

## THE CULTURAL COMMONALITIES OF IRAN AND UZBEKISTAN

(From the perspective of the Persian language and literature history)

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**Abstract:** Iran and Uzbekistan are both countries with a very old history and are influential countries in the culture and civilization areas in Asia. Although the new political identity of Uzbekistan has not been formed recently since its independence, the historical background of this land and its important and crucial cities and great personalities and thinkers of this country is clear and evident. Uzbekistan, as part of the historical Transoxiana region, has been the ground for many cultural, linguistic, literary, and political events for its neighboring lands. Iran is also an ancient country with wide geographical latitude and longitude that has had a special effect on the cultures of different nations and ethnic groups in different historical eras. The overlap of these two cultures throughout history has led to the emergence of rich and dominant culture, in which the characteristics of Iranian-Islamic culture can be clearly observed. In the present study, cultural commonalities between these two countries were briefly investigated and identified with an emphasis on Persian language and literature as two important cultural origins. The common historical inseparable roots, common cultural and political history, influence on the formation, prevalence, and identification of Persian language and literature along with the similarity of traditions, rituals, and social beliefs are among the main factors in the formation of a close cultural relationship between Iran and Uzbekistan.

**Keywords:** Culture, Persian language, Persian literature, art, Transoxiana, Uzbekistan, Iran.

## ERON VA O'ZBEKISTON O'RTASIDAGI MADANIY HAMJIHATLIK

(Fors tili va adabiyoti tarixi nuqtai nazaridan)

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**Annotatsiya:** Eron va O'zbekiston mamlakatlari juda qadimiy tarixga ega va Osiyoning madaniyat va sivilizasiyasida katta nufuzga ega. Garchi O'zbekistonning yangi siyosiy o'ziga xosligi mustaqillikka erishganidan beri yaqinda shakllanmagan bo'lsa-da, ushbu zaminning tarixiy kelib chiqishi va uning muhim va hal qiluvchi shaharlari hamda ushbu mamlakatning buyuk shaxslari va mutafakkirlari aniq va ravshan. Tarixiy Transsoxianaregion mintaqasi bo'lgan O'zbekiston qo'shni mamlakatlar uchun ko'plab madaniy, lingvistik, adabiy va siyosiy voqealar uchun zamin bo'ldi. Eron, shuningdek, turli tarixiy davrlarda turli millat va elatlar madaniyatiga alohida ta'sir ko'rsatgan, keng geografik kenglik va uzunlikka ega qadimiy mamlakatdir. Tarix davomida ushbu ikki madaniyatning bir-biri bilan to'qnashishi boy va hukmron madaniyatning paydo bo'lishiga olib keldi, unda Eron-Islom madaniyati xususiyatlarini aniq kuzatish mumkin. Ushbu tadqiqotda ushbu ikki mamlakat o'rtasidagi madaniy mushtarakliklar qisqacha o'rganib chiqildi va fors tili va adabiyotiga ikki muhim madaniy kelib chiqishi sifatida e'tibor qaratildi. Umumiy tarixiy ajralmas ildizlar, umumiy madaniy va siyosiy tarix, fors tili va adabiyotining shakllanishi, tarqalishi va aniqlanishiga ta'siri, urf-odatlar, marosimlar va ijtimoiy e'tiqodlarning o'xshashligi yaqin madaniylikni shakllantirishning asosiy omillaridan biridir. Eron va O'zbekiston o'rtasidagi munosabatlar.

**Kalit so'zlar:** madaniyat, fors tili, fors adabiyoti, san'ati, Movarounnahr, O'zbekiston, Eron.

## КУЛЬТУРНЫЕ ОБЩНОСТИ МЕЖДУ ИРАНОМ И УЗБЕКИСТАНОМ

(С точки зрения персидского языка и истории литературы)

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**Аннотация:** Иран и Узбекистан - страны с очень древней историей, влиятельные страны в области культуры и цивилизации в Азии. Хотя новая политическая идентичность Узбекистана не формировалась в последнее время с момента обретения независимости, исторический фон этой земли, ее важных и важных городов, а также великих личностей и мыслителей этой страны ясен и очевиден. Узбекистан, как часть исторического Трансоксианского региона, был площадкой для многих культурных, языковых, литературных и политических событий в соседних странах. Иран также является древней страной с широкой географической широтой и долготой, которая

Филология / Филология / Philology

оказала особое влияние на культуры разных народов и этнических групп в разные исторические эпохи. Перекрытие этих двух культур на протяжении всей истории привело к появлению богатой и доминирующей культуры, в которой четко прослеживаются характеристики ирано-исламской культуры. В настоящем исследовании культурные сходства между этими двумя странами были кратко исследованы и определены с акцентом на персидский язык и литературу как на два важных культурных истока. Общие исторические неразделимые корни, общая культурная и политическая история, влияние на формирование, распространение и идентификацию персидского языка и литературы наряду с сходством традиций, ритуалов и социальных верований являются одними из основных факторов в формировании близкого культурного отношения между Ираном и Узбекистаном.

