

BENEDEK PÉRI – MIKLÓS SÁRKÖZY

Foreword: Uzbekistan and Hungary

The present issue is dedicated to the history and culture of Uzbekistan. It is, presumably, the very first attempt on behalf of Hungarian and Uzbek scholars to publish a full issue of a scholarly journal devoted to the rich and extremely valuable cultural and historical legacy of the peoples of Uzbekistan. Several distinguished Hungarian scholars have worked in the field of Central Asian studies since the 19th century; however, a collective volume with papers focusing exclusively on various aspects of Uzbekistan's culture has never been published before. The aim of the present issue of the *Orpheus Noster* journal (which is published by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church) is to discuss various aspects of the rich cultural, literary and historical heritage of the Republic of Uzbekistan, as well as to draw attention to hitherto neglected areas of the history of Hungarian-Uzbek connections.

In order to understand the importance of Uzbekistan, we should consider its geostrategic location: Uzbekistan is found in the very heart of Central Asia, between the great Amu Darya (Oxus) and Syr Darya (Iaxartes) rivers, where major urban centres developed surrounded by the mighty Kizilkum desert in the west and the Pamir-Tianshan mountain ranges in the east. Uzbekistan's identity has been deeply rooted in Central Asian traditions since late antiquity. This part of Central Asia was called Transoxania in classical sources, and later it became the area of Māwarā'an-nahr, literally 'the land beyond the River' (i. e. Amu Darya).

Most of this territory had direct ties to the so-called Silk Roads, which evolved in the 2nd century BC and flourished until approximately 1700 CE. Great Uzbek urban centres such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Tashkent, Khiva, Khokand, Termez, the mighty fortresses of the so-called *elliq qala* (fifty fortresses) region of the by now sadly defunct Aral Lake characteristically shaped the history of this transcontinental network of commercial and intellectual highways called Silk Roads between China, Rome, Iran, India and the great Eurasian steppe. These rather cosmopolitan cities had developed a refined urban culture since late antiquity, where a certain coexistence of different major religious movements such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Judaism, Manichaeism, Christianity and Islam can be detected. This distinctly urban character attracted several major ethnic groups, who all enriched the cultural and religious map of Central Asia: several waves of Turkic peoples (the West Turkic Khaganate, numerous groups of Karluks, Oguz Turks and Kipchaks), as well as Hunnic tribes, Soghdians, Arabs, Iranians, Mongols, Indians and Chinese groups have all appeared in Central Asian history in the past two thousand years, thus making the land of Uzbekistan the heartland of the Silk Roads.



Above left: Khiva: view of the Inner Castle (Ičān qal'a). All photos by Miklós Sárközy

Above right: Bukhara: Ark (fortress of amirs of Bukhara)

In the middle left: Khiva: Islam Khoja's minaret in the area of the Inner Castle

In the middle right: Khiva: Tile decoration from the Old Fortress

Below right: Bukhara: old Jewish quarter, residence



Above left: Bukhara: Great Mosque and the Kalān (Great) Minaret

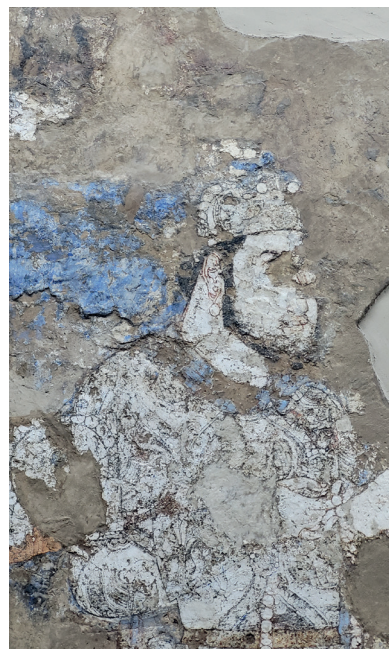
Above right: Bukhara: Great Mosque and the Kalān (Great) Minaret

In the middle: Bukhara: Kalān (Great) Minaret and the Pāy-i Kalān quarter in the old city in the evening lights

Below left: Bukhara: Memorial of Ármín Vámbéry in the Bukhara Ark (in the former fortress of amirs of Bukhara)



Above left: Bukhara: Mīr-i ʿarab madrasah
 Above right: Samarkand: Registan square
 Below left: Bukhara: Oibinok mosque
 Below right: Bukhara: Čahār minār (Four minarets) madrasah



Above left: Samarkand: Registan square, Ulugh Beg's madrasah
Above right: Samarkand: Soghdian fresco from Afrasiyab
In the middle: Samarkand: Soghdian fresco from Afrasiyab
Below: Shahrisabz: Dār al-Tilāvāt (House of Recitation) quarter



Above left: Samarkand: Šāh-i zinda (Living King) pilgrimage site
 Above right: Khiva: Kalta minār (Truncated minaret) Ičān qal'a (Inner castle)
 Below: Čahār Bakr (Four Bakr) necropolis near Bukhara



Above: Khiva: Ičān qal'a (Inner castle) wall

Below left: Khiva: Ičān qal'a (Inner castle), mausoleum of Pahlawān Mahmūd

Below right: Samarkand: Gūr-i Mīr, the interior of the dome of the Timūrid mausoleum



