.
depicting human and animal heads. Their bases were made of silver or gold and were often given the shape of an animal’s head.

The loveliest rhyton of all was assigned to the second century B.C., and included inscriptions in Middle Persian, which was one of the official languages of the Parthian Empire. The majority of the remaining art objects date back to the first century B.C. Besides a large number of Parthian statues found at Nisa, similar Parthian sculptures were found in Khorazmia, in modern day Uzbekistan; the Kushan sanctuary of Surkh Kotal in northern Afghanistan; Hathra in northern Iraq; and in Nimrud in present day eastern Turkey. Statues of comparable size were nevertheless rare at that time. Many statues at Nisa depicted the early dynasts and queens of the Parthian dynasty.

The Parthians chose Dara (Damghan) for their second capital, then transferred to Ecbatana (Hamadan), and finally settled in Ctesiphon, outside of modern-day Baghdad in central Iraq. The Parthians of Central Asia assimilated the beauty of motion from Scythian/Sakian animal and figurative style, and synthesized their art with Achaemenid elements and local traditions to create a new school of art. A good example of this new Parthian art is a wall painting of a hunt from Dura Europos, in the Syria of today, from A.D. 2nd c.

**Parthian Architecture**

Parthian architecture made significant contributions to architectural design. These included the development of a dome on squinches, and the development of vaulted *ivan* structures. The Parthian temple of Kangavar, in western Iran today, and the Parthian city complex of Hatra in northern Iraq, are two excellent examples of the new style. In Hatra the main façade of blocks of masonry was stories high and pierced by two large ivans.
roofed with high barrel vaults separated by two smaller rooms. This design developed later into the grand iwan entrance of the Islamic epoch. Even more important was the smaller square vaulted chamber directly behind the southern iwan. In Sassanian times, and after establishment of Islam, this design became the square domed chamber so vital to Persian architecture.\textsuperscript{72}

The Parthians made widespread use of stucco, both carved and painted, a technique that was to be more fully developed under the Sassanians and Islamic Persia. A domed temple dating from the Parthian period, with a dome on four arches known as the Rabate Sefid, sits twenty eight miles southeast of Mashad, in today's northeast Iran. It is an excellent example of the Parthian style.

\textit{The Treasure of Tilla Tepe}

One of the most fascinating discoveries from the Parthian era was made in Tilla Tepe, in northern Afghanistan in 1979. A collection of about 20,000, gold ornaments was found in six graves belonging to five women and one man. The ornaments dated back to the first century B.C. They included coins, necklaces set with gems, belts, medallions, and crowns made of gold, turquoise, and at times lapis lazuli.\textsuperscript{73}

The site was identified as a Scythian/Parthian royal burial ground, which contained silver coins from the reign of Parthian king Mithradates II (122 B.C. – 88 B.C.) and gold coins from the era of the Parthian king Gotarzes I (95 B.C. – 90 B.C.). These artifacts were interspersed with items originating from much farther away, including Chinese bronze mirrors, Indian decorated ivory plates, and gold coins (found in tomb number three) depicting the Roman emperor, Tiberius, in profile view. These finds demonstrate that the
first intercontinental trade route, known as the Silk Road, was already active and thriving over two thousand years ago.\textsuperscript{74}

\textit{Hellenistic artifacts}

Trade played a central role in the rise of the four ancient empires of Parthia, China, Rome, and Kushan, all of which enjoyed a great deal of prosperity through the exchange of goods and ideas. Many Central Asian cities were located at the heart and along the route of this intercontinental trade route - the Silk Road. By the year A.D. 79, however, the Roman forces led by Emperor Titus, occupied the Holy Land, destroyed the temple of Jerusalem, and looted its treasury back to Rome. Since Augustus declared himself the premier emperor of Rome in the first century A.D., Roman forces expanded the borders of their empire from Scotland to the shore of Africa, annexing Spain, Gaul, Central Europe, Greece, Egypt, parts of the Near East, and all the islands of the Mediterranean Sea. The Roman Empire reached the zenith of its power under the leadership of the emperors Trajan and Hadrian in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century A.D.. The only force halting Roman military expansion was the Parthian empire.

Roman forces suffered one of their major losses in the battle of Carrhae in 53 B. C.\textsuperscript{75} The Roman commander, Crassus and 20,000 Roman soldiers were killed in this battle and the Parthian forces led by their commander, Suren, took 10,000 Roman soldiers as prisoners of war, and relocated them to the Parthian province of Margiana. This region corresponded to present-day southern Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, northeast of Iran, and northern Afghanistan.

The Roman prisoners were integrated into the Parthian culture, married native wives, and later served as Parthian soldiers, protecting the trade routes, that traversed through
Central Asia. Apparently, these Romans built a city in the area. The ancient city of Merv had a concentration of Roman soldiers and in a cave outside the city Roman writings were found on a wall. A unit within the Roman army that fought in Carrhae, originated in the Roman colonies of Syria and Greece. Some artifacts found from the excavations in the region have been identified as Greco-Roman or Hellenistic.
Chapter 5

Satrap of Bakhtaran (Bactra) & Kushan Empire

A branch of the Yeuzhi tribes composed partially of Tokharians or Asiani Scythians was pushed from northwest China, by the Huns, toward the southwestern regions of Central Asia. Upon settling in the southern and southwestern areas of Central Asia, and expanding into an empire, the mobile Scythian Empire emerged as the Kushan state.

The Kushan Empire was one of the four major powers of ancient times along with Parthia, China, and Rome. It included Afghanistan; northeastern Iran; southern Uzbekistan, Tajikestan, and Turkmenistan; Pakistan; and northern India. On the shores of the Yamura River in India, the Kushans established their southern-most cultural capital, Mathura. Surkh Kotal, Bagram - their summer capital - and Bamiyan in Afghanistan were among the empire’s most important cities.

Surkh Kotal

Surkh Kotal was located in the Kunduz Valley on the main road leading from Kabul to Mazar-e Sharif, in northern Afghanistan. Its buildings climbed up a hill and were surrounded by two lines of defenses, which followed its contours. The most spectacular site within the enclosure was a complex temple, to which an immense stairway led. The temple faced an impressively large courtyard and included human figures rendered in a manner that recalled the Scytho-Parthian school of Mathura. The building’s plan followed Achaemenid palaces built in Iran a few hundred years earlier.

A French excavating team identified Surkh Kotal as an early Kushan complex, possibly a Zoroasterian temple, belonging to the first half of the 2nd century A.D., prior to emperor
Kanishka’s conversion to Buddhism. Kushanian royalty converted to Buddhism possibly in the second half of the second century, and Afghanistan remained one of the centers of this religion until the arrival of Islam in the 7th century A.D. Afghanistan was once a treasure of excavation sites. A large portion of the artifacts discovered, however, were destroyed during the many wars that have engulfed Afghanistan in the last four decades. In the late 1990s, during the Taliban occupation, 25,000 art objects were destroyed, including the large Buddha sculpture in Bamiyan.

**Buddhism in Central Asia**

Bamyan became the cultural capital of Buddhism in the fourth century A.D. Immense statues of Buddha representing him as Locatarra, the Lord of the World, were cut in the rock, at the eastern and western gates of this city in today’s Afghanistan. Surrounding the statues were hundreds of caves, which at one point were used as the cells and sanctuaries for Buddhist monks. Some of the earliest Buddhist images were discovered in these caves. Thirty-two major and eighty minor figural compositions initiated in Bamyan, Begram, and Gandhara, to the southeast of this area, and travelled eastward to China, Korea, and Japan, giving rise to major divisions of the religion, including Esoteric, Pure Land, and Zen Buddhism.

Buddhism moved across Central Asia to conquer the Far East. Siddhartha Gautama the founder of Buddhism was born in 560 B.C. among the foothills of the Himalayas. According to the Buddhist view, the center of the universe was a mountain, Meru, from the top of which rose the various levels of the heavens. This towering mountain was surrounded by seven circular, concentric chains of mountains, each separated by one of the seven oceans. Beyond these was the great ocean, containing the four island
continents, one in each of the four regions of space, with the southernmost, the island of Jumbudvipa, being the realm of humans. This entire universe was surrounded by a huge wall of rock. The heights of Mt. Meru included the residence of the four rulers of the cardinal points and the thirty-three principal gods.\(^{82}\)

Buddhist temples and Christian churches were found in various parts of Central Asia. The Buddhist temple discovered at the town of Krasnaya Rechka thirty-five kilometers from Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan today, was one of the best examples of the Buddhist architecture.\(^{83}\)

The excavation conducted under the supervision of A. N. Bershtam, P.N. Kozhemyako, K.M. Baipakov, and V.D. Goryacheva revealed Soghdian castles and urban settlements with interior frescoes and other art work. A twelve meters high statue of Buddha was found within the temple. In Ak Beshim town, eight kilometers southwest of Tokmak excavations were conducted by L. R. Kyzlasov in 1953 and 1954, and A.P. Zyablin in 1955 through 1958. A seventh century church with a cemetery beside it was unearthed. In 1953 not too far from the church a Buddhist temple from the same period was found with sitting statues of Buddha. In the seventh century writings of a Buddhist monk known as Tripitaka, there are references to the Ak Beshim, near Tokmak.

**Buddhist Kingdoms of Khotan & Kucha**

To the east of Central Asia, in the present-day province of Xinjiang, the city of Khotan, which served as the capital of jade, was one of the major trade centers of the region.\(^{84}\)

Since early ancient times, Khotanese, and Soghdian merchants transported the much-sought-after precious stone, jade to the cities of China. Jade could be found in two
dominating shades and grades of pastel white and light green. In Chinese shamanism, and Taoism, it was believed that anyone possessing or wearing jade would have long life. Khotan was identified as one of the first cities in which silk was produced outside China. According to Chinese sources, the prince of Khotan, who married a Chinese princess, sent an envoy with a message to her, saying: “the kingdom to which you are traveling does not have any silk production. Bring some of the silk producing secrets when you come to Khotan.” Hiding the cocoons in her clothing and crown, the young princess slipped them out of her home and introduced the wonders of the luxurious fabric to Khotan, which today has one of the oldest and most sophisticated silk industries in the world.

In the third century B.C., when the son of the first Indian emperor to convert to Buddhism – Ashoka, was ruling Khotan, the Uyghurs, settled in the Lake Balkhash area, to the northeast of the modern-day Xinjiang province of China. By the first century A.D., the Khotanese kingdom had expanded to include 13 smaller kingdoms, and was the dominating power in Central Asia. Conquered by the Chinese in AD 61, the Uyghurs struggled for their independence continued. Ban Chao, the Chinese general conquered Khotan and the Khoatanese kingdom remained under Chinese rule until A. D. 105. Struggling for independence, Khotan enjoyed autonomy until A. D. 127. Chinese forces occupied the kingdoms of Khotan, Kashgar, and Yarkand between the years A.D. 127 and A.D. 132. Meanwhile, in A. D. 220, Uyghurs, defeated by the Kyrghyz, enter Tarim Basin in the Xinjiang area.

Khotan was a popular destination for Chinese monks, who stayed in the city and gathered up Buddhist documents and sources, writing extensively of the beauty of Khotan, its
prosperity and diligent people. Meanwhile, Mahayana Buddhism expanded from Khotan into Kucha, the capital of music and home to an astonishing variety of produce, and into Turfan, the largest city of the Silk Road. By A.D. 744 the Uighur court declared Manichaeism as the state religion of their kingdom. One intriguing and peculiar personality who tried to synthesize the teachings of Buddha, Christ, and Zoroaster in his gospel was Mani.

Between A.D. 850 and the beginning of the 13th century, Uyghurs enjoyed a great deal of prosperity, expanding their kingdom into a large empire, from the shores of the Caspian Sea to the heart of China. Manichaeism was the dominating religion of the Uyghur kingdom in Xinjiang until the beginning of the 11th century. In 1005, Yusef Qadr, Khan of Karakhadids, forced Uyghurs and Khotanese to convert to Islam. At the rise of the Mongols, in the Gobi desert, and the threatening force put together by Ghenghiz Khan, the Uighurs decided to join the Monghol alliance under leadership of Ghenghiz Khan.
Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, Ancient Kucha. Rick & Susie Graetz

Ancient Fire Temple, Panjkent, Tajikistan. Rick & Susie Graetz
Chapter 6

Sassannian Empire: The Birth of A State Religion

One of the dramatic events of the ancient era was the rise of the Sassanian Empire (A.D. 226 – A.D. 651) that ruled a large area of today’s Middle East, Central Asia and the Caucasus. The new dynasty ended the domination of the Parthian Empire and ushered in a new era in the political and cultural history of the region. The Sassanians were a prominent family from the Fars (Pars) province in present day southern Iran. At its zenith, the Sassanian dynasty ruled a vast empire stretching from the river Oxus in the northeast to the gates of Jerusalem in the west. Under the Sasanian rule, Zoroasterianism was established as the state religion of the Persian empire. The Sassanian palace at Firuzabad is a remarkable achievement, and the focus of a new epoch. The façade was 180 feet long, the vault of the large central iwan spanned 42 feet, fronted by an immense talar. Beyond this central iwan, which was flanked on either side by two rectangular ivans, were three square-domed chambers supported by walls 13 feet thick. The walls of the city palace of Firuzabad were covered with plaster. The largest Sassanian architectural entity was the palace complex of Taq-e Kasra at Ctesiphon, in Iraq. Its iwan, a great open vault, spans 75 feet, wider than any vault in Europe, is 90 feet high and 150 feet deep.

Zoroaster and Zoroasterianism

The prophet Zoroaster initiated one of the earliest Central Asian religions. Many scholars identify Zoroaster as a prophet who originally came from the shamanistic tradition. He is often identified as a wise man or a healer. Zoroaster introduced the idea of monotheism
to the world, and his concepts and ideas left a profound impact on many other world religions and cults.\textsuperscript{90}

Zoroasterianism was declared the state religion of the Persian Sassanid Empire, which ruled a large part of Central Asia and the Near East for over four hundred years (A.D. 226 - 651). After the fall of the Sassanian empire, hundreds of Pahlavi texts were translated from Middle Persian, which was the official language of the Persian Empire into Arabic and modern Persian, which emerged after the introduction of Islam. A few of the literary sources translated from Middle Persian included: Ayadgari Zareran (Memories of Prince Zarir); Hazar Afsan (The Thousand Tales); Sindbub-namag (Book of Sindbud or Sindbud Bahri); Vis and Ramin (a famous love story); Ayen Ewen-namag (etiquette, manners, ceremonies, backgammon, horsemanship); Madigan-i hazar Dadestan (Book of a Thousand Judicial Decisions by Farrukhmard son of Bahram); Kweskarihi-i Redagan (Education of Children).