**Ключевые слова:** культура, персидский язык, персидская литература, искусство, Трансоксиана, Узбекистан, Иран.

### Introduction

Iran and Uzbekistan have deep and traditional historical and cultural bonds. These bonds are rooted in the myths and history of these two lands; from the mythical stories that attribute the emergence and formation of the culture and civilization of each of these two lands to their common heroes and prominent historical and mythological figures to later eras when these myths were connected to history, forming the common historical fate of the Transoxiana and Iran.

With nurturing many thinkers, poets, and writers, it has been regarded as one of the rare centers of culture and civilization in the history of the world. These thinkers have considerably affected the formation and blooming of Iranian-Islamic culture. Famous figures, such as Biruni, Ibn Sina, etc. have been raised in this region and have created lasting works.

Many of regions and cities in Central Asia that have a long historical background and have been among the major political and cultural centers are situated in the current political territories of Uzbekistan. Khorezm, Khiva, Organj, Bukhara, Samarkand, etc. are some of these cities. The

traces of civilization and identity of this country should be sought in the distant past.

Iran is also an ancient and old land with a rich culture and civilization and unique cultural, artistic, and historical heritage. Iranian culture is a collection of knowledge and wisdom, including various customs and habits, local cultures of ethnic groups, language, religion, art, literature, philosophy, architecture, traditional music and a treasury of thinkers, celebrities, writers, intellectuals, etc. Many people living in this cultural region, especially figures and thinkers of Uzbekistan, have been involved in the formation and spread of this culture. Some of these elements of Iranian culture can be observed beyond the political borders of Iran in many countries.

### Transoxiana

In historical geography, the cities and villages on the other side of the Ceyhun River or the Amu Darya were called Transoxiana (Barthold, 1997: 73). This land, i.e., Central Asia, has had different names since ancient times; from Sogdian State during the Achaemenid Empire (Pirnia and Iqbal, 2001: 131) to Fararud, Varzrud, Varazrud, Mianrudan, Khorasan, Turkestan, Western Turkestan (Belenitsky, 1992: 29) in the more recent era. However, in the last

Филология / Филология / Philology

years of the first century AH, the name of Transoxiana slowly surpassed other names (Аминов, 1997: 8283; Турсунов, 2009: 244).

Central Asia is the origin of Iranian culture and civilization. In Avesta, a land is described that has a temperate climate and our ancestors first grew up there, and it can be inferred that it means the promised land of Iranians in the beautiful region of the coasts of Ceyhun and Seyhun. The historians believe that Iranians have come from there and today Iran is our second home (Nafisi, 1994: 9).

Transoxiana had a common cultural (and relatively less political) fate with Iran in the Islamic era and until the beginning of the 10th century AH in the periods of Samanids (204-389 AH), Ilkhanids/ Al-eAfrasiab/ Qarakhanids (389-523 AH), Qarakhtayans (535-609 AH), Khwarezmians (470-62), Mongols (616-764 AH) and the Transoxiana Timurids (771-906 AH). The political destiny of these lands was separated by the formation of the Safavid dynasty in Iran (135-907 AH) and the Shaybanid dynasty in Transoxiana. However, there has always been a close connection culturally.

### **Cultural and Historical Commonalities**

The great human civilization is the result of the collective efforts of humankind as a result of the clash of the opinions of various nations, and many ethnicities, especially neighboring and accompanying ethnicities, share in the formation of great, influential, and civilized cultures. Iran's cultural and historical commonality with the countries of the Central Asian region dates back to a time when the countries of that region shared a common destiny with Iran (Fuller, 1991, 10-15). The single geographical territory in the past caused these countries to have an adapted

approach to Iranian culture and customs. Holding ancient celebrations, such as Nowruz and Yalda Night, is one of the common Iranian cultural manifestations. Nowruz is celebrated every year on the first day of Farvardin, March 21, in Iran and several Central Asian countries, especially Uzbekistan. Today, many customs and traditions, some of which have been forgotten even in Iran as their origin (Mohajerani, 1993, 14) have survived in Central Asia.

The culture represents the way of living of people and the plan that a society follows for living. In fact, it is an interwoven totality that includes knowledge, religion, ethics, customs, and any customary ability that an individual acquires as a member of society. To this end, the conventional patterns of thinking and behavior, including values, beliefs, rules of behavior, political system, economic activity, and the like, which are passed down from generation to generation through learning, are the culture of that society, which constitutes the identity and existence of any society and forms the basis of that society's human behavior. Language and literature, religion, livelihood and economics, history and events, surroundings and geography are the origins of culture.

Public culture of Uzbekistan and Iran is one of the most beautiful and original ones in the east. It is a fascinating culture that includes various types of arts, from music to painting, calligraphy, architecture, etc. The art of any land has a direct relationship to the culture and intellectual identity of the people of that land. Thus, it can be stated that the art of any land is the manifestation of the culture of the people of that land. The artistic commonalities of the two countries and the mutual influence on each other's art are a sign of strong consensus and cooperation between them.

Филология / Филология / Philology

Samarkand and Bukhara, two large cities of Transoxiana, which were considered as part of the Sogdian State in geographical division, have a special cultural and artistic connection with Iran.

The Afrasiab Painting is a rare example of Sogdian-Iranian art, discovered on the hill of Afrasiab near Samarkand, belongs to the 7th and 8th centuries AD, in which Iranian mythological elements such as the Soug-e Siavash (Mourning for Siavash) have been used.

The tomb of Ismail Samanid, whose construction style is similar to the fire temples of the Sassanid era, is one of the artistic commonalities of Iran and Uzbekistan in the architecture.

Miniature art is the other area that manifests artistic-cultural commonalities of Iran and Uzbekistan. Sassanid art and Sogdian art have many shared points. If the martial and festive themes of Sassanid and Sogdian art are noticed, these themes are changed only in the framework of government rituals in Sogdian art, and royal and court rituals are transformed into local celebrations and rituals, the only issue that is observed weaker is the battle of the armies.

Language is one of the main and most important factors in the formation of culture, so that in 1824 it was argued that the true natural boundaries of mountains and rivers did not represent the boundaries between countries, rather, it is the common language, customs, and memories that are distinctive (Hobsbawm, 2003: 133).

To this end, paying attention to Persian language, as one of the culture-making elements, seems necessary in studying cultural commonalities of Iran and Uzbekistan. Although the national language in Uzbekistan is Uzbek language that has been prevalent since the past, Persian

language and literature has also been especially common and prevalent in some of historical cities of this country in some periods because of specific cultural and political connection and communications. Since every powerful language influences the different layers of life of its speakers and neighbors; Persian language, due to its rich and spiritual literary history, has considerably influenced the way of thinking and lifestyle of its speakers and has created strong cultural networks. This fact, along with other factors that make up culture, such as customs, religion, various types of art, etc., has created an attractive and effective culture, elements of which are still present.

### Persian Language and Literature

Persian language and literature in Khorasan has an inseparable bond with Persian literature in Transoxiana. Transoxiana was considered as one part of the Great Khorasan. According to Mu'jamul-Buldān Encyclopedia, Belazari divided the Old Khorasan into four regions, including Iranshahr, Marv, Shahjan, West River and Transoxiana (Hamavi, 1979: 351).

The poets, writers, and scholars of these two regions have been in direct contact with each other, especially in the Islamic period. Some of famous Transoxiana poets, such as Adib Saber Tirmidhi and Seif Asfarangi lived and died in Khorasan, and this reveals the direct connection between language and literature in Transoxiana and Iran.

The birthplace of the Persian language is the eastern part of Iran plateau and the first poets and prose writers originated from this land. From the beginning of the 3rd century, especially in the East, special political and social issues led to the spread of Persian language and literature. The Samanid era is the period of revival of Iranian culture. "When it was the turn of the



Филология / Филология / Philology

government of Al-e Saman, the observance of the letters raised and great poets appeared and mobilized the virtues and organized the world of poem and made poetry a slogan" (Aufi, 1942, Vo. 1: 12). The Samanids realized that without reviving the ancient cultural traditions, their government would not achieve a long-lasting independence (Bertels1996: 179). Hence, Samarkand and Bukhara, as the capitals of the Samanids, became a gathering place for famous poets and writers.

Rudaki, the father of Persian poetry, who was probably born in the middle of the third century (Nafisi, 1987: 300), was a famous poet during the time of Amir Ismail Samani. Abu al-Hussein Moradi, Rabia al-Ghazdari, Abu Nasr Farabi, and Ibn Sina were raised in such an era. Prominent Samani ministers also contributed to the flourishing of literature and culture, such as Abu Abdullah Muhammad Keyhani, Abolfazl Muhammad ibn Ami, and Abu Tayyib Muhammad ibn Hatim Musabi (Dehmardeh, 2005: 75). The dominance of morality, vitality, the spirit of freedom and national pride, and epic ideas are among the cultural elements of this era that were institutionalized in the society.

Persian language was the formal language in Transoxiana after Samanids, and it was used not only in the formal and administrative correspondence, but also in writing different books. Spread of Persian language was so widespread that the public interests in Arabic, which there were many texts in this language, was gradually declined, and some decided to translate Arabic books into Persian (Narshehi, 4). For a long time Persian language and literature was recognized as part of the national and social culture of people living in region (Khodayar, 2005: 109).

During the relatively long reign of Sultan Husayn Bayqara (873-911 AH), with the help of scholars and thinkers, such as Amir Ali Shirnavai (144-906 AH), the literate and art lover minister Sultan Husayn Bayqara, with regard to the attention to the culture and Persian language and literature in this period, the Iranian identity and cultural dimensions and Persian language were again become salient in this region (refer to Khodayar, 2013: 32). Amir Ali Shirnavai influenced cultural and artistic trends of his time in different ways and reached its peak. He is known as the father of classical Uzbek literature and the founder of Turkish Jaghatai literature (refer to Torsonov, 2009: 157-160; Zarrinkub, 2001: 71-74; Basworth, 2004: 349-355, quoted by Khodayar, 2013: 34). Uzbek language is the formal and state language of Republic of Uzbekistan. Firstly, Arabic alphabet was used for writing Uzbek language, which was common with the alphabet used by Iranians, and it led to presence of many words from Arabic and Persian in Uzbek (refer to Vafaei and Avazmotf, 2005). Amir Ali Shirhad mastery over both Uzbek and Persian and has written beautiful poems in Persian. Composing poetry in Uzbek and Persian turned into a literary tradition after Amir Ali Shir. His interest and mastery of Persian language and literature and his special connection, friendship and support of Iranian cultural and literature, as well as his special relationship, friendship, and support for Iranian cultural and literary figures and thinkers, such as Jami and Mulla Hossain Vaez Kashefi, further enhanced the flow of Iranian-Islamic culture of that time.

There exist a large number of books from poets and thinkers of this region in Persian and Uzbek written in Persian alphabet in libraries and museums of Uzbekistan. Persian inscriptions on the entrance of historical and ancient buildings

Филология / Филология / Philology

of Tashkent, Samarkand, Bukhara and Khiva, as well as the presence of a significant number of Persian words and completely Iranian names in the Uzbek language indicate the place of Persian language in the culture and the past history of this land.

Currently, Persian, along with its true counterpart, Tajik language, has a special historical, cultural and scientific status among many people of Uzbekistan, especially in Samarkand and Bukhara cities, and the Surkhandarya and Qashqadaryo provinces.

In the end, it should be stated that the people of both lands have traditionally been interested in each other's land and culture. Uzbekistan, in addition to all attractions and influence on identity of Persian language and Iranian culture and stabilization of Iranian cultural elements in the world, has always been favored by Iranians because of location of historical cities of Iranian culture and civilization in its land.

In the research on that which countries in Central Asia have been attractive for researchers in Iran it was found that the Republic of Uzbekistan, due to the linguistic similarity of many of its people with the Iranians and the historical dependence of some of its ancient cities on the destiny of Iran, including Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khorezm, has attracted the attention of researchers more than some other countries (refer to Khodayar, 2013: 41).

### Conclusion

From the researches, it is concluded that there is a special mythological, historical, cultural, linguistic, literary, and artistic kinship and relationship between Iran and Uzbekistan. This closeness can be seen in the shared cultural and political history of Iran and Uzbekistan as part of Transoxiana. This closeness has caused that

despite the unique linguistic and racial differences between the two countries, there is a special interest and empathy between these two lands and its inhabitants. Examining the history of the presence of Persian language, literature, and art in the historical cities of Uzbekistan revealed that the prominent thinkers and writers of this land, along with famous Iranian figures, are the culmination of a rich Iranian-Islamic culture, a culture that still is manifested in common customs, traditions, and beliefs of people of these two lands.

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Филология / Филология / Philology

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