

# SAMARKAND: CULTURAL AND SCIENTIFIC CENTER OF CENTRAL ASIA

AFRO EURASIAN STUDIES -VOLUME: 8 / ISSUE: 2 pp.186-198

**Hammet Arslan**

Assoc. Prof. Dr., University of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman;

Faculty of Islamic Sciences / Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies /  
Religious Studies Department

E-mail: hammetarslan@mu.edu.tr

Orcid Id: 0000-0002-4703-9952

**Received:** 15.02.2022

**Accepted:** 05.04.2022

**Cite as:** Arslan, H. (2022). Samarkand: Cultural and Scientific Center of Central Asia. Afro Eurasian Studies, 8 (2), 186-198. DOI: 10.33722/afes.1095356

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Phone: +90 – 212 395 0000 Fax: +90 – 212 – 395 0001 E-mail: [aes@musiad.org.tr](mailto:aes@musiad.org.tr)

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MUSIAD

Afro Eurasian Studies Journal

## Semerkant: Orta Asya'nın Kültür ve Bilim Merkezi

### ÖZ

Özbekistan'da yer alan Semerkant kenti, coğrafi olarak ülkenin güneydoğusunda konumlanır. Köklü bir tarihe sahip olan Semerkant, yerleşim yeri olma niteliğini daimi surette koruması açısından Orta Asya'nın en eski kentidir. Uzun tarihsel süreçte kent, birçok İmparatorluğun merkezi olmuş, birçok hakana, sultana, krala ve idareciye ev sahipliği yapmıştır. Burada hüküm süren devletlerin ve yöneticilerin kente eğitim, mimari, sanat ve kültür alanında yapmış olduğu katkıları halen görebilmek mümkündür. ılıman ve yağışlı bir iklime sahip olması kentin daima cazibe merkezi olmasını sağlamıştır. Dolayısıyla insanların yerleşmeyi ve yaşamayı tercih ettikleri bir bölge olarak öne çıkmıştır. Doğu'yu Batı'ya bağlayan tarihi İpek Yolu üzerinde konumlanmış olması şehrin kültürel çeşitliliğine, ekonomik zenginliğine katkı sağlamıştır. Aslında bu yönleriyle kent bir "medeniyet beşiği" olarak anılabilir. Bütün bunlarla birlikte birbirinden farklı kültürel unsurlara yer vermesi kentin kültürel anlamda zenginleşmesine yol açmıştır. Bu bağlamda Semerkant'ın tarihine göz atıldığında Yahudilik, Mecusilik, Budizm, Hıristiyanlık, Maniheizm ve İslam gibi dinlerin tarihsel süreç içinde kentte yaşama fırsatı bulduğu görülecektir. Özellikle İslam bilim ve düşünce tarihi açısından önemli simaların kentte yetişmesi kentin bir bilim merkezi haline gelmesine yol açmıştır. Başla İslam olmak üzere bütün bu dinler değişik yönleriyle kentin kültürel açıdan zenginleşmesine katkı sağlamışlardır. Bütün bu hususlar kentin önemli bir ticaret, kültür ve eğitim merkezi olarak adının duyulmasına vesile olmuştur. Biz bu makalemizde (i) Semerkant kentinin kültürel yapısının tarihsel açıdan teşekkül sürecini (ii) kentin kültürel yapısının temel unsurlarını (iii) kentte yaşayan etnik ve dini unsurların yaşama tecrübesini ve onların bariz yönlerini ortaya koymayı hedeflemekteyiz.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Semerkant, Orta Asya, İpek Yolu, Kültür, Sanat.