\textbf{The Fire Temples of Azar Goshnasb, Azar Faranbagh and Azar Borzinmehr}

Fire symbolized Mithra, the sun god, which was worshiped as a deity by followers of Zoroaster. Mithra also had its own cult, which had already developed into a distinct sect under the Parthian rule. There were three major, and hundreds of minor, fire temples in Central Asia at the time of the Sassanian Empire. The most important was the Fire Temple of Azar Goshnasb, in the Iranian province of Azarbijan. The temple complex, a fortified fortress surrounded by high massive walls with numerous gates, was built around a volcanic lake on top of a mountain. Azar Goshnasb was the fire temple of the kings and the top warriors of Sassanian Empire, in a place today called Takhte Solaiman. In ancient texts, the area is identified as Ganjak, and in the Middle Ages the area was
identified Sheez. Jackson writes that, Azar Borzin Mehr fire temple of the farmers is close to the village of Mihr between Miandasht and Sabzevar, near the ancient city of Neyshabur, in Khorasan province, in Iran today. In the northern part of the ancient city of Baku, on the western shore of the Caspian Sea stands a well-preserved fire temple of Surakhany. The temple is surrounded by thick outer walls 120 X 102 feet. The central shrine stands nearly in the middle of a court. A square-towered building, approached by a steep flight of steps, rises toward the northeast corner. The walls of the precinct are very thick, as they consist of separate cells or cloistered chambers, running all the way around, and entered by arched doors. The whole is solidly built and covered with plaster. The structure in the middle is a square fabric of brick, stone, and mortar, about 25 feet in height, 20 feet in length. In the middle of the floor is a square well, measuring forty and one-half inches in each direction. Pipes that once transported oil or gas to the temple are visible. The top of the shrine is surmounted by four chimneys at the corners, from which the flaming gases once rose.

The second most important fire temple was the Azar Faranbagh, or the temple of priests. It was believed that this temple was originally located in Khwarazm to the south of the Aral Sea and was then relocated to the Fars Province, near the Persian Gulf. The fire temple of Azar Borzin Mehr, the third most important, was dedicated to Mithra, the sun god and the deity of love. It was located near the city of Nishabur, in the state of Khorasan, in Iran, and was devastated by the Mongols in the 13th century.91

Mani and Manichaeanism

The prophet who tried to synthesize the teachings of Buddha, Christ, and Zoroaster in his gospel was Mani (AD 216-AD 276) the founder of a religion that came to be known as
Manichaeanism. His teachings were influenced by his mother Maryam who was related to the Parthian royal family and came from a Judeo-Christian background. Mani’s father Patik was born in Hamedan and moved to Ctesiphon, the capital of the Persian Sassanid Empire. Mani was only 24 years old when he started preaching. Unlike the Sassanian and the Roman Empires, which persecuted Manichaeans, Central Asia tolerated the religion and provided it with a safe haven.

**Mani and Book Art**

Manichaeism was always identified with the ancient tradition of book making. In one of his own passages, St. Augustine described Manichaeism and its exquisite book art. It was in Turfan, on the northern route of the Silk Road in Central Asia, that Albert von Le Coq discovered several illustrated manuscripts which dated back to the 8th and 9th centuries. The significance of these miniature paintings lie in the fact that they were some of the oldest surviving book paintings in the world. The illustrations were closely associated with the surrounding text. Rich red, purple, white, green, and gold colors illuminated landscape elements of trees and floral scrolls. Enlightened figures drawn in outline wore elaborate and simple dress patterns. Under the Abbasid caliphs who ruled a vast empire from Baghdad, the Manichaeans were persecuted and their books and manuscripts were burned. According to sources who witnessed this, streams of molten gold and silver ran out of the bonfires.

Despite suppression by the Sassanid Empire, Manichaeism rapidly spread from Egypt and North Africa into the Roman Empire through missionary activities. Over the next several centuries Manichaean missionaries converted many in Armenia, Bulgaria, and France.
According to Chinese sources, Manichaeism reached the Chinese court in AD 694, and its teachings were freely preached in 8th century China. In A.D. 762, Uyghurs, who ruled large parts of Central Asia, declared Manichaeism as their state religion. The systematic and continued persecutions of Manichaeans in the Sassanid Empire forced them to move to Central Asia, North Africa, and even Europe. The defeat of Uyghurs by the Kyrgyz in AD 840 forced Uyghurs to migrate from the shores of Yenisei River to the Tarim Basin. Here the Uyghurs converted to Manichaeism, inherited the traditions of eastern Iranians or Tokharians and adopted the script of northern Iranians or Sogdians.

Following the persecution of Manichaeans by the Caliphs of Baghdad in the tenth century, the city of Samarkand in today’s Uzbekistan, became a Manichaean center.
Byzantine Empire
Sassanian Empire
Arabia
Egypt

Damascus
Jerusalem
Ctesiphon
Persia

Elevation (m, ft)
above sea level
- 5000 m
- 15000 ft
- 4000 m
- 12000 ft
- 3000 m
- 8000 ft
- 2000 m
- 5000 ft
- 1000 m
- 1500 ft
- 0 m, ft

0 200 400 600 800 1000 km
0 300 600 miles
Chapter 7

The Coming of Islam

In 651, the invading Arabs defeated the armies of the Sassanian dynasty and introduced a new religion, Islam. Originating in the Arabian Peninsula, Islam spread in all directions, including Central Asia along with Christianity and Buddhism. Muhammad (570 – 632), the messenger of Islam, was an Arab born in the religious and commercial town of Mecca. The people at this time worshipped idols that were kept in a crudely built structure called Ka'ba. In 610, while meditating in a mountain cave outside of town, Muhammad was visited by the angel Gabriel bringing divine revelations and calling on him to act as a messenger of God. By the time of Muhammad’s death in 632, the Muslims had unified the Arabian Peninsula under their rule. Muhammad's teachings were compiled shortly after his death into the holy Koran.

Four of Muhammad’s companions, Abu Bakr (632-634), Umar (634-644), Uthman (644-656), and Ali (656-660), ruled the expanding Islamic state as caliphs or deputies to the prophet. It was during the reign of Umar that the Muslim armies exploded out of Arabia and defeated both the Greek Byzantine and Persian Sassanian empires, which, after a century of warfare, had become militarily and financially exhausted. To finance their armed campaigns, both empires had increased taxes on their subjects. Worse, the rigid hierarchical order, which in the case of the Sassanian Empire functioned as a caste system, did not allow any social mobility for the members of the middle and lower classes such as merchants, artisans, and peasant farmers. Thus, the arrival of Islam, which promised the end of warfare between the two rival empires and a significant reduction in
taxes, particularly for those who converted to the new religion, served as a powerful incentive for many to abandon Christianity and Zoroastrianism and join the Muslim community.

Upon the death of Mohammed, conflict over who would take over as the leader brought about a division in the religion. Two branches, Sunnis and Shiites, were the result. The majority of Muslims in Central Asia today are Sunnis.

Ismailis, who broke from the Shiites in the eighth century, have a strong following in the Gorno-Badakhshan autonomous province of Tajikistan. The absence of mosques and the call to prayer is strikingly evident in the villages. Ismaili worshippers hold services in each other’s homes, follow a less strict regime and give women a more equal role.

**Sufiism – A Spiritual Quest Within**

Sunnī Islam, which had reached the southern regions of Central Asia in the 7th century A.D., penetrated the areas corresponding with modern day Kyrgyzstan in the 16th century. Mosques and schools were built in southern part of the country and the religion was fully established in the eighteenth century. The spread of Islam in northern Kyrgyzstan, however, was slow. The northern Kyrgyz were un-dogmatic in their religious attitude and were attracted to their ancient belief systems such as Shamanism, Totemism, and Sufiism.98

By the time Islam arrived on the planes of Central Asia, Sufiism had already begun to play an increasing role in the religious and social life of Central Asian people. The practices of Sufi groups varied. While they all sought spiritual reality (or Haqiqat), the
different methods or directions they adopted (Tariqat) to reach that reality, made each Sufi school different from the others.

Central Asia’s four most popular Sufi orders included the Yasawiya order, initiated by Ahmad Yasawi, who was buried in the town of Yasi, renamed Turkestan, located in Kazakhstan. The Naqshbandiya Sufi order was founded in Persian speaking Bokhara, by Bahadin Naqshband, (1317 – 1389). The Naqshbandiya order greatly influenced the cultural life of many people in Anatolia and the Indian subcontinent. The Qadiriya Sufi order was founded by Abdul Qadir Gilani, who was born in the town of Nif in the Gilan province, south of the Caspian Sea, in modern day northern Iran. The Chishtiyya Sufi order was initiated in Chisht, Khorasan province, in northeastern Iran. The Chisties had a profound impact on the culture and music of parts of the Indian subcontinent.

None of the Sufi orders adopted a distinct dress or uniform. Many Sufies did not believe in a formal gathering place, and because of persecutions against them, the majority were active underground networks. Hence, it was very difficult to report on the exact number of each order. Even though the Sufis operated through an informal and decentralized organization, they played an important role in the life of Central Asians, especially in the fifteenth century and after.100

A New School of Architecture to Address the New Cultural Values

New schools, libraries, bridges, caravanserais, hospitals, tombs, and mosques all featured Persian Sassanian elements of architecture that were revised in order to address the ritualistic demands and practices of the new religion. The oldest existing mosque in Persia was the Tari Khana in Damghan, built around A.D. 760. The layout was the typical inner court plan, a large, square court surrounded by arcades of tunnel vaults set
on huge round piers almost twelve feet high and six feet in diameter. The whole design was simple, but gave an impression of grandeur. It was purely Sassanian; the dimensions of the burnt bricks and the columns themselves were identical to the nearby Sassanian palace. The mosque at Damghan, featured sophisticated ornamentation with precious marble. From Parthian times on, carved and polychromatic stucco also was an important element major factor in architectural embellishment.
Friday Mosque, Timurid, 15th c. Almaty, Kazakhstan. Rick & Susie Graetz
THE SILK ROAD NETWORK

- Main Silk Road
- Connector to Silk Road
- Maritime Route
- Other Major Trade Route

0 1000 km
0 500 miles
Chapter 8

The Satrap of Soghdia

Sarazm

One of the oldest settlements of Central Asia is Sarazm which dates back to 4000 BC. Since 1976, and fifteen seasons of work, only one ha. of the 100 ha. of this city on the shore of Zarafshan river has been excavated. A temple with a round altar, palaces, public buildings and residential homes have been excavated. Jewelry, armor and objects made of gold, silver, bronze, and copper have been discovered. In fact, Sarazm has been identified as one of the earliest mining and agricultural centers of the region.\(^{102}\)

Panjkent: Background

Soghdians are one of the major eastern Iranian groups. Full size profile figures of Soghdians appear for the first time as high relief sculptural pieces on the walls of Apadana audience hall in Persepolis, the capital of the Achaemenid Empire (550 BC – 330 BC) in the sixth century B.C.. The reliefs portray Soghdians offering the Persian Emperor Darius I, a pair of gold bracelets, a pair of rams, some fabric cloth, an animal skin, cups and vessels. Soghdia was the sixteenth satrap (province) of the Achaemenid Empire. Apadana reliefs portray representatives of all provinces offering a variety of gifts to their emperor, including representatives from the other Central Asian satrapis of Kharazm (Kharazmia) and Bakhtaran (Bactra). The disintegration and fall of the Achamenid Empire in the fourth century, and the resistance of the Soghdians to foreign rule prevented the invading Macedonians from establishing any firm authority over
Soghdia. It forced some of the Soghdians, however, to pursue commercial and business interests with traders and merchants, sponsored by the Chinese court.

The history of the Chinese court and production of silk is over four thousand years old. Queen Leizu, the wife of Emperor Huangdi (The Yellow Emperor, 2674 B.C. – 2575 B.C.), was known as the goddess of the silkworm. She was also identified as the founder of silk production. She taught her people how to breed the silkworms, and how to unwind the cocoons. In 1958, archeologists excavating a Neolithic site in the province of Zhejiang discovered a silk belt, some silk felt and raw silk. Subsequent C-14 dating identified them as 4,750 years old. It was, however, Shi Huang Di of the Chin dynasty (221 B.C. – 206 B.C.) who decided to export silk for the first time. Previously, silk was made exclusively for Chinese royalty, and only in limited amounts.

To stop tribal invasions from the north and to provide safety and security for trade and commerce to the west, the Chin emperor initiated the construction of the Great Wall. That first intercontinental route of trade and commerce was later named the Silk Road. In 1974, the tomb of the Chin emperor, Shi Huang Di, was discovered accidentally by a farmer digging a well in a farm in the Shaanxi Province. Over six thousand life size terra cotta warriors and over two thousand terra cotta horses were found in the tomb.

The Chin Empire was short-lived, and many of Shi Huang Di's dreams did not materialize. In fulfilling the dreams of the Chin emperor in 138 B.C. Emperor Wudi of Han Dynasty (206 B.C. - A.D. 220) ordered an officer from the palace guards named Zhang Qian to lead ninety-nine soldiers to embark on a mission of diplomacy. The central objective of the mission was to establish diplomatic and commercial strategy alliances with China's neighboring states. The delegation headed for the northwest
through the Gansu province and Hexi corridor to the west of the Yellow River, where they encountered the Xiongnu tribe warriors. The Xiongnu tribe, which dominated the area, imprisoned the members of the Chinese delegation, including Zhang Qian, who remained in prison for eleven years. Zhang Qian managed to flee from the prison and traveled for two more years visiting eight different kingdoms. Only in the land of Dayuan (Ferghana Valley) Zhang Qian received a warm welcome. On his return to China he took Central Asian horses, grape, garlic, carrot, sesame and alfalfa to the Chinese capital, Chang’an, and the court of Emperor Han Wudi.