Above: Bukhara: Ark (Citadel) memorial site of Ármin Vámbéry

Right: Samarkand: Šāh-i zinda (Living King), Quthamb. 'Abbās pilgrimage site

By the early Islamic period the area of modern-day Uzbekistan played a unique role in the history of Islam, when towering figures of Islamic scholarship and science such as the ḥadīth scholar Muḥammad al-Buḥārī (810–870), several great polymaths such as Muḥammad al-Ḥwārizmī (780–850), Abū ‘Alī Ibn Sīnā (Avicenna, 980–1037), Abū Raiḥān Muḥammad al-Bīrūnī (973–1048), the Qur’an scholar Abū’l-Qāsim Maḥmūd Zamaḥṣhārī (1074–1143), and the father of Classical Persian poetry, Abū ‘Abd Allāh Jacfar Rūdakī (858–941), Mīr ‘Alī Šīr Nawā’ī (1441–1501), the greatest medieval Uzbek poet, all hailed from the area of present-day Uzbekistan, and the works they created are still regarded as milestones in medieval Islamic culture.

Several major Islamic dynasties such as the Sāmānids, the Karaḥānids, and later the Ḥwārizmšāhs, the Čaġatāyids, the Timūrids and the Uzbek Šaibanids and Astarḥānids characterised the medieval and early modern history of present-day Uzbekistan. The legacy of Timūr (Tamerlane 1335–1405), the last great nomadic conqueror of Eurasia, is particularly strong in shaping the post-1400 history and culture of Central Asia.

The area of Uzbekistan is also very important in the light of Hungarian history. The concept of Turan, the mythical land of Turanians, different peoples of nomadic background, was very often identified with the land beyond the Amu Darya river in Turko-Iranian medieval sources. The idea of Turan and being Turanian became very popular in Hungary after 1800, when the term ‘Turan’ was introduced to Hungary. Besides, the region of Ḥwārizm (or Khorezm) in present-day western Uzbekistan was the homeland of the Káliz (Ḥwārizmian) people, many of whom settled in medieval Hungary in the 10–11th centuries CE. As far as the 20th century is concerned, it is worth mentioning that a significant number of Hungarian war prisoners were deported to Uzbekistan by Tsarist authorities during WWI whose history is still scarcely known; in Samarkand, however, there is a war memorial in honour of these Hungarians, many of whom chose Uzbekistan as their new homeland.

Undoubtedly, Uzbekistan studies in Hungary were founded by Arminius Vámbéry (Vámbéry Ármin, 1832–1913), the world-famous self-taught Hungarian turcologist, explorer and scholar, the founder of the first ever department of Turkic philology in the world in 1868. Vámbéry himself travelled to Central Asia in 1863 and visited the most important Uzbek cities of Khiva, Bukhara and Samarkand on the eve of the Russian Tsarist conquest. Vámbéry was possibly the last major European visitor of the most important urban centres prior to the Russian victory against the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara after 1866. Due to the fact that all of Vámbéry’s major works were also published in Hungarian (besides English and German), his memoirs and essays on Uzbek history, culture and folklore played an important role in disseminating elements of Uzbekistan’s culture in Hungary before 1914. Vámbéry continued to be fascinated by various aspects of Uzbekistan’s culture until the very end of his life, as it was testified by

several seminal works he published. His Uzbekistan studies cover different areas relating to Uzbek history (such as his voluminous History of Bukhara published in 1872–73), Uzbek philology (his early work called *Āgataische Sprachstudien* from 1867, or the *Yūsuf and Ahmed*, which is possibly Vámbéry's last major contribution to the field of Uzbek literary traditions, issued in 1911), 19th century Uzbek life (several works penned for a wider audience, such as *Sketches of Central Asia* from 1868 or his world famous travelogue *Travels in Central Asia* from 1865). Vámbéry wrote extensively on every aspect of Uzbek life, therefore he played a pivotal role in introducing Uzbek history and identity to Europe and Hungary. A pioneer and early enthusiast of Central Asian Studies, Vámbéry wished to prove that Central Asian Turkic elements also played a very active role in the formation of early Hungarian tribes and early Hungarian language, an idea which was met with a rather mixed reception. To conclude, despite his inadequacies in linguistic methodology, Vámbéry definitely paved the way for modern Uzbekistan studies thanks to his vast scientific output relating to Uzbekistan. It is also worth mentioning that it was Vámbéry who brought Mulla Ishāq, the very first Uzbek man and a subject of the Khanate of Khiva to Hungary. Mulla Ishāq (in Hungarian he was often called 'Csagatáj Izsák') later became an assistant of Vámbéry in Hungary, learnt Hungarian and translated Hungarian poetry to Uzbek. Mulla Ishāq was buried in the Hungarian village of Velence in 1894. Fascinating new details on the life of this little-known Uzbek personality of 19th-century Hungary have been discovered and published by Benedek Péri recently.

I very much hope that the present volume will be a first major step for a better understanding of the culture of Uzbekistan in Hungary, and here I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the Károli Gáspár University of the Hungarian Reformed Church for its generous support of this volume dedicated to Uzbekistan and its rich cultural heritage.