## Samarkand: Cultural And Scientific Center of Central Asia

### ABSTRACT

The city of Samarkand, which is in the Uzbekistan, is geographically located in the Southeast of the country. Samarkand has a long history and it is the oldest city in Central Asia in terms of permanently preserving its quality of settlement. In the long historical process, the city has been the center of many Empires and has hosted many kings and administrators. It is still possible to see the contributions of these Empires and administrators to the city in the fields of education, architecture, art and culture. Having a warm and rainy/humid climate has made the city always a center of attraction. Therefore, it has served as a region where people prefer to settle and live. Its location on the historical Silk Road connecting the East to the West has contributed to the cultural diversity and economic wealth of the city. In fact, with these aspects, the city can be called as a "cradle of civilization". In addition to these, the fact that there are different cultural elements in each other led to the enrichment of the city in a cultural sense. In this context, when we look at the history of Samarkand, it will be seen that religions such as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism and Islam have the opportunity to live in the city. Especially the growing of important figures in terms of Islamic science and thought in the city caused the city to become a scientific center of Islam. All these religions, especially Islam, have contributed to the cultural enrichment of the city in different aspects. All these issues have led to the name of the city as an important commercial, cultural and educational center. In this article, we will present (i) the historical formation process of the cultural structure of the Samarkand city (ii) the basic elements of the city's cultural structure (iii) the experience of the ethnic and religious elements lived in the city.

**Keywords:** Samarkand, Central Asia, Silk Road, Culture, Art.

## Introduction

The city of Samarkand, which located within the borders of the Uzbekistan today, is accepted as one of the oldest settlements in Central Asia. The city, positioned in the southeast of the country, is said to date back to the eighth or seventh century BCE. The fact that it is located both in an arable basin and on the historical Silk Road has ensured the cultural and economic development and enrichment of the city. It has been one of the important stops of commercial caravans that set off from Chinese cities to Iran and the Mediterranean basin in the west, and pass through the Afghan passages in the south to Punjab and Indian cities. The fact that it was established in an area irrigated by the waters of the Zeravshan river enabled the production and marketing of many agricultural products in the city (Babak, Vaisman & Wasserman, p. 374; <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>).

Considering its long history, it is seen that the city has hosted many different civilizations. It was the capital of the Soghdian province during the Iranian-origin Achaemenid Empire. It was conquered by Alexander the Great in the first half of the fourth century BCE. In the later period, the city was ruled by administrators of Iranian and Turkish origin. In the first quarter of the 13th century, the control of the city passed to Genghis Khan. The city had its brightest years during the Timurid Dynasty. Timur declared Samarkand as the capital and left traces in the city in economic, cultural and artistic terms. In addition to the production of various agricultural products, economic activities such as gold processing, silk weaving, wood carving, ceramic arts and copper work continued for centuries in the city (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>).

There are different opinions about the origin and meaning of the name Samarkand. According to one of these assertions, it is claimed that the word comes from the Sogdian compound word samarkand, which means "rock/stone city". Accordingly, the word *samar* in Sogdian language means "stone, rock" and the word *kand* means "city, fortress," (Room, 2006, p. 330). In Sanskrit and old Persian, the word Samarkand is also a compound word and means "battlefield". Accordingly, the word *samar* in the word means "war" and the word *kand* means "square, field, place". The second part of the word samarkand, the word *kand*, is used today in the sense of "city" in both Turkish and English. The Greek usage of the word Samarkand is *maracanda*. In Chinese history books, the name of the city is referred to as *K'ang* and *Hsi-wan-chin* (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>; Aydınli, p. 481-484). As in Arabic sources on the name of the city, the word Semerkend means "rich/wealthy city". The name of the city is mentioned as "Semiz Kent" in old Turkish language sources (Alyilmaz, p. 303-311).

Iranian writer and geographer Istakhri, who traveled in the tenth century in the Transoxiana region and is known for his work *Kitab al-Masalik wa'l-Mamalik*, states that he has never seen a more fertile, greener and more attractive place than Samarkand and its surroundings. Saying that he walked among the greenery and gardens for eight days in the land he named "Samarkand Soghd", he drew attention to the beauty of the region and that it was a place to live. It is said that the beauty and greenery of the city stretches along the river coast. It is said that there are large pastures around the city for animals to graze. It is told that there are water channels, fruit trees and lush gardens (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>; Tolmacheva, p. 203-205) in front of every house in this region, where the people are very hospitable.

Marco Polo, traveling in the region at the end of the thirteenth century, stated that Samarkand was a very large, prosperous, truly beautiful and green city (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>).