Upon his return to the Han court Zhang Qian was declared a high dignitary by the Emperor Han Wudi. Shortly afterward, he was assigned to his second mission. The second mission of Zhang Qian which began in 126 B.C., included a visit to Bakhtaran (Bactra) and Shengdu (Northern India). Zhang Qian was sent to a third mission with three hundred warriors in 115 B.C. The Chinese delegation passed through northern Tianshan Mountains, continued its way westward and entered the Empire of Anxi (Parthian Empire, 226 B.C.–A.D. 206) in 105 B.C. The Chinese delegation was met by twenty thousand Parthian horsemen warriors in the heart of Soghdia. Zhang Qian was surprised to discover that the Parthian warriors were sent by the Parthian Emperor Mithradates II (Mehrdad II, 124 B.C.–91 B.C.) not to murder him and his men, but to welcome them. The Parthian Empire was established in the third century B.C. as a result of collaboration of seven eastern Iranian families from Central Asia and present day Iran. The empire expanded its territory from its first capital Nisa, and was bounded by the shores of the Persian Gulf, Tigris River, central Anatolia and southern Caucasus. The
systematic flow of capital and goods in both directions between the Parthian and Han Empires brought prosperity to both states, as well as the surrounding countries.

Soghdian merchants played a central role in linking the Parthian state to the Chinese Empire. Soghdian merchants provided their western neighbors with Chinese, Indian (Kushanids A.D. 30–A.D. 320) and Persian products including silk, cotton, wool, spices, plants, medicine, perfume, glassware, ceramics, gold, silver, gemstones and jewelry. The prosperity of many Soghdian cities and towns was the result of expanding trade and exchange between the Parthian and Han Empires. Parthian, Soghdian, Khotanis and Kuchan musicians, acrobats, jugglers, magicians, and dancers traveled to and performed in Chang’an, the old capital of China. A bundle of documents and letters from A.D. 313 was unearthed in a watchtower in the extreme western end of the Great Wall of China, indicating extensive trade between Soghdia and China in ancient times. For over eight hundred years (105 B.C.–A.D. 722) an intense trade and exchange of goods, technologies and ideas continued between Central Asia and China with a number of dramatic interruptions.

One of the dramatic events of the ancient era was the rise of the Sassanian Empire (A.D. 226 – A.D. 651) that ruled a large area of today’s Middle East, Central Asia and Caucasus, ending the domination of the Parthian Empire and ushering a new era in the political and cultural history of the region. Sassanians, a prominent family from Fars (Pars) province in present day Iran, expanded their kingdom into Central Asia. At its zenith, the Sassanian dynasty ruled a vast empire stretching from the river Oxus in the northeast to the gates of Jerusalem in the west. Under their rule, Zoroasterianism was established as the state religion of the Persian Empire. By the mid-
fifth century A.D., Central Asia was invaded by the Hephthalites (Ephtalites or the White Huns). Hephthalites occupied Khotan, Koche, Kashgar, Samarkand, Balkh, Badakhshan and expanded into northern India. In A.D. 484, the Sassanian Emperor Piruz, fighting Hephthalites, was killed in Central Asia. Piruz’s grandson, Emperor Khosrow (Chosrow), made an alliance with the Turkish leader Qaghan Sinjibu, ending the Hephthalites rule of the area in A.D. 557.

From A.D. 557, some parts of Central Asia, including Panjkent, were ruled by the members of Qaghan Sinjibu family, who enjoyed a close alliance with the Sassanian dynasty. Some of the murals of Panjkent painted between A.D. 557 and 722 portray the members of the Qaghan Sinjibu family as they hosted their royal guests. The prosperity of Panjkent lasted another one hundred and sixty five years. In the year A.D. 722, the region was devastated by an Arab army which forced the last ruler of Panjkent, Divastich to flee to Mount Mugh fortress where he died shortly thereafter. In the year 1933, shepherds digging the fortress floor accidentally found the treasury of the last ruler of Panjkent which included a significant number of Soghdian documents. During the golden age of Panjkent from 105 B.C. to A.D. 722 especially in the seventh and eight centuries, Soghdian communities expanded their trade not only with China and India, but also with Japan, Rome and the Byzantine Empires.

The Old City of Panjkent

The climax of Soghdia’s prosperity as reflected in Panjkent’s power and influence, dates back to 105 B.C., when a trade agreement was concluded between Emperor Mithradates II of the Parthian Empire and Emperor Han Wudi of China. Central Asia suffered from
the disruption of trade on the Silk Road in A.D. 722, when Panjkent was devastated by
the Arab invasion of the region. Central Asia and the surrounding regions, however,
began to enjoy another golden age of prosperity and cultural revival under the leadership
of the Samanids (AD 875 – AD 999) who established their capital in Bokhara. The
ancient city of Panjkent had already re-emerged as an affluent urban center prior to this
period.

The modern town of Panjkent, with a population of over fifty thousand, is less than two
kilometers from the old city, on the shore of the Zarafshan River, between the town of
Aini in northwest Tajikistan and the city of Samarkand in present day Uzbekistan. The
excavation of the old city of Panjkent which started in 1946 was led by the Tajik scholar
and academician B.G. Ghaffurov. Some of the best Tajik and Russian archeologists,
umismatists and scientists of the Soviet Union were involved in different phases of
excavation and research until 1991.

Excavation and research in the area was interrupted because of the fall of the Soviet
Union in 1991, and the civil war in Tajikistan which erupted shortly after the fall. The
members of three institutions: Institute of History in Dushanbe (A.I. Isakov), Museum of
Regional Sciences and History (I. Rahmatuulaev), and Peterburg Archaeological
Institute (A.M. Belenitsky), played a prominent role in the Panjkent excavation project.
Only one-third of old Panjkent’s fourteen hectares was excavated by 1981. The
excavation of the old city of Panjkent continued until 1991. However, a large section of
the old city remains unexcavated.
On the extreme western side of the ancient city of Panjkent were the royal palaces, and on the same side, closer to the center of the city, there was a temple. A Zoroasterian fire temple with a symmetrical centralized fire altar in the middle was the largest architectural monument of this section. Over one hundred sixty houses to the east of the city were excavated. To the northeast of the city a Hindu temple was unearthed. The majority of the houses had two floors and belonged to rich aristocrats and merchants who traded with China, India, Persia and Rome. At least one third of the homes were painted with a variety of murals. Towards the center of the city, the excavators discovered a bazaar with a number of shops. The large quantities of coins discovered in this area suggest that the town was a prosperous center for trade and commerce. The cultural artifacts portray a relatively peaceful and prosperous urban center before it was devastated in AD 722 by Arab invaders. According to the Soviet scholars, the coins found in Panjkent belonged to Vagoman and Chakin Chur Bilga, the two rulers of the seventh century. A group of coins from the beginning of the eighth century belonged to Turgar the ruler of Samarkand. Some Arab coins belonged to the latter part of the eighth century were also found. Their existence demonstrated that even after the Arab invasion of AD 722 city life continued until the year AD 770.

The major building materials used to construct the walls, arches and ceilings were mud bricks of hard clay. As far as space and structure is concerned, the eastern portion of Panjkent with residential houses appeared dense compared to the western section of the city, which offered more open space and included palaces and temples. Besides coins, a variety of pottery, pieces such as plates, dishes, jugs, iron tools, glassware objects, mirrors, belts, bronze, silver and gold bracelets, rings, earrings and toys were unearthed.
during the Panjkent excavation. Some of the jewelry pieces found included precious stones, turquoise, pearls, agates and corals. Some of the most peculiar and unique art pieces in Panjkent are woodworks. Wooden doors, door frames, columns, and even ceiling beams with exceptional carvings decorated with organic and geometric patterns were discovered in Panjkent. These art pieces including most of the woodworks and paintings were moved to the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg, and other museums and institutions in Moscow for further analysis. Today, some of these pieces can be found at the museum next to the excavation site of the old city of Panjkent, the museum of the new city of Panjkent, and the National Museum of Tajikestan in Dushanbe.

The most important artistic remains of ancient Panjkent, however, is its mural painting. The walls of the palaces, the temples and one third of the houses were literally covered with a variety of images and paintings. One of the most popular secular subjects of Panjkent paintings is the story of Rustom, the hero of Shahnameh, the epic poem of ancient Iran which was composed by the poet Ferdowsi, during the reign of Samanid Empire (A.D. 875 – A.D. 999).110 Other secular and popular subject matters include banquets, single figurative paintings of the members of royalty and nobility, battles, games, sports, especially horse back riding scenes and even images from popular stories and fairy tales. The bright colors of the paintings are dominated by browns, blues, reds and shades and grades of yellow ochre. A strong naturalist realism dominates most of the paintings. However, a limited number of paintings appear surreal, reflecting the practice of a cult (or cults) and the images of fairy tales.

Panjkent’s mural paintings suggest that the town was a highly diverse community. The heart of Zarafshan Valley, where old Panjkent was located, had a majority Zoroasterian
population. The fire temple in the old city was decorated with numerous paintings, reflecting the power and influence of Zoroasterians in the region. One of the early eighth century paintings from the western wall of the palace in Panjkent, there is a fire altar surrounded by a group of mubads (Zoroasterian clergymen) and some of the members of the royalty. Some of the costumes, fabrics, belts, buckles, necklaces, fluffy trousers tucked into boots, ribbons and other ornaments in this painting, and many others, display Sassanian elements and influences.

There were series and sequences of images that suggest one, or a series of local cults that were popular in Panjkent. One exceptional architectural monument, which faced east, was a temple dedicated to the cult of Mithra (Mehr) the sun god. Some of the cult images included worshippers and donors performing rituals of carrying vessels and gifts. The image of a deity seated on a throne with a long beard has been identified as Zurvan, the god of time, a very old and highly respected supernatural force. There were also communities of Nestorian Christians in and around Panjkent. A dish with Christian scenes from the Holy Writ was unearthed within the area. There were also communities of Buddhists and Manichaean believers who had settled in the area. Mahayana (the Great Vehicle) Buddhism flourished in the first century, five hundred years after the birth of Buddha (560 B.C. – 480 B.C.) during the reign of the Kushanid Empire (1st c. A.D. - 4th c. A.D.) to the south of Soghdia. From Central Asia the thirty-two major and eighty minor features of Buddha traveled to China, Korea and Japan. Many of the Buddhist terminologies entered the Soghdian language and were adopted by the Manichaean community.
Manichaeanism, was a third century religious movement, which traveled to Central Asia. Mani, the founder of the religion, with a Judeo-Christian background, synthesized Zoroasterianism, Buddhism and Christianity in his teachings. Unlike the Sassanian and the Roman Empires, which persecuted Manichaeans, Central Asia tolerated the community and provided it with a safe haven. By the eighth century Manichaeanism had established itself as the state religion of the Uyghur court. Scattered pieces of Manichaean manuscripts were found in various parts of Central Asia, reflecting a variety of styles of illuminations and suggesting the important role of images in educating and indoctrinating the new converts. It is believed that Panjkent had a strong Manichaean community. Buddhism, however, was not a dominant faith in Panjkent and its influences remained strong in the domain of the Kushanid Empire (A.D.1st – A.D.4th centuries) to the south, Kocha the Buddhist kingdom to the east, and Tibet to the south from the eighth century onward. On one of the walls of the Hindu temple to the northeast of the city a colorful image of Hindu supreme deities Brahma (the creator), Vishnu (the preserver), Siva (the destroyer) and Ganish (the deity of good luck) was painted. There were also scenes resembling images from the Indian epic Mahabhrata (Virataparavan), including images of horses and elephants.

One way of saving the ancient city of Panjkent from total disintegration is rebuilding, preserving and recreating it, including all the murals on the walls where they belonged. United Nations affiliated institutions, some of the international private and public firms may be willing to collaborate in saving the old city. A new excavation season is planned to begin soon, and with the consultation and help of Tajik experts who have worked at
the site, and contribution and help from other international specialists, Panjkent could turn into one of the most fascinating and educational archeological sites in the world.
Rustam and other Shahnameh warriors, wall painting, 6th/7th c. Panjkent, Tajikistan. Rick & Susie Graetz
Chapter 9

The Golden Age of Samanids

By the second half of the ninth century a genuine Persian renaissance was developing in Khorasan, in the northeastern Iran, under the patronage of the Samanid dynasty, which claimed Sassanian ancestry. Throughout the tenth century in Bokhara, in present day Uzbekistan, a new yet characteristically Persian culture emerged. Bokhara was an ancient city and since the time of the Persian Achamenid dynasty, it had been one of the major urban centers of the region.

Bokhara’s Cultural Renaissance

The old Bokhara or Qohandiz (Qala) was one of the oldest cities in Central Asia. An extension of the Zarafshan River, the Shahrud, flowed through the city. The city retained its place as one of the main centers of Persian civilization until the imposition of Russian rule over the region and the assignment of the city to a new Uzbek Republic in the late 1920s. The Bokhara of Parthian and Sassanid times included the ark (citadel), and the surrounding suburbs known as shahristan. The ark was destroyed by the invading Arabs in A.D. 722. Following the revival of Bokhara began during the reign of the Persian Samanids (A. D. 815 – A.D. 999). The Persian Samanid dynasty traced its roots to Saman Khoda, a recent convert from Zoroasterianism to Islam who claimed lineage from a Persian Sassanian general.
Saman was a nobleman and landowner who was born and raised near the city of Balkh district in present-day northern Afghanistan. After serving as the representative of the Abbasid caliphs in the province of Khorasan, (northeastern Iran and northwestern Afghanistan today), the family of Saman achieved great power and prominence. Four of Saman’s grandsons were appointed governors of Chach (Tashkent), Ustrushana, Samarqand, Ferghana and Herat. Under the leadership of Saman’s great grandson Ismail Samani (892 – 907), the Samanid dynasty reached the zenith of its power. It is under the leadership of Shah Ismail, that the system of central and local state administration (diwans) was established. The army, as well as internal and external security of the country was given especial attention. Opportunities for agricultural, economical, and commercial activities were increased. Cultural, scientific, literary, and artistic traditions were revived and appreciated. New canals and hydro-technical installations were constructed. Wheat, barley, rice, millet, and oilseeds were cultivated. Vineyards were expanded and orchards of apricots, cherries, plums, grapes, pomegranates, figs, walnuts, and almonds more than ever were created. As far as the affairs of the Samanid Empire Maqdisi writes, “The character of the Samanids, their appearance and their respect for people of learning make them the best rulers.”

It was during Samanid rule that Rudaki Samarqandi, (A.D. 858 – A.D. 941) one of the greatest of all Persian poets and the first literary giant of new Persian literature, composed his poems. Rudaki was born in A.D. 858 and served as the court poet during the reign of the Samanid ruler, Nasr (A.D. 914 – A.D. 943). Under the influence of the Samanid monarchs who supported the revival of Persian culture and language, another giant of Persian poetry, the epic poet Ferdowsi (935 – 1020), composed the Shahnameh.
(Book of Kings), which still serves as the national epic of all Persian/Tajik/Dari speakers of the world. It recounts the history of ancient Iranians from the dawn of history to the fall of the Persian Sassanian dynasty in the 7th century A.D. Epics of pre-historic and ancient monarchs, warriors, and heroes, their struggles and the glories of their victories, had been handed down for centuries. It was during the enlightened reign of the Sassasian emperor Khusro Anushervan (531 – 579) that a systematic attempt was made to collect pieces of literature and historical documents from all over the empire. A group of scholars synthesized the material, collected, and presented it as the “Khvatai namak” in Pahlavi, or Middle Persian. The book was translated into Arabic in the ninth century; however, in A.D. 976, the Samanid monarch, Nuh II, asked the poet, Daqiqi, to compose it in verse in modern Persian. Daqiqi was murdered, after a relatively short period of time working on the text. It was Ferdowsi, who, after thirty years of labor, finished the Shahnameh, or Book of Kings in A.D. 1010.  

Other giants of the Samanid era included the prominent physician and scholar Avicenna (d. 1037), who wrote a book on medicine, *Qanun* which was used as a medical text for over five hundred years at European universities. The historian, geographer and astronomer Biruni, (d. 1048) described ways of determining the specific gravities of the minerals. Narshakhi (d. 959), wrote *The History of Bokhara*, Balkhi recounted *Marvels of the Lands* and the scholar and mathematician Khwarazmi wrote extensively on mathematics, especially on logarithm and algebra.
Bokhara after Samanids

Besides Bokhara, the cities which served as the cultural, social, and economic centers of the Samanid state included Nishapur, Herat, Merv, Balkh, Samarkand, Khujand, and Termez. The mausoleum of Ismail Samani in Bokhara, both in its structural development and brilliant use of decorative elements exerted a strong influence on subsequent Islamic architecture. Simple yet impressive in scale, the dome centered mausoleum’s, harmonious and thoroughly studied proportions, along with its vigorous and inventive ornamentation, combined to rank it among the masterpieces of Persian architecture. Brick was used with a vivacity and intensity that had no precedent.

Bokhara and other urban centers of Central Asia were devastated by the Turkic and Mongol invasions of the region, which started with the arrival of the Seljuks in the 11th century and culminated in the destruction of urban life across Central Asia by the Mongols in the 13th century. It was only during the reign of Timur (1336 – 1405), particularly in the second half of the 14th century that some of the region’s most culturally significant urban centers were rebuilt.

During Timurid rule, in the early 15th century, a religious school was built in Bokhara by the Timurid prince Ulug Beg. In the early 16th century, however, Bokhara was declared the capital of the Shaibanids (A.D. 1503 – 1598), an Uzbek dynasty, who managed to expel the Timurids out of the western Central Asia. Timur’s great grandson Babur went on to establish the Mughul dynasty in India. A famous sixteenth century construction which has survived in Bokhara, and became a popular Sufi gathering place, was Khaneghah-e Khoja Zaynadin, built in 1544.
The Janaid dynasty (A.D. 1599 – 1785), ruled from Bokhara, and their influential Khan, Imam Quli Khan (A.D. 1619 – 1636) ordered the construction of the Lab-e Hawz complex (1620 -1623), in the heart of the city. He also finished the construction of Shirdar School of Samarkand. One of his descendents, Abdulaziz Khan (1647 – 1680), built the Telakari School in Samarkand. During the rule of Mangits (1785 – 1920), however Bokhara came under Russian protection in 1868. A few years later, General Konstantine Petrovich von Kaufmann, was appointed as the first Russian Governor General of the Turkestan region, and the age of Russian rule in Bokhara began.
Rudaki mausoleum, Haft-Rud. Rudaki, Tajikistan. Rick & Susie Graetz
Chapter 10

Timurid's Golden Age: Rebuilding Samarkand

The city of Samarkand is located in the fertile Zerafshan Valley in what is today Uzbekistan. Samarkand is the ideal city in which to study the architecture and extensive ceramic art of the 14th and 15th centuries in the context of impressive interiors and exterior decorations. The ancient city of Afrasiab (old Samarkand), located to the north of the present city, was one of the most important ancient cities on the Silk Road. It was demolished and its inhabitants massacred by the Mongols in the 13th century. Masson in 1919, and Vyatkin in 1925, visited the ancient site and conducted a brief archeological survey on it. In 1989, a Franco Uzbek team reopened the excavation of the ancient city of Afrasiab, one of the largest excavation sites in Central Asia. A small percentage of the ancient city of Afrasiab has been excavated. Two palaces and one temple belonging to the 8th century have been identified.

Afrasiab (old Samarkand) was destroyed by Mongols in the 13th century and by Timur in 14th century. Timur (1336 – 1405), however, decided to rebuild the city and designated it as his new capital in the second half of the 14th century. One of Timur’s most famous buildings is the Gur-e Amir, which was designated as the ruler's tomb. The dome of Gur-e Amir is 112 feet high, and enriched by sixty-four round flutes, and flanked by minarets 83 feet high. It is set on a high but narrow cylindrical drum at the base of the dome. The dome is covered with bright blue tiles and a high drum, ornamented with inscription. The interior holds a superb mosaic portal built in 1454 by the Persian artist Mohamad Mahmud Isfahani.

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During his reconstruction of Samarkand, Timur carried out other superb construction works. He built a citadel in 1370, and within its walls included a residence, a guardhouse, as well as administrative and military buildings. He then set about redesigning the city and planning other new buildings. Bibi Khanum complex, named after the queen of the empire, was the largest Timurid architectural project. It was never completed by Timur and his successors. Only in 1975 did the Soviet authorities decide to finish the building. Several years after the fall of the Soviet Union, the Uzbek government declared the completion of the building.

Bibi Khanum complex stood within a high wall. Its rectangular plan measured 110 X 170 meters. In typical Persian fashion, it contained a courtyard of 65 X 75 meters, and four ivans, one in the center of each façade. At the four corners of the great enclosing wall, four polygonal minarets, in pairs, flanked a monumental pishtaq and framed the principal ivan that led to the room containing the mihrab or a great central hall. A forty-meter-high dome, covered with blue-green ceramic tiles stands next to two shorter domes. The tallest dome included thirty-six thick ribs enlivened by blue, white, and orange ceramic tiles.

Of course, there were other architectural structures built in Samarkand in the second half of the 15th century, including Ak Saray (White House), built in the 1470s. Sixteen relatively small architectural monuments, covered with ceramic tiles, were built at the Shah Zinda, where a number of Timur's relatives were buried. The next golden age of Central Asia culture and arts would begin in the 16th and 17th century, after Shah Ismail Safavi founded the Safavid Empire in Iran.
The Safavid’s Golden Age of Culture and Arts

The Safavid’s Golden Age, as Chardin reports, in 1666, Isfahan, the capital of the Safavids (1491 – 1722), had forty-eight schools, one hundred seventy-three public baths and one hundred eighty-two caravanserais. The great Maydan Shah (Royal Square, 1500 X 450 feet), of Isfahan, scene of maneuvers, processions, and games, especially polo, is surrounded by two-storied arcades. Today, there are 180 shops surrounding the royal square. Opposite, at the north end of the royal square, is the royal caravanserai and bazaar, and at the middle of the western side is the palace of Ali Qapu, the seat of the government, while facing it, across the maydan (square), is the mosque of Shaykh Lutf Allah.

The era of Shah Abbas I (1589 – 1627) was the beginning of the great period of Safavid architecture. Isfahan was reconstituted with so many palaces, schools, bridges, parks, avenues, pools, public baths and mosques that European travelers referred to it as “half the world,” and wrote extensively of its beauty. In fact, the remodeling of Isfahan began with a great north south avenue named Chahar Bagh. Chahar Bagh was a very wide tree lined avenue, leading directly to the river Zayandeh Rud. Then the avenue continued over the famous bridge of “Seyu Se Pol” (thirty three arches), also known as “Alaverdi Khan” bridge (over 900 feet long and 40 feet wide), named after the Georgian general of the Safavid, who later became the governor of Fars province. Downstream from Alaverdi Khan bridge, another bridge called “Pol e Khaju” Khaju Bridge is 4500 feet was built in the mid 17th century by the Safavids. On the other bank lay the attractive Armenian suburb of Julfa, with its historical museum, church, and complexes. The Isfahan palaces, of which two have survived, are exceedingly modest, in comparison to ancient
Achaemenid and Sassanian royal palaces and constructions. The Chehel Sutun Palace (Forty Columns), stands in a wooded park, on the edge of a pool, seventy meters long. The palace includes a central talar, or columnar porch (built in 1647), a form used in palace, temple, mosque, and home for centuries. At its simplest, it is only a roof high porch constituting the façade. When attached to a royal building (The Talar), it provides a huge outdoor reception hall, and is susceptible to lavish embellishments including mirror plated columns, panels and stalactites, and polychrome mosaic ceilings. The interior of this palace is covered with painted ornament of both figurative and abstract designs and capped with ceiling vaults of intense harmonious colors. The palace of the Ali Qapu, constructed in the early 17th century, on the Maydan Shah (Royal Square) of Isfahan, was the center of political power. It is seven floors tall, square in plan. It has a huge reception hall capable of holding more than two hundred courtiers. The talar of the palace of Ali Qapu, one hundred feet off the ground, with a raised terrace under a roof supported by tall wooden pillars, commands a fine view over the city with mosques, domes, and minarets, and particularly over the activities of the maydan below. The interior is covered with delicate polychrome reliefs. The Palace of Ali Qapu contains halls of reception, music, and dance. Many rooms for private entertainment include delicate ceilings made of carved and painted stucco composed of many tiny openwork domes fitted together like the component niches in muqarnas, have fireplaces and open on one side, evidencing again the Persian technique of bringing the out-of-doors into the home.

Shah Abbas was an administrative genius, and re-established communication in the empire, by building many bridges and roads. Carpet making became a high art, and many of the woven silk carpets were made, as well as knotted garden designs. Isfahan played a
central role in rug-making, but of course there were many other cities where the rug industry was supported by the monarch, including Tabriz, Kashan, Naiin, and Kerman. The predominant motifs were animals, trees, flowering plants, and leaves.\textsuperscript{124}
Chapter 11

Satrap of Khwarazmia – Toprak Kala, Urganj and Khiva

Neolithic Cultures

Khwarazmia excavation at Toprak Kala, began under supervision of P. Preobzhensky, in 1929. As the leading archeologist of the Museum of Ethnography of the Peoples, S.P. Tolstov resumed the excavation of Toprak Kala between 1932 and 1934. Although Tolstov returned briefly to Toprak Kala in 1938, it was after WWII, between the years of 1951 and 1957 that he became fully committed to the Khwarazm. S. P. Tolstov, a renowned archeologist and ethnographer by using aerial photography discovered hundreds of sites, and mapped the roads and settlements.

The Neolithic culture of Khwarazm is known as the Kalteminar culture, a term introduced by Tolstov, from the name of a village near the site. The first Neolithic occupation site to be investigated in Khwarazm is Dzhanbas-Kala. The animal remains found show that the main occupations of the inhabitants were hunting and fishing. They lived in large huts with an area of approximately 3000 square feet, roofed with rushes, each of which could accommodate a large family unit of over one hundred people. Varied material found on the site included stone tools and bones, and fragments of pottery with stamped and incised decorations. Similar constructions from the same period were found in southern Xinjiang and recently in western Kazakhstan and in the lower Volga region.
Khwarazmian Bronze Age

The most informative Bronze Age site in Khwarazmia is the site of Kokcha III, where a tomb was excavated which yielded interesting anthropological and cultural material. The dead were frequently buried in couples, a man and a woman lying face to face. Various objects were buried along with the dead. The pottery consisted mainly of cooking pots decorated with simple patterns, usually incised, in the form of straight or zigzag lines or simple geometric motifs. The bronze articles included awls, pendants, and bracelets. The inhabitants of these settlements were farming, based on artificial irrigation, and stock rearing including horses and other domesticated animals. The process of assimilation between the different cultures of Central Asia which can be observed at the end of the Bronze Age intensified.

Ancient Civilization of Khwarazmia

Tolstov discovered a great many remains of ancient irrigation systems of the middle of the first millennium BC. Some of the major irrigation works discovered by Tolstov in Khwarazmia date back as far as the first half of the first millennium BC especially when Khwarazmia became the sixteenth satrap (province) of the Achaemenid Empire. At this time Khwarazmia was dominated by Massagetae Saka/Scythians. Prosperity and urbanization of Khwarazmia continues through the Parthian Empire era (247 BC – AD 224), Kushan Empire (AD 30 – AD 320), and Sassanid Empire (AD 224 – AD 651). Khwarazmia irrigation system, however, underwent a substantial reduction in the 4th - 6th century AD, following the collapse of the Kushan Empire and Hephtalites invasion and
occupation of Central Asia (AD 484 – AD 557). Consequently, because of the breakdown of efficient government, the region entered a period of severe economic and social crises. From 1958 Historical Institute of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences took over the expedition of the northern Amu-Darya delta. Khwarazmia expedition led by Gudkova in 1960 to 1962, entered a new stage yielding spectacular results in Tok-Kala. As a result of Arab invasion of 8th and 9th centuries AD, the irrigation system of Khwarazmia was further reduced, but a remarkable recovery, accompanied by the setting up of a strong authority of Samanid Dynasty in the 9th and 10th centuries. There were series of mass migration of very powerful tribes through Central Asia between 11th and 13th centuries, but the Mongol invasion of the 13th century, however, destroyed the whole system.

Khwarazmia was the area where successive waves of sedentary farming people from the Indus valley, Bactra, Parthia, Margiana, Soghdiana and neighboring lands met and intermingled with similar movements from the pastoral societies of the Eurasian steppes. This Iranian-speaking population gave rise to the civilizations of Central Asia’s sedentary and nomadic peoples. There was a gradual transition from a tribal society to the formation of social hierarchy in the context of statehood, which involved the introduction and intensification of farming economy, urbanization, consolidation of ethnic communities and the emergence of the historical regions with a sedentary culture through the first millennium BC. The transition phase, in which Central Asia advanced from its primeval condition to the formation of an agricultural and pastoral economy, is reflected in the oldest Central Asian text, the Avesta. Khwarazm was the first region in which Zoroaster’s teachings spread. “Greater Khwarazmia” social-cultural character includes the entire Aral and Syr Darya belt of the northern Central Asia, which was then a zone of
sedentary farming and nomadic pastoral people, stretching from Khwarazmia through Chach and Usrushana to Ferghanain the east. Incidentally, Khwarazmians are also mentioned by Herodotus and Hecataeus of Miletus.

**Khwarazmian Iron Age**

In Khwarazmia during the Iron Age a rapid growth of towns and their fortifications, the construction of city citadels and the development of agriculture by artificial irrigation works are discovered. The most interesting Early Iron Age culture of ancient Khwarazmia was that of Amirabad, in the tenth to eight centuries BC. Dozens more settlements were found in the lower reaches of the former channels of Akcha Darya, the ancient delta of the Amu Darya. The most interesting was Yakka-Parsan II, alongside which were found ancient fields, and the remnants of Amirabad period irrigation system. The old channel passed near by, its banks being reinforced with dykes. More than twenty houses were found in the Yakka-Parsan II settlement. Large numbers of storage pits were found around the houses, and the entire site is rich in animal bones, pottery, grain-querns and so on. The houses stood between two canals that merged to the south, all the doors giving on to the canals. Rectangular in ground plan, the houses were 90 to 110 square meters in area and had two or three rooms. The interiors contained many storage pits and post-holes, each with a long fireplace in the center. The major finds were pottery, hand-made with a darkish brown, red or grayish slip, the shoulders of the bowls being decorated with small crosses, lattice-work or fir trees. According to S. P. Tolstov, the Amirabad culture dates from the tenth to eighth centuries BC. Other finds include bronze artifacts – a needle with an eye, a sickle with a shaped handle, a bronze arrowhead with a shaft – and stone moulds for casting shaft-hole arrowheads and sickles. A bronze sickle,
large numbers of grain-querns and the advanced irrigation network and fields together show that agriculture was widely practiced, while the bone finds further indicate that the population was engaged in stock breeding.\textsuperscript{134}

The sedentary farmers and pastoralists of Khwarazmia represent the late Bronze Age Amirabad cultural pattern seen in the Dzhanbas and Yakka-Parsan settlements. At that time Khwarazmians were master craftsmen with settled houses.\textsuperscript{135} Khwarazmia develops new forms of economy based on sedentary farming and urban culture with strong central authority and is included in the Achaemenid Empire at the height of its prosperity in the sixth and fifth centuries BC.\textsuperscript{136} The oldest Khwarazmian city, and the key monument of the Achaemenid period, was Kyuzeli-gir. It lay on the left bank of the Amu Darya (Oxus) in the Sariamish region of the delta. Standing on a natural elevation, roughly triangular in ground-plan, it occupied an area of 25 ha. The city was surrounded by a powerful defensive wall with oval bastions. Its residential district was densely packed with buildings of rectangular unbaked brick and pakhsa. It had an advanced pottery industry, based on the wheel, and art objects of a type common in Saka/Scythian burial complexes of the period have been found.\textsuperscript{137} Another early city of the same date, Kalali-gir, was surrounded by triple walls with bastions and had four gates with entrance barbicans and a hill-top palace.\textsuperscript{138}

In Khwarazmia, in the eastern part of the south Akcha Darya delta, the agricultural oasis of Dingildzhe dates from the fifth century B.C. The eastern part of the site was occupied by a large house with many rooms and out buildings, the western part by a large courtyard. The whole was surrounded by an outer wall 2 meter thick, built of large rectangular unbaked bricks of archaic type. The archeologist who studied the farmstead
suggests that it might have been a home for extended family of the district governor. Its inhabitants were engaged in agriculture and cattle breeding, pottery, metal work and making farm products. Dingildzhe points to the relatively high standard of architecture, building techniques and design that prevailed in ancient Khwarazmia.\[13\]

**Walled Cities of Ancient Khorazmia:**

**Centers of Cultural Activities & Silk Road Trade**

Between the fourth and second centuries BC, initiating stage of the silk road, Khwarazmia had a series of walled cities with strong moats, complex fortifications and gateway barbicans. They defended farming districts that lay along the silk road caravan routes, and served as centers of crafts, trade and culture. They include Dzhanbas-kala and Bazar-kala, with precise and regular ground-plans, on the right bank of Hazarasp and Dzhingirbent on the left bank of Amu Darya.\[140\] Khwarazmia’s ancient cities and fortresses have several characteristics features. They were either built on marshland where the farming population met the steppe, or stood on the major trade routes. Fortresses on the plains, such as Hazarasp, had a regular rectangular ground-plan; smaller fortresses stood on high ground, such as Kalali-gir II, Lesser Kirkkiz, Burli-kala; and at the foot lay undefended secondary settlements, such as Guldursun, Akcha Gelin, Kunya- uaz and Toprak-kala. Their size and strength contrasted sharply with the mass of small unfortified settlements in the farming oases.\[141\]

Excavations of one of the ancient capitals of Khwarazm led to the discovery of the ancient fortress of Koy Krylgan Kala (400 B. C. – A. D. 400), which was centered around a circle-shaped castle.\[142\] The castle was identified as one of the earliest ancient centers for astronomical observations and studies. The town was built in a circle around the
fortress. Ancient documents found in the area suggest that the town played a central role in the life of the region in ancient times. The outstanding structure of ancient Khwarazmia was the great fortified sanctuary of Koy-Krilgan-kala of fourth century B.C. to fourth century A.D., in the southern Akcha Darya delta, on the right bank of Amu Darya. Circular in ground-plan with a diameter of about ninety meter, it consists of a large cylindrical building surrounded at a distance of fifteen meter by a fortress wall. The site has two period of occupation. The lower floor was divided into two identical halves, suggesting that the structure may have been used as an astronomical observatory, as is suggested by its alignment. The lower floor excavation contained an assemblage of well-formed vessels with red slip, small-stepped altars and terracotta figurines representing deities of the Khwarazmian pantheon. The upper strata, however, yielded a different series of pottery with light colored slips similar to Kushan-style vessels and coins.143

The walls of cities, fortresses and settlements in ancient Khwarazmia were ten to twenty meter high and five to eight meter thick. To strengthen the defenses, supplementary outer walls were built five to twenty meter from the fortress walls, with open ground intervening. Particular attention was given to the gates, which sometimes had additional projecting bastions at the entry, on the corners and along the sides.144 There is a striking variety of burial sites in Khwarazm at this period and a growing influence of the Zoroasterian rite with its ossuary type of burial in clearly discernible. The rich mausoleum complexes from the late second and early first millennia B.C. with their monumental architecture and pottery, made by skilled craftsmen at Uygarak, Chirik-Rabat and Babish-Molla, and continuation of unique architectural entities from the first century B.C. to the early Middle Ages suggest a distinctive, complex culture with
advanced pastoral economy alongside agriculture. There were large cities, smaller settlements, a system of fortress strongholds with thick walls and towers and enormous burial grounds. The irrigation system, using mountain streams and springs, helped develop the agriculture economy. Craftsmen also played an important role in the city life. The powerful defenses of towns, its complex architecture and planning structure and fine pottery are evidence of the advanced social life and cultural level of the city.\textsuperscript{145}

Khwarazm was also famous for its calendars, which were created based on the daily movement of the sun and the moon.\textsuperscript{146} Keeping such calendars necessitated stationary observations of the daily movements of the moon and sun and the position of the stars at the vernal and autumnal equinoxes and the summer and winter solstices, which in turn presupposed a thorough knowledge of astronomy. Biruni provides us some information about astronomy in ancient Khwarazmia. He mentions that an astronomer was called akhtar-venik in ancient Khwarazmia. Of course, more extensive information has been preserved about astronomy in pre-Islamic Persian world beyond Khwarazm. To clarify this point, here is a brief example: One of the very first significant contributors to the development of Arabic literature was Ibn Muqaffa. He was born in Firuzabad to a Zoroastrian family and knew knowledge of Middle Persian (Pahlavi), went to study Arabic in Basra. He translated from Pahlavi into Arabic such works as the “Khowaday-namak” (Book of Lords), “Ayn-nama”, “Mazdak-nama”, “Kitab Taj”, “Kalila wa Dimna”, “Risalat al-sahaba” (on the structure of ruling institution), “al-Adab al-Kabir” (on politics and the rules of communication), “al-Adab al-sahir” (on morality and ethics).\textsuperscript{147}
During the reign of Abbasid Caliph al-Mamun (813-833), many scholars from Khwarazm and the rest of Central Asia were forced to move to Baytal Hikma (house of wisdom) in Shammasiyya district of Baghdad. Abbasid were building their new capital few miles from Ctesiphon the last Capital of Persian Parthian Empire and Persian Sassanid Empire (231- 651). Al Mamun capital in Khorasan was the city of Marv (813-819). While staying for six years in Marv, al Mamun gathered astronomers, mathematicians and scientists of Central Asia including Khwarazm, Chach, Ferghana and Khurasan. One of the most impressive scholars leaving Khwarazm and Central Asia for Baghdad was Muhammad b. Musa Khwarazmi. (Other scholars included Yahya b. Mansur, Khalid b. Abd al-Malik Marwarrudhi, Abbas b. Said Jawaheri, Abu Tayyib Sanadb. Ali, Ahmad b. Muhhamad b. Kathir Farghani, Ahmad b. abd Allah Habash Hasib, Abd al-Hamid Ibn Turk Khuttali).

The Shammasiyya district of Baghdad had also a high concentration of translators including Nirizi, Battani, Hajjaj b. Qurra, Ibrahim b. Sami, Husayn b. Ishaq, Umarb. Farrukhan, Thabit b. Qurra. Central Asia in general and Khwarazm in particular enjoyed a large number of extraordinary, high level educated scholars in early medieval times. Following is a brief analysis of only two of these scholars.

Khwarazmi

Muhammad b. Musa Khwarazmi was a Persian scientist, mathematician, geographer and cartographer who was born in 780 in Khiva, Khwarazmia. In the field of mathematical geography, his “Kitab Surat al-arz” (Book of the map of the earth) is one of his earliest works creating map of the earth based on seven climes, with additional information on the subject.
He wrote a book on calculations involving restoration and confrontation "al-Mukhtasar fi hisab al-jabr wa moqabala". During the reign of Abbasid caliph al-Mamun, in Bayt al-Hikma, Baghdad. Khwarazmi composed the oldest astronomical tables and the oldest astronomical work in which was translated into Latin in medieval Europe. His work focused on lunar anomalies, eclipses, parallaxes, the inclination of the elliptic length of the tropic and on the sidereal year. He was the first scholar in history to discard the idea of the static universe and he strongly upheld the idea of a dynamic universe. Khwarazmi's Algebra was twice translated into Latin in the twelfth century, by Robert of Chester and then by Gerard of Cremona, and influenced medieval European algebra.

Biruni

The life of the world renowned Persian historian, geographer and astronomer, Abu Rayhan Biruni (973 -1048), reflects the historical events of the late tenth and eleventh centuries in the region. Biruni was born in the city of Kath (Biruni today), Khwarazmia. Eighty of his more than 150 books were devoted to astronomy. Astronomers played a central role in old Khwarazmia during the Sassanian era because they designed calendars and identified the most important days and festivities of the coming year. Central Asia in general and Khwarazmia in particular in the early seventh century, was ethnically, still largely an Iranian land whose people used various Middle Iranian languages.

During the ninth and tenth centuries a remarkable development of civilization took place in Central Asia including Khwarazmia. Not only Bokhara the capital of Samanid but also Gurgandzh (Kunya-Urgang), and Khiva were famous centers of sciences and arts. By the end of tenth century Khwarazmia was one of the states of Samanid Empire. Samanid
capital was the city of Bokhara. Khwarazmia and Central Asia were enjoying the golden age of Samanid Empire (815 – 999), when Biruni was a young man. Meanwhile, Ziyarids State from its capital Gorgan to the south and southeast of the Caspian Sea and Buwayid Empire to the southwest of the Caspian Sea was extending their territory to the shores of the Persian Gulf and Mesopotamia. There was a military que against Samanid by one of their slave warriors Mahmud Qaznavi in 999. Because of the turbulances within the region Biruni leaves Khwarazmia and Central Asia. Biruni while wondering and seeking a safe haven, at one point he stopped at Ray (an ancient city to the south of Tehran today that had one of the largest libraries in the world). In Ray, Biruni visits Khojandi an exceptional astronomer who was working with a very large instrument he had built on the mountain above the city. By the year 1000, Biruni was at Gorgan, the capital of Qabus, the king of Ziyarid. Biruni dedicated his book “Chronology” to the king. In his book Chronology, Biruni refers to seven earlier books which he had written — one on decimal system, one on astronomical observations, three on astronomy, one on astrolabe, and two on history. In June 1004 Biruni returned to Khwarazm.

Khwarazm was, in general renowned for its art – its distinctive music and interesting dances. In the eleventh century Khwarazm had a local ruler, Abulabbas Mamun, who was highly educated, he held scholars, poets and performances in great esteem and loved to play a stringed instrument called “rud”. Biruni worked for seven years in Mamun’s circle, respected by the local king. Biruni built an instrument at Jurjanniya to observe solar meridian transit and made fifteen observations with the instrument in 1016.

In summer of 1017, Mahmud Qaznavi marched his army into Khwarazm and took Biruni with him to his capital Qazna (in Afghanistan today). In Qazna, Biruni observed a lunar
eclipse in Qazna, in September 17, 1019. One of the fastenating books written by Biruni is called “Shadows” which he wrote in 1021. The book includes theoretical and practical arithmetic, summation of series, combinatorial analysis, the rule of three, irrational numbers, ratio theory, algebraic definition, method of solving algebraic equations, geometry, trisection of the angle and other problems which cannot be solved with ruler and compass alone, conic sections, the sine theorem in the plane, and spherical triangle. “Shadows” is an extremely important source for our knowledge of the history of mathematics, astronomy and physics. Biruni had great contribution to geodesy and geography by introducing the techniques to measure the earth and distances on it, using triangulations. Biruni calculated the radius of earth in the eleventh century, while Europe obtained that in the sixteenth century. Biruni contributions to hydrostatics included some of the first measurement of specific weights and ratios between densities of metals including gold, mercury, lead, silver, bronze, copper, brass, iron, and tin.

Mahmoud Qaznavi invades India in 1022. Mahmoud took Biruni with to India, and while in India Biruni determined the latitudes of eleven towns in Punjab and Kashmir. Biruni wrote a book, a master piece called “India”. The book included Philosophy, religions, customs, systems of writing, mathematics, astronomy, astrology and the calendar of India. Biruni died in Qazna the capital of Qaznavids in 1048. Biruni wrote 146 books in his life time. Biruni corresponded with Abu-ali Sina (Avicenna). The eighteen letters that were exchanged between Biruni and Sina included topics on philosophy, astronomy, physics, and discussions on the nature of heat and light. The rule of Qaznavids was relatively short lived. The penetration of the Seljuks from north put an end to Qaznavid rule in 1040.
Chapter 12

Seljuks, Kara Khitaeyes and Mongols in Khwarazmia

The Seljuk Turks occupied Khwarazm between 1040 and 1141. Khwarazm was ruled by Seljuk sultans Arsalan (1156 -1172) and Takish (1172 – 1200) and the Sufi dynasty Qongrat independently by the mid 13th century. Sufi Lord Yusuf and Sufi Lord Sulayman were two of the famous local rulers of this period. By the beginning of the thirteenth century Gurganj became the capital of the powerful Khwarazmshahian Empire. The economic situation of the area have greatly improved. Towns were revived and irrigation farms were reclaimed. Crafts, especially pottery, had also recovered. This particular era is identified by new forms of richly decorated and elaborated jars. Glazed ceramics decorated in diverse colors of red, ochre, yellow, cinnamon, on white or yellowish background. Silk road trade was once again revived on all routes. Makdisi, mentions some of the popular items on the trade route including amber, nuts, timber, cattle, boats, cheese and fish. Gurganj as the capital of Khwarazmia at this junction was benefitting from all the new trade, interactions and communications. Kharazmians revived and built even a new belt of fortifications, signal towers, stone built caravansarais along the old silk road trade routes.

In 1220 (and again in 1273, 1276, 1279 and 1316), Khwarazm was devastated by the Mongol army, destructing the dams on the Amu Darya, flooding the city of Urganj. A new Urganj was built in 1231. The population of Khwarazm, however, was massacred again by Timur in 1379 and 1388. After a series of bloody invasions the city of Urganj failed to regain its former prosperity, but some of Urganj’s architectural structures did
survive. Sultan Takish Mausoleum of the 12th century, with its large conical shaped dome and massive symmetrical brick construction continues to dominate the cityscape. The use of cool colors, such as blue green ceramic tiles, broke up the dominating and warmer color tones of the yellowish cream and reddish brown bricks.

The blue-green tiles were used to elaborate the inscriptions that enriched the building. The cool-color tiles also broke the monotony of the solid brick background by creating patterns of diamonds and geometric lines around the upper part of the conical dome. Close by, a gigantic conical shaped minaret shot up to the sky. The Mausoleum of Tura Beg Khatun, the Queen of Khwarazm, was another impressive structure of this period to survive various nomadic invasions. It features an arcade entrance, with a large pinpointed arch, and dominant brick construction. The most impressive component of its construction is the interior of the dome, with its exquisite ceramic tile work of geometric and organic abstractions of warm and cool colors.

**Khwarazm under the Khanate of Khiva**

Parts of Central Asia and Khwarazm, were massacred by Timur in 1379 and 1388, however, he decided to rebuild Samarkand as his capital. The next golden age arrived during the reign of the Timurids, in early 15th century, when the neighboring city of Samarkand, to the south of Khwarazmia, was filled with great architecture, art, and literature brought by force from conquered lands especially from Shiraz. The Uzbek Shaibanids occupied large portions of Central Asia in the 16th century, and by the end of the 17th, three small Uzbek khanates were ruling parts of Central Asia from the cities of Khiva, Bukhara, and Kokand. The town of Khiva was chosen as the capital of the khanate of Khiva and would remain that until 1924. In Khiva, one of the most popular
destinations of newly wed couples was (and still is), the Pahlavan Mahmoud Khaneqah and mausoleum. It was a relatively small architectural structure which dominated by brick construction and an intense centralized green-blue ceramic tile dome (1247 – 1325).

One of the major districts of Khiva, known as Ishan Kala, was built in 1788, and another district known as Dishan Kala was added to the town in 1842. By 1804, the descendents of Qongrats, who had ruled the area after the Mongol invasion, once again emerged to rule Khiva.

One of the most influential khans of Khiva was Allah Quli Khan (1825 – 1842), who ordered the construction of Tash Kauli Palace. The ivan of the palace housed some of the most attractive wood carvings in the world. The tall columns, from top to the bottom, were carved with highly detailed and skillful wood working, a variety of curvilinear lines, and abstract patterns. The extensive use of various shades and grades of blue ceramic tiles, enough to cover all the walls of the Tash Kauli Palace, created a strong contrast between warm and cool colors, and contributed more depth to the space. Another impressive construction of the first half of the 19th century was the Madraseh of Allah Quli Khan. Symmetrical in structure, with a central arcade entrance, it held two floors of rooms on either side of the central entrance. Pin-pointed arches were used extensively throughout the building.

The last series of constructions in Khiva appeared at the time of the Mohamad Rahim Khan II (1863 – 1873). Mohamad Rahim Khan also built a school, and a hammam (public bath). The architectural style he chose followed the existing traditions of the area. Dominated by brick construction as it utilizes ceramic tile compositions as the dominant source of decoration, introducing and adding colors, shapes, lines, and creating
decorative elements. Located in ancient Khwarazmia, which is presently divided into the Karakalpak region of Uzbekistan and the Tashauz region of Turkmenistan, the city of Khiva was renovated into a walking museum after the Soviet authorities ordered the people living in the old town to vacate their homes. The residents of modern day Khiva live in the neighborhoods of the old town.

To the east of khanate of the Khiva, and khanate of Bokhara, the third small Uzbek khanate to come into existence in the 18th century. This was Kokand, which throughout its history enjoyed a close relationship with China’s Qing Empire. Alim and Umar, the two sons of Nar Buta Beg (1774 – 1789) established the Kokand khanate. Some of the famous Khans of Kokand include Shir Ali (1842 – 1842), and the two last independent khans Khudayar and Malla (1845 – 1875). Conflict within the ruling family and friction with other Uzbek Khanates within the region weakened the Kokand Khanate. In 1875, the Russian Czarist forces occupied Kokand and put an end to its kingdom.
Chapter 13

Central Asian Aristic Traditions

Ceramics

Besides Khiva, there were other cultural and economic centers in Central Asia including Bokhara, Afrasiab (Samarkand), Chach (Tashkand), Herat, Urganj, Merv, and Nishapur. These cities were among the most active cities in pottery production. Potters occupied large quarters in each city. The pottery of the ninth century to the beginning of the 13th century was divided into the two major categories of glazed and unglazed ware. Stamped ware became widespread in the 12th century, offering a particular wealth of inscriptions and organic and geometric decorative patterns or abstractions. The pottery pieces were elaborated by decorative motives of birds, including doves, pheasants, and ducks; animals such as mountain goats, horses, cheetahs, and lions; mythical creatures such as phoenixes; plants, pomegranates, and flowers; and even scenes from royal receptions. The geometric patterns included squares, triangles, and varieties of lines. Inscriptions occupied the rim of the plates, while the remaining surface was usually undecorated. One glazing technique with particular appeal was a lead glaze that resulted in a particular gloss to the ware.

After the Mongol invasion of the thirteenth century and the massacre of many of the inhabitants of cities in the region, particularly artisans and craftsmen, we witness a sharp decline in the quality of ceramic products. Ceramic production regained some of its quality after Timur decided to rebuild Samarkand as his capital and brought artisans from
all parts of his empire especially from the city of Shiraz. The city of Shiraz was not affected by the Mongol invasion. The architects and tile makers who were brought from Shiraz to Central Asia left a profound impact on the architectural styles of the 14th and 15th centuries, especially on the obsessive fashion with which some of the interiors and exteriors of the buildings were covered with ceramic tile works.\textsuperscript{158}

As a result of the drastic changes of the 14th century, the color of the ceramic tiles and their style of decorative motives changed. By the fifteenth century these tiles were among the most outstanding achievements of ceramic art in the world. Under khanate rule in Khiva, Bokhara, and Kokand the styles and techniques of the Timurid 14th and 15th centuries continued in Central Asia until the Russian Bolshevik revolution of 1917.

\textit{Metal Works & Jewelry}

Prior to the Mongol invasion the metal art of Khwarazmia and the rest of Central Asia, included magnificent silver gilt artifacts created in the manner and style of Sassanian and Soghdian ancient metal works.\textsuperscript{159} These included were well proportioned jugs with narrow necks and wide pear-shaped bodies, spoon-shaped hemispheric cups, round flat plates; and small jugs of various shapes decorated with relief, embossed, and engraved ornamentation. Many of the themes of this period resembled the compositions of Sassanian and Soghdian subject matter.

Some of the medieval metal works included inscriptions that distinguished them from the ancient pieces they were modeled on. New types of bronze and copper spherical jugs were created during this time. Engraving was the dominant technique of ornamentation. Carpet-like patterns were created through engraving. Popular motives of engraving of the
11th and 12th centuries included winged sphinxes and goats, griffins, human-headed birds, hunting scenes, and enthronements. The use of motives of animals such as deer, dog, leopard, hare, bird, and fish were extremely popular. Some of the engravings included medallion shaped rings on the body of the jug.

The pre-Mongol period bronze pieces from Marv and Herat reflected mastery of the technique of the period. Incrustation with silver thread began to be practiced at this time. Sixty artifacts intended for variety of uses from the 14th and 15th centuries were found near Registan in Samarkand. They included pots, cups, and jugs with vegetal geometric patterns.

Exceptional jewelry pieces, dating from the 8th century through the 12th century and then 14th century through the 16th century, made of gold, silver, and other metals, with insets of emerald, turquoise, cornelian, diamonds, rubies, sapphires, pearls, chalcedony, garnet, and crystal, reflected the richness of the material culture of the region. Thousands of Central Asian silver coins from this era have been found in Russia, Poland, Sweden, and Denmark, which exhibits the close commercial ties among these countries. Khwarazmian and Central Asian artisans also produced rare sophisticated silver, copper and brass besides jewelry, pottery, and metal works, other artifacts made of glass, wood, bone, and paper were also produced within the region. In the ninth and tenth centuries, decorative glass figures of birds, animals, fish, and medallions were manufactured in Termez and Afrasiab. Bone carvings, produced between the 8th and 16th centuries were also found, and they included pieces of a chess set from Samarkand as well as decorative spoons.
Wood Working

Wood panels frequently embellished the walls of the buildings at this time. Interiors of homes and palaces from the 14th through 16th century bear witness to the high artistic quality of wood carvers. Two masterpieces of wood carving included the 14th century mausoleum of Sayf al Din Bakharzi in Bokhara and the 15th century mausoleum of Shams al din Kulyal in Shahre Sabz. Both of these wood carvings are highly symmetrical and included stylized inscriptions, as well as geometric and organic ornamentations.16

Ikats, Suzani and Rug Manufacturing

During the pre-Mongol period, wool, cotton, linen, silk, and even blended fabrics were produced in Khwarazmia and the cities of Samarkand, Bukhara, Nishapour, and Merv and exported to other regions and countries.163 The variety of textile and carpet designs of the ninth and tenth centuries included decorative motifs of rosettes, spirals, garlands, buds, and floral patterns. Many carpets were created either for wall decoration or floor cover. Gold embroidered was used for a variety of purposes including, horse cloth and cover, cushions and pillows, robes, and other clothing items.164

Rugs have a special place in the social and cultural history of Central Asis. Soviet archeologists, discovered the earliest knotted rug in a frozen grave, in Pazyryk Kurgan, in Altai mountains, in Southern Siberia. It pre-dates all other known knotted rugs by over a thousand years. Medieval Persian literature contains quite a few references to Persian rugs. A number of different Central Asian and Iranian regions and towns remain famous today for their high-quality rugs, which utilize appealing color combinations, along with distinctive design and patterns. These include, Khiva, Tabriz, Isfahan, Bokhara,
Kashghar, Kashan, Khotan, Kerman, and Naiin. Turkmen rugs, however, had a particular place and appeal amongst rug admirers. The production of Turkmen weaving included a variety of utilitarian and decorative items, that were created with the same material, and in the same colors, but took different shapes and forms, including khorjin (bag), javal, saddle bags and a variety of bands, and decorative rugs for the interior and exterior of the yurt.

The main elements of traditional Turkman knotted rug design were known as *guls* (flowers). Turkman rugs were composed of repeated geometric shapes and forms; hence, although initially the motif of a flower was borrowed from nature, it was abstracted into geometric motifs. The semi-diamond shaped *guls* repeated on Turkman rugs were woven across different tribal regions, and the shape and details of the *gul* varied from one tribe to another. Traditionally, maroon, black, and pastel white colors were favored for Turkmen rugs. There are twenty eight major Turkman tribes; however, many of the Turkman rugs are identified by the name of Salor, Tekke, Saryk, Yomud, Ogurjali, Chaudor, Ersari tribes. The more recent wave of rugs woven in the region included some green and blue colors. Khiva in Khwarazmia is one of the major markets for Turkmen rugs.

**Book Making and Miniature Painting reflects the Popular Mode of Living**

Khwarazmians in particular, and in general the people of Central Asia, Afghanistan and Iran have always been artistic, poetic, and nature loving. The qualities and characteristics of the people’s feelings and thoughts were reflected in various styles of painting throughout many centuries. Epics, romances, histories, and fables provided artists with subjects to paint in exquisite detail. Clarity, quality of color, and elegance of composition
were the common characteristic of the Persian and Central Asian paintings. Gardens, orchards, and landscapes in spring were included in paintings that depicted poetry reading, story telling, and outdoor entertainment with music, dance, and wine drinking scenes. Elegant court banquets, as well as chess and polo matches were popular subject matters and often decorated and illuminated different kinds of manuscripts.

Masterpieces of book making—particularly those produced in the courts of Khiva, Samarkand, Herat, Shiraz, Tabriz, and Bokhara—were appealing, artistic and highly prized. Many illustrative artists of the time initially were trained and educated by the master artist Behzad. He originally lived in Samarkand, but moved to a number of other major cities. Behzad was in charge of Herat School, during the reign of Shahrokh, son of Timur. He then moved to Tabriz and continued his education and training of young artists at the court of Shah Ismail, the founder of Safavid dynasty of Iran. Behzad’s formula for creating manuscript illuminations included cityscapes with multi-figure subjects, and a variety of contrasting cool and warm toned colors, alternating with extensive use of earth tones and neutralized colors. In countless examples of book making from this time, Behzad’s techniques and training may be reflected in the stamped and gilded decorations of the book’s cover, to the elegant calligraphy of the manuscript, to the diverse ornamentation and bright colors and illuminations and illustrative miniature themselves.

Many manuscript illuminations created by the royal atelier were images created for popular books on literature, poetry, and history, which were commissioned by princes and princesses of various royal families. The similarity of images from Khiva, Samarkand, Bokhara, Herat, Shiraz, and Tabriz can be attributed to the influence of...
Behzad, since many of them were designed and produced by Behzad’s students, who were now residing at different courts, and were trying to follow his earlier formula. By the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century the Iranian city of Isfahan was chosen by the Safavid dynasty as the new capital of their powerful empire. The School of Isfahan led by a new master, Abbasi offers a new vocabulary and formula materializing painting compositions. The new formula concentrated on single portraits of young men and women, often reflecting leisure time, or melancholy, in the face, body language, or impressions.

The School of Isfahan, led by Abbasi, produced many masterpieces with strong monochromatic tendencies. In book art, however, the climax of miniature illumination that started over a century before in Samarkand, and expanded into Khiva, Herat, Bokhara, Shiraz and Tabriz, continued in Isfahan, with new elegant and exquisite accomplishments in the late 16th and early 17th century. The styles of Persian miniature illumination continued in Central Asia until the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917.

For over seven thousand years, Central Asian people have left a record of distinguished cultural artifacts. Like creators and innovators of any age or period, they sought to respond as creatively as possible to the necessities of their societies as a whole, and those of their individual patrons. In doing so they have given us a timeless source through which we can detect the dynamic stages of their creativity throughout history, and also the breadth of our own rich cultural and artistic heritage.
Pottery market, Bishkik, Kyrgyzstan. Rick & Susie Graetz

Contemporary artifacts, Dushanbeh, Tajikistan. Rick & Susie Graetz
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6. Ibid, 249 – 270.

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Also, see: Bernshtam, A. N. (1952b), Saimaly-Tash: Fergana Rock engravings, Sovietskaya Etnografiya, 2.
Also, see: Bernshtam, A. N. (1954), Po Sledam Drevnih Kultur: Tyan-Shan and Pamirs Engravings.
Also, see: B. A. Litvinskiy, Tadzhik Archeology, Sovietskaya Arkheologiya, (1967a), 3.
Chapter 2:


25. Scythian and Saka warriors played active role in the military politics of the
Also, see: C. Beckwith, Empires of the Silk Road, Princeton University Press, 2009.
26 See: H. L. Jones, The Geography of Strabo, The Loeb Classical Library, 8 V.
27. For more information on S. Hedin explorations in Central Asia see: Across the Gobi Desert, New York, Greenwood, 1968; Riddles of the Gobi Desert, London: Routledge, 1933; and My Life as an Explorer, New York, Boni and Liveright, 1925.


37. According to Chinese bone inscriptions, the famous “shih-chi” (historical record) by Sima Qian, Mongolia and Dzungaria were inhabited by the tribes such as: Huns (Hsiung-nu), Hu, Tung Hu (Eastern Hu), Hsi Hu (western Hu), and (Hsien-pi).


42. Ibid, pp. 171-190.

43. To consider the important Turkish factor in details, consult various chapters of D. Sinor, The Cambridge History of Early Inner Asia, Cambridge University Press, 1994. Strong presence of Huns is felt in eastern and central Europe, as Hungarians and Magjars, of today.


Kunstkammer, the first real museum in Russia, was founded in 1714 by Peter the Great. The following year, Alexis Demidov, owner of a metallurgical industry with many mines in Siberia, donated twenty gold objects found in kurgans to the museum. The next year,
of the regional governors, M.P. Gagarin of Tobolsk, sent the museum fifty-six more
gold objects. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the Academy of Sciences of
Russia sent scholars to southern Siberia for excavations and research around the Irtysk, Ob, and Yenisei rivers. The director of the first expedition was D. Messerschmidt, who,
in 1721, expressed his surprise in his diary that digging up gold and silver from ancient
graves had become a trade in Siberia already. One of the most surprising areas of
southern Siberia is the Minussinsk district where thousands of ancient kurgans surrounded
by vertical stones are a distinctive feature of the landscape. Meanwhile, by the first half
of the eighteenth century G. F. Miller, had conducted research in Siberia from 1733-
1743. At that time, the Scythian/Saka culture was unknown to everyone, hence, the
mysterious ancient gold and silver objects skillfully formed and shaped as domesticated
or wild animals created naturally or conceptually, caused a great sense of shock and awe.
Miller wrote a history of this vast area, mentioning the archeological finds.
The earlier gold and silver objects from the Siberian burials entered Kunstkammer
Museum in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth centuries, and in 1859, were
moved to Hermitage Museum.
 Also, see: R. Grousset, The Empire of the Steppes- A History of Central Asia,
A component of the Soviet excavation and research according to G. Frumkin can be
summarized and interpreted as the following: The bronze age of Kazakhstan corresponds
roughly to the second millennium BC. Some of the archeologists including A. Kh.
Margulan in1960, M. N. Komarova in 1962, V. P. Aleksieyev in 1967, in their analysis of
Andronovo Culture have shown that it extended from north of the Black Sea, the shores
of Ural river, to the heart of Altai mountains, to the shores of Aral Sea and Khorazm.
Andronovo Culture was common to major parts of Kazakhstan, and Siberian Minussinsk
region.
Andronovo Culture:
The dwelling sites of the Andronovo period in central Kazakhstan usually comprised of
ten to forty inhabitants, in the form of huts. The burial places consisted of groups of
tombs surrounded by megalithic granite slabs, sometimes several hundreds of them.
Central Kazakhstan Andronovo Culture of Bronze Age first excavation was conducted by archeologists A. Kh. Margulan, M. K. Kadyrbayev and A. M. Orazbayev in 1946. M. K. Kadyrbayev in 1959 and 1966, continued his expedition around Karaganda in central Kazakhstan. He explored many kurgans of Tasmola burial site of the seventh to third century BC near Shiderty River. The significance of Kadyrbayev discovery was the fact that it was the earliest evidence of the Scythian animal style in Central Kazakhstan. Numerous ornaments in bronze, gold, bone and iron were discovered. To the east of Kazakhstan, S. S. Chernikov in 1956 and 1960 and A. G. Maksimova in 1959, in Chilikin valley, south of Lake Zaysan discovered several hundreds of gold objects in kurgan number five, known as the Golden Kurgan, of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. To the north of Kazakhstan, in the districts of Borovoye, Kokchetav, Petropavlovsk and Akmolinsk, archeologists K. A. Akishev in 1959 and A. M. Orazbayev in 1958 investigated many Andronovo tombs. The tombs contained a great deal of pottery, some bronze tools and a few bronze and gold ornaments. To the west of Kazakhstan, north of the Caspian Sea in the region of Novaya Kazanka or Dzhangaly, two expeditions were taking place by the late 1940s. I. V. Sinitzyn 1956, T. N. Senigova in 1956, and E. E. Kuzmina in 1961, the leading figures of the expeditions identified and analyzed four thousand years old Bronze age tombs consisting of Neolithic flints, bronze objects, iron weapons, as well as a great deal of pottery. To the south and southeast of Kazakhstan, A. N. Bernshtam in 1950, explored the shores of Talas, Ili, and Chu rivers. He then explored the area between Syr Darya river and the Karatau range. L. I. Rempel in 1957 explored the banks of Talas River. Rempel discovered number of Zoroasterian ossuaries in terracotta within this area. Akishev in 1956, 1959, and 1967, on the shore of Ili River found Bronze Age ornaments and jewels with early indication of animal style art in twenty large size kurgans of Saka period. Akishev in 1962, in Bes Shatyr area discovered several thousands of tombs including some of them belonging to Saka emperors. According to M. A. Itina (1960) analysis, Andronovo Bronze Culture spreads across the steppes of Kazakhstan in the second half of second millennium. In Kyrgyzstan A. N. Bernshtam in 1949 and 1950, M. N. Komaroiva in 1962, and S. S. Chernikov in 1960 identified and explored the Bronze Age Andronovo Culture of the second and first millennium BC in the Chu, Talas, Fergana Valleys, Tian Shan and Alay mountains. In
the Chu Valley, Bemshtam in 1949 and 1950, discovered and explored variety of kurgans with elements indicating the fire cult, Shamanism, and some Zoroasterianism. Bemshtam in 1949, also discovered figures of animals in an early Scythian style in Semirechiye, near lake Issykul in Kyrgyzstan. The objects were belong to the 5th to 3rd century BC, and included bronze utensils, tables, lamps, and a bronze figure of a yak.

Semirechye:
T. Gorka and J. W. E. Fassbinder in 2011, were classifying and documenting kurgans of Siberia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, northern Caucasus and Kalmykia analyzing eastern kurgans of Kazakhstan including Semirechye region. Semirechye, the land of seven rivers of Ili, Karatal, Bien, Aksu, Lepsy, Baskan, and Sarkand, is central region of Eurasian steppe belt. In Semirechy region over ten thousands of small burial mounds have been identified, but also hundreds of monumental huge kurgans are known. The Kurgans date to six to third century BC, reflect Scythian/Saka horse and/or sheep cultures of the steppe with abundance of gold, tin and copper objects buried in them. The wealth buried in the kurgans has made them a tempting target for looters ever since ancient times.

Andronovo and Indo-Iranians:
Anthony and Vinogradov in 1995, in their analysis indicate that the Andronovo culture is strongly associated with the Indo-Iranians and is often credited with the invention of the spoke-wheeled chariot around 2000 BC. Sintashta is a site on the upper Ural River. It is famed for its grave offerings, particularly chariot burials. Sintashta is often pointed to as the premier proto indo-Iranian site. Abetekov and Yusupov in 1996, indicate that many Greek writers referred to all the nomads of Eurasia including those of Central Asia, as Scythians. Persians designated all nomadic tribes of the Eurasian steppes, including the Scythians as Sakas. These broad classifications were based on the similarity of the culture and way of life of all the nomads who spoke Iranian languages. Abetekov and Yusupov in 1996, through their analysis, interpret the similarity of Scythian cultures as a single original culture, agreeing with Herodotus that Scythians originally came from Asia. Terenozhkin in 1976, in his analysis of recent discoveries, refers to Arzhan site an older archeological site in Tuva region, of the ninth and eight centuries, as the place that the Scythian culture that spread across the Eurasian steppes first took shape.
A second group of scholars including K. A. Akishev and Kushaev in 1963 conducted excavation and research in Semirechye, B. A. Litvinsky in 1972, conducted research in Pamir Area, and Vishnevskaya 1973 conducted excavation on the shore of Syr Darya have slightly a different interpretation of the regions early cultures. They agree with the strong cultural similarities, resemblances and ethnic ties between these people, however, they also believe that politically the region was a distinct decentralized entity of various indigenous kingdoms, with each entity having its unique and peculiar historical development. In fact Scythia was only once unified as an empire under the leadership of king Atreus.

47. Ibid, pp. 23 – 38.

48. For more information on the excavation of Pazyryk see: S. I. Rudenko, Frozen Tombs of Siberia, the Pazyryk Burials of Iron Age Horsemen, University of California Press, 1970.

In Bashadar, and Tuekta, the royal sepulcher of Arzhan in Tuva was found. To the north, in Chuy Valley near the city of Kara-Balta and Sokuluk village, still more mounds are located. A number of mounds surround Lake Issyk Kul, including the burials of Kok-Moinok, and Kok-Bulak.


In two earlier Scythian kurgans, at Kelermes in the North Caucasus, and at the Melgunov kurgan in Ukraine, objects have been found very similar to the Ziwiye treasure of early
sixth century discovered in Iran between the borders of Kurdistan and Azarbijan provinces.

The idea that Scythian animal style objects follow, mimic or copy objects from another school of art is rejected by a number of scholars who have done extensive work on Central Asian archeological sites. Thousands of Scythian “animal style” art pieces have been found over a wide territory from west of Mongolia and Altai Mountains through the Eurasian steppes into southern Russia, Crimea, and Ukraine.


Also, see: Herodotus, The History of Herodotus, The Fourth Book: Melpomene, translated by G. Rawlinson, N.Y. Tudor Pub. Co., 1956, pp. 204 – 211. More over: In one account, after eighteen years of famine in Lydia (east of the republic of Turkey today), the king deported half of the population to look for a better life elsewhere. Under the leadership of the crown prince of Lydia, Tyrrhenus, the emigrants were loaded onto the ships and sailed from Smyrna until they reached Umbria in Italy. This raises the question about the strong possibility that the deported people from Lydia were of Scythian origin. Italian geneticists are conducting DNA testing on the Etruscans found in the graves to trace their origins.

Also, see: L. Bonfante, Etruscan Life and Afterlife, Wayne State University Press, 1986). The Etruscan confederation of city states between the Tiber River to the south and Arno River to the north included some of the oldest Italian cities of Perugia, Veii, Tarquinia, and Cerveteri. The last Etruscan entity to the north of Rome by the year 89 B.C. was taken over by the Roman Republic. According to the Greek historian Theopompos of Chios, Etruscan civilization was brilliant and mysterious. They were masters of metallurgy, and skillful seafarers, who dominated much of the Mediterranean.

The profound contribution of the Etruscans to the cultural glory of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire has been one of the most popular topics of research within the last fifty years, for Italian and other international scholars in the field. The last fifty years of excavation and research in the north of Italy has shed new light on a chapter of European and world history that has been, to a large extent, unknown to us.
According to Herodotus, Scythians conquered numerous towns and settlements around the Black Sea area in ancient times.


Within the vast Eurasian steppe land, from Altai Mountains across the Eurasian steppe into the southern Russian and Crimean territories and shores of the Black Sea, the royal Scythians left elaborate graves filled with richly worked “animal style” articles of gold and other precious metals.

The Institute of History of the Ukrainian Academy of Sciences has excavated more than three hundred kurgans from this period belonging to the Scythians, around the Black Sea. Also, see: B. B. Piotrovski, The Scythians and the Ancient East, Soviet Archeology, 19, 1954.

Herodotus indicates that from the end of the seventh century to the third century B.C., the Scythians occupied the steppe expanses of the north Black Sea area, from the Don in the east to the Danube in the west, and formed a large confederation of separate tribes. In the fourth century B.C., the king Atreas created the first Scythian empire by uniting all nomadic and settled tribes of the Black Sea steppes under his rule. This kingdom lasted until the first century B.C.

Also, see: Herodotus, The History of Herodotus, The Fourth Book: Melpomene, translated by G. Rawlinson, N.Y. Tudor Pub. Co., 1956, pp. 204–211). Sometimes royal power fell into the hands of women, who led armies just as male rulers did when there was a military threat.


According to some scholars, the revival of shamanism in Siberia and Central Asia followed the fall of the Soviet Union, particularly among: Altaians (Kyrgyz and Kazakhs); the Khakass (in the Russian Republic of Khakassiya, Republic of Tuva, and in Krasnoyarsk Kray northeast of Kazakhstan); Tuvinians (in Russian Republic of Tuva north of Mongolia and northeast of Kazakhstan); the Yakuts (in Russian Republic of Sukha or Yakutia, east of Siberia); and the Buryats (in the Russian Republic of Buryatia, to the southeast of Lake Baikal). Altaian male and female shamans utilized ceremonial
garments, which were constructed from sheepskin or deer skin according to specific dreams. The Altaian shaman drum was made from the hide of a deer, or horse, stretched over the rim of the drum. The drum handle was shaped like a human figure, representing the spirit of the master of the drum and the ancestral shaman. Before and after the rites, the tribal people would hang cloth ribbons on the crosspiece of the drum as offerings to the spirits. Altaians believed that the drum was a living creature—a horse on which the shaman in ecstasy made his voyages into the other world. When the Altaian shaman died, there were holes made into his drum, symbolizing the death of his drum. The drum of the shaman was hung in a tree close to the grave of the shaman. A number of festivals and ceremonial customs reflect the strong impact of belief in the spirit world and shamanism. Djer-suutayi refers to the festivities that include sacrifices to the divinities of earth and water. When a new building was erected, or a yurt was installed, a sacrificial animal was offered. The first spoon of the broth of the animal was dropped on the fire to make the fire deity, Umaiene, happy. The richness of Eurasian cultures is apparent from the diversity and pluralism of the religions and cults the area has inherited. The history of sacred sites goes back to ancient times. Burial mounds hold the remains and the personal belongings of the deceased.

55. For more information on this topic see the author’s article on Kyrgyzstan.
58. The following examples illustrate the rich tradition of pottery within the region in the early historical era. Particularly fine prehistoric pottery was produced at Sarazm, near Samarkand; at Hesar, Nurek, Regar, Vakhsh, in Tajikistan; at Bagram, Said Qala, Fullol and Tella Tepe, in Afghanistan; in Iran: at Persepolis, near Shiraz; at Tepe Sialk, near Kashan; at Tepe Hissar, near Damghan; at Tepe Gian, northeast of Susa; at Yarim Tepe, near Gurgan; at Marlik (1200 B.C. – 1000 B.C.), near Amlash in Gilan Province; at Hasanlu (1250 B.C.- 1050 B.C.), south of lake Urumia, in Azarbaijan; at Shahre Sukhte, in Baluchestan; at Turang Tepe, in Mazandaran Province; at Namazgah and Altyne Tepe, in Turkmanistan; at Sapalli Tepe and Kuchuk Tepe in Uzbekistan.
Also, see: A. I. Isakov, Sarazm: An Agricultural Center of Ancient Soghdiana, Bulletin of the Asia Institute, New Series, V. 8, 1994, pp. 1 – 12;
Also, see: A. Kia, M. Kia, R. and S. Graetz, Tajikestan – Pearl of Central Asia, U. of Montana Press, 2007;
Also, see: R. H. Dyson, Digging in Iran – Hasanlu, Expedition 1/3, 1959, pp. 4 -11.

Chapter 3

Also, see: T. M. Potemkina, On the Question of Bronze Age Steppe Tribal Migration to the South: Interaction between Nomadic Cultures and Ancient Civilization, Science, Alma-Ata, 1987, pp.76 – 78.
Also, see: L. T. Yablonsky, The Saka of the Southern Aral Sea Area: The Archeology and Anthropology of the Cemeteries, Moscow, 1966, pp. 6 – 12.
Also, see: A. A. Klyosov, The 3 R’s in R1 Haplogroup, Journal of Genetic Geneology, v.5, n.2, pp. 217-256, 2009. According to Klyosov’s genetic analysis the Andronovo culture embraced Kazakhstan, Central Asia, and South Ural and Western Siberia, and about 3600 ybp they migrated to India and Iran. Those who were left behind, re-populated Eastern Europe (present-day Poland, Germany, Czech, Slovak, etc.) between 3200 and 2500 years bp.
64. L. W. King and R. C. Thompson, The Sculptures and Inscription of Darius the Great on the rock of Behistun in Persia, London, 1907.

For more information on Cyrus and the accomplishments of the empire he established see Henri Stierlin, Splendors of the Persian Empire (Timeless Treasures), White Star, 2006.

On the fall of the Achaemenid Empire see: P. K. Davis, One Hundred Decisive Battles from Ancient Times to the Present: The World Major Battles and how they Shaped History, Oxford university Press, Oxford, 1999, p. 27. The rebellion that starts in Macedonia, one of the satraps of the Achaemenid Empire, follows the defeat of Athenians at the Battle of Chaeronea (338 B.C.) by Phillip the Macedonian, and puts an end to the golden age of Athenian kingdom and the classical period (480 B.C. – 331 B.C.) in Greece. The military expedition of Alexander of Macedonia, Philips’ son continues for ten years and mysteriously he died at the age of thirty three in Mesopotamia.
Also, see: J.E. Curtis and N. Tallis, Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia, Published in Association with The British Museum, 2005, pp. 18 – 49.
Also, see: E. Herzfeld, The Persian Empire, Franz Steiner Verlag GMBH, Wiesbaden, 1968.

65. Recent DNA tests, Lalauzea-Fox (2004) study suggests that, during the bronze/iron Age period, the majority of the population of present day Kazakhstan was an extension of Andronovo Culture, and prior to the thirteenth to seventh century BC, all samples from
present day Kazakhstan belong to proto Andronovo Culture. Keyser (2009), conducted test on ten human remains of the Bronze Age of various regions of Kazakhstan, nine possessed the R1a Y- chromosome haplogroup and one Haplogroup C (Y-DNA)(xC3).

(On the issue of cultures and history of Central Asia: Also: see
Also, see: Kia A., Central Asia: Rediscovering a Cultural Treasury, Central & Southwest Asian Studies Program, Anthropology Department, the twelfth monograph in the contributions to Anthropology Series, (three articles), The University of Montana Press, 2010.)


Let’s hope that the above-mentioned studies, conducted by various scholars in the field, although still very incomplete, will be instrumental to serve the reconstruction of the history and cultures of Central Asia and beyond, and not as a tool in the hands of extremists and fanatics to ignite conflicts and destructions.

66. See: J.E. Curtis and N. Tallis, Forgotten Empire: The World of Ancient Persia, Published in Association with The British Museum, 2005, pp. 18 – 49.
Also, see: O. S. Muscarella, A. Caubet, and F. Tallon, Susa in Achaemenid Period, in The Royal City of Susa, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, harry N. Abrams, new York, 1993, pp. 215 – 252. The palace of Darius in Susa is built around a central court, 116 X 118 feet. Susa was a powerful fort and a flourishing administrative city with a large civilian population, in the heart of the satrap of Khuzestan. Many of the art objects discovered
from the Achaemenid excavation sites have synthesized the motif of animals, and are either naturalistic or stylized animal forms.

Chapter 4

71. Ibid, pp. 142- 149.
(For more information on the significance of trade and commerce in the region see the author’s article on Panjkant).

Chapter 5

80. D. Schlumberger, Surkh Kotal, Antiquity, V. 33, N. 130, 1959, pp. 81 -86.


Also, see: L. R. Kyzlasov, Archeological Explorations in Ak-Beshim Settlement, Funze, 1953-1954. Also, see: L.P. Zyablin, Second Buddhist Temple of Ak-Beshim, Settlement, Funze, 1961


86. L. Bouinois, Silk Road–Monks, Warriors and Merchants, Odyssey Books and Guides, Hong Kong, 2005, pp. 179 – 190.

Chapter 6


90. For more information on ancient religions of the region, particularly Zoroasterianism, see J. Duchesne-Guillemin, Religions of Ancient Iran, Bombay, 1973.


Yashts include a pantheon of twenty-one supernatural forces:

1. Ormazd Yasht (Hymn to Ahura Mazda); 2. Haft Amshaspands Yasht (Haptan Yasht), (Hymn to Seven Archangels); 3. (Bahman Yasht); 4. Ardibehisht Yasht;

For more detailed analysis of Sassanids implication of Zoroasterinism as their state religion see R. Ghirshman, Iran: Parthian and Sassanians, London: Thames & Hudson, 1962.

Also, see: W. A. V. Jackson, From Constantinople to the Home of Omar Khayyam, Ch. IV, Macmillan Co., 1911, pp. 73 - 82.

92. For more information on Manichaeism in the region see G. Widengren, Mani and Manichaeism, translated by Charles Kessler, Upsala, 1965.


Fragments of Manichean manuscripts written by Mani have survived:


The social formation of Manichaeans communities was composed of two major groups, the elect (the few) and the hearers (the masses). Fragments of Manichean manuscripts written by Mani have survived.


Fragments of Manichean literature in a variety of languages were found in Kan-tcheou and Qoco, within the Uighur lands.

96. For more information on Manichacism in the region see G. Widengren, Mani and Manichaeism, translated by Charles Kessler, Upsala, 1965.


On the complicated issue of the ancient believe systems of the region, the cult of Mithra or Mithraism has to be indicated here: The cult of Mithra, known as Mithraism, was conveyed from Central Asia and Persia to Rome. Before the declaration of Christianity as the state religion of Rome in the fourth century AD, Mithraism was an influential and popular cult, especially in the second and third centuries AD. The Mithra cult in Rome included seven ranks that marked the spiritual progress of an individual toward ever higher ranks. The seven ranks were:

Chapter 7

Chapter 8


Also, see: Campbell, L.A. Mithraic Iconography and Ideology. Lieden: E.J. Brill Press,
1968, p. 23.


**Chapter 9**


120. A. Vambery, History of Bokhara from the Earliest Period down to the Present, Eliborn Classsics, London, 2005, pp. 88 – 392. Bokhara, was massacred by Mongol war lord Chenghiz and his son Chagatai in A.D. 1220, 1273, 1276, 1279, and 1316.

**Chapter 10**


Chapter 11


129. A. V. Gudkova and V. N. Yagodin, Delta of Amu Darya: Tok Kala, Moscow, 1968. Also, See: A. V. Gudkova and V. A. Livshitz, Inscriptions at Tok Kala, Moscow, 1967.


133. S. P. Tolstov, At the Ancient Delta of the Oxus and Yaksara: Documents found at Toprak Kala, Moscow, 1962, pp. 96 - 104.


139. Ibid, p. 447.


145. S. P. Tolstov, At the Ancient Delta of the Oxus and Yaksarta: Documents found at Toprak Kala, Moscow, 1962, pp. 136 – 186.


149. Ibid, p. 196.


Chapter 12


Chapter 13

Also, see: N. Sykhova, Traditional Jewellery from Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan, Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow, 1984, pp. 14 -79.
Dr. Ardi Kia is the award winning co-founder and co-director of Central and Southwest Asian Studies Program, (CSWA Center), at The University of Montana. He has developed a number of courses in Central and Southwest Asian Studies, which are now components of a new minor and major in this field. More than sixty of the courses he has taught since 1991 have concentrated exclusively on Central Asia, are cross listed in anthropology and history, and include: “Silk Road,” “Central Asia: People and Environments,” “Central Asia and Its Neighbors,” “Cities and Landscapes of Central Asia,” “Artistic Traditions of Central Asia,” and “Central Asia: Seminar.” Dr. Ardi Kia received a “Teaching Excellence and Scholarship” award during the sixth annual Central and Southwest Asian Studies Conference. In April 2007, President Royce Engstrom and Professor John Douglas, Chair of the Anthropology Department, presented an award in recognition of Dr. Kia’s high quality teaching of thousands of students since 1994. In Spring 2010, Dr. Kia was awarded an honorary doctoral degree and an honorary professorship from Nasser Khosrow State University in Tajikestan, Central Asia. He is one of the most popular professors at The University of Montana. For the last twenty years he has written and lectured extensively on the history, archaeology, cultures, and artistic traditions of Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Iran.
This publication marks the fourteenth monograph in the Contributions to Anthropology Series, of the Anthropology Department at the University of Montana. The present issue includes a short history of some of the cultural and artistic accomplishments of Central Asia, as well as the cultural heritage of surrounding entities affected by this region.