Ibn Battutah, who visited Samarkand in the middle of the fourteenth century, described the city as the most attractive and pleasant city in Central Asia. He stated that the irrigation system (norias) and aqueducts established to irrigate the orchards of the city attracted attention (Ibn Battutah, p. 143). Also, according to the information he reported, traces of the destruction done by Genghis Khan in the city were also visible. It is defined as “the port of Transoxiana” because it is the meeting junction of the roads coming from China, Iran, India-Afghanistan (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Due to the effect of the Zeravshan River on the city’s climate and vegetation, the city was not affected by extreme temperatures and droughts. Considering the narratives of the travelers, the city is mostly likened to a garden of paradise (Aydınli, p. 481-484).

Today, the city of Samarkand is the capital of the Samarkand province (oblast) of Uzbekistan and the second largest city in the country after Tashkent. Of the nearly four million population in the country’s most populous province, nearly one million live in and around Samarkand, and nearly five hundred thousand of them live in the city centre. More than eighty percent of the population is Uzbeks. The rest are Russians, Tatars and Tajiks. In the city where the official language is Uzbek, Russian is de facto second language. Samarkand has a temperate climate, with hot summers and mild and partially cold winters. The economy of the city is based on agriculture, handicrafts and industrial products. As agricultural products, mainly cotton, fruits such as wheat, rice, tobacco and grapes are produced. In the context of handicrafts, carpet making and ceramic work draw attention. In the industrial sector, weaving, canning and motor vehicle parts are manufactured. The city of Samarkand is 270 km away from Tashkent, 240 km from Bukhara, 35 km from the Tajikistan border.

### **I- History of the City**

In Central Asia, the history of Samarkand and its surroundings as a settlement goes back approximately three thousand years. During the archaeological excavations in the region, findings dating back to the eighth century BCE were encountered. However, there is no clear and detailed information about the early centuries when the city was founded. It is told that the famous Turkish commander Alp Er Tunga (Afrasiyab), whose name is given to the surviving remains of the city, took Samarkand and its surroundings under his control in the 7th century BCE. It is said that during this period the city had the appearance of a castle within the walls. The first information in the records about the city is that it is the capital of the Soghd region and an important settlement. According to the interpretations made in the light of the findings obtained in the archaeological excavations, the city became the end zone of the Persian King Sirus in 535 BCE. It is reported that the city was established on an area of more than two hundred hectares during this period (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>; Aydınli, p. 481-484; Çoruhlu, p. 484-486; Aleskerov, Samarkand, p. 27-28).

Alexander the Great took the city of Samarkand, known as Maracanda in Greek, under his control in 329 BCE. It is even claimed that it caused destruction in the city in order to suppress the riots. The limited information in the sources shows that Alexander the Great appointed an administrator to the city. It is stated that this person who was appointed was not from the local people, but one of Alexander’s management team (Orepius). The destruction during the siege of the city was quickly repaired and the city was reconstructed with new construction techniques (Wood, 2002, p. 15-35; Shichkina, p. 83). After this date, the Greek culture had an intense influence on the local craftsmen in the city. This effect continued during the Seleucid and Greco-Bactrian Kingdoms, which were the following administrations, and even showed its existence during the Kushan Dynasty, which originated in Central Asia. During this period, the majority of the inhabitants of the city consisted of

Sogdians of Persian origin and Sakas of Turkish origin. In the following periods, the control of the city passed into the hands of Yuezhi Turks, Kang-chu Turks and Kushans, respectively. The end of the dominance of the Kushans in the region in the third century AD caused Samarkand to weaken economically and culturally (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>; Aydınlı, p. 481-484; McGovern, p. 69-70; Law, 1992).

In the second half of the third century AD, the control of Samarkand and its surroundings passed to the Iranian Sassanids and then to the Akhuns. The Gokturks, who won the Battle of Bukhara (Rezakhani, 2017, p. 141; (<https://en.wikipedia.org>)) in 560 AD, ruled Samarkand. The Gokturks appointed some of the people they chose from the local people as ambassadors to the surrounding countries. The administration of the city passed to the Sassanids again at the beginning of the seventh century (Pourshariati, 2008). With the Arabs' attack on Iran, the Turkish khanates took Samarkand under their control. Later, the Tang dynasty of Chinese origin established dominance in the region. Despite the dominance of the Chinese dynasty, the Samarkand region had an autonomous and independent structure (<https://en.wikipedia.org>).

In 710, Islamic armies under Qutayba ibn Muslim entered the city. Although Qutayba did not implement the Arab settlement policy in the region, he taxed the local administrators. The Abbasid administration in Samarkand came to an end with the Samanid domination in the 860s. In a period of about 150 years, the Samanids declared the city as the capital of the dynasty and the city became even more important commercially. With the elimination of the Samanids by the Turkestan Ilek Khanate (Ali Afrasiyab), the next two hundred years of Samarkand passed under the rule of the Turks. In this process, the Kara-khanids, Seljuks and Khwarazmians were the dynasties that shaped the history of the city (Dumper, 2007, p. 320; (<https://en.wikipedia.org>)).

In the 1200s, the control of Samarkand passed to the Mongols led by Genghis Khan. It is stated that during this period, the city was established on the coast of the Zeravshan River, in an area overlooking the valley. With the destruction of the city by Genghis Khan, the new establishment of the city took place a little further south. Different information is given in the sources about Genghis Khan's attitude towards the people in the city. In some sources, it is reported that he did not interfere in any way with the people of the city and allowed them to continue their lives in the same way, while in others it is reported that he plundered the city, killed those who took shelter in the castles, recruited the youth, and exiled those who did not obey. It is also mentioned in the sources that Baraq Khan plundered Samarkand in order to provide the financial support needed to establish a regular army. In all this process, the city continued to exist as a part of the Chagatai Khanate, the successor of the Mongols, until the last quarter of the fourteenth century (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>; Aydınlı, p. 481-484).

In 1370, Samarkand was declared as the capital of the empire by Timur. Timur ordered deep trenches to be dug around the city and nearly eight km long wall to be build. Thus, by controlling the entrance and exit of the city, where approximately 150 thousand people lived, he created a safe city (Wood, 2002, p. 136-137). At the beginning of the sixteenth century, nomadic Uzbek communities took over the administration of Samarkand under the leadership of Shaybani Khan. In this process, the Shaybanids came to the fore in the administration. With the Bukhara becoming capital in the 1550s, Samarkand began to decline. It was ruled by a branch of the Bukhara Khanate from the late 16th century to the middle of the eighteenth century. Then, until the last quarter of the nineteenth century, it was ruled by Manghud from the Emirates of Bukhara. Since 1868, Turkestan was included in the general administrative region and became a part of the Russian Tsardom, and in 1886 it became the

capital of the Samarkand Region. It remained the capital of the Uzbek Soviet Socialist Republic until 1930 (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>).

## **II- Religions Existed in the City**

The city of Samarkand has become an important settlement for all religions with its multicultural and tolerant structure due to being a crossroads on the trade route between China, Iran, the Mediterranean Basin and the Indian subcontinent.

### **i- Buddhism**

Buddhist monks and believers, who had to flee to the north due to the violence and oppression implemented by the Shunga Dynasty (185 BCE – 75 BCE) in India, settled in different parts of Central Asia, which they reached by using the difficult Afghan passes.

### **ii- Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism**

After the Sassanids took control of Samarkand and its surroundings in 260 AD, the main religion of the region became Manichaeism. In addition, Manichaeism found the opportunity to spread in other cities of Central Asia and on the Silk Road route, with Samarkand being an important center. At the beginning of the eighth century, when the Islamic army led by Qutayba ibn Muslim took control of Samarkand and its surroundings, there were people from different religions. Most of them were believing Zoroastrianism and in addition to it there were people who follower of Buddhism, Manichaeism, Hinduism, Judaism, Nestorian Christianity and other religions in the city (Dumper, 2007, p. 319; Aydınlı, p. 481-484). It is said that Qutayba destroyed Zoroastrian fire temples and Buddhist monasteries (vihara) and built a mosque. It is reported in the sources that the people of the city either left the city or converted to Islam with the influence of the dominant power. In the following period, the city became an important education center where the history of Islamic thought was taught (Wellhausen & Graham, 1927, p. 437-438; Whitfield, 1999, p. 33; Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

### **iii- Islam**

The religion of Islam came to Samarkand and its environs in the eighth century. After this date, mosques, madrasas, minarets and tombs were built by the order of the rulers. The tomb of Imam Bukhari, one of the leading scholars of the Islamic world, is located there. In addition, the tomb of Imam Maturidi, who gave his name to a school named after him, is also in Samarkand. Many Muslim scholars got educated in the city. The works of some of them are still being read and researches are carried out to understand the original ideas in the works.

### **iv- Christianity**

The history of Christianity in Samarkand goes way back. The city hosted the Nestorians who could not have the chance to live in Anatolia and Iran for a long time (Dickens, 2001, p. 17). It is stated in the sources that there was a Nestorian archbishopric in the city in the 19th century (Aydınlı, p. 481-484). In 1329, the Samarkand diocese was established under the Roman Catholic Church, and this diocese served the Christians living in the city for thirty years. Again in these years, with the help of Eljigidey from the Chagatai Khanate, the Church of John the Baptist was built in the city, depending on the Catholic sect. During the Khanate period, Christian bishoprics were allowed to be established in the city (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>). Christianity disappeared in the following years. At the end of the 19th century, the Russian Orthodox church began to make its presence felt in the city and churches were built.

### **v- Current Situation**

Today, the most common religion in Samarkand is Islam. Christianity comes second. The vast majority of Christians belong to the Moscow Patriarchate. There are still functional Orthodox Churches in the city, such as the Aleksy Moskovsky Cathedral and the Church of the Holy Virgin. There are also a small number of ethnically Polish and German Catholics in the city. John the Baptist Catholic Church in the city center serves for them. There are also a small number of Armenian Church members in the city.

### **III- Cultural and Artistic Places in the City**

One of the most effective inventions in the development of science and the spread of scientific studies is the invention of paper. One of the most significant developments in the history of Central Asian science is that the technique of making paper was learned from a Chinese prisoner who was imprisoned during the Battle of Talas. Based on the learning of this technique, the first paper mill in Islamic history was established in Samarkand. The technique of making paper spread from Samarkand to other regions dominated by Islam and to Europe (Quraishi, p. 29-36).

After Genghis Khan took Central Asia under his control, he benefited from foreigners in the region for administrative affairs. According to Chinese sources, administrative tasks such as the management of the lands and the arrangement of the gardens were given to the Chinese and the Karakhitai people, not to the Muslims in the region. Because it is said that people of Chinese origin have been performing some arts in this region for a long time. (Gernet, 1996, p. 377; Bretschneider, 1888, p. 37-108).

The city was reconstructed in approximately thirty-five years during the Timurid period. Due to Timur's fondness for art, masters and craftsmen from all over the empire were invited to Samarkand. Timur was ruthless against his enemies, but he was merciful and protective towards the artists. The artists who saw this made a great effort in the development of the city in terms of art. Thus, the city became an important art center of the Transoxiana region (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>). Timur's thoughts and dreams were sometimes not fully realized by artists. Timur followed the zoning activities of the city very closely and ordered the reconstruction of buildings that were not in the way he wanted. The greatest contribution to the development process of the city came from Timur (Marefat, p. 33-38; Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

It is stated that many scholars were educated in Samarkand, which was the capital city during the Samanid period. In some sources, it is reported that the number of scholars who educated there was more than one thousand (Aydınlı, p. 481-484).

Ruy Gonzalez de Clavijo, who served as an ambassador in the city, draws attention to the magnificence of the works of art commissioned by Timur and describes the palaces, gardens and other structures in the city with admiration (Le Strange, p. 280; Clavijo, 1975; <https://en.wikipedia.org>). Babur also describes the splendor of the buildings in the city in his memoir (Babur, p. 68).

Famous astronomer Ulug Bey built the Samarkand Observatory between 1424-1429. He invented an 11-metre-long tool that measures the angular distance between two visible objects. The bottom part of this tool was buried under ground to protect it from earthquakes. At the end of the fifteenth century, this observatory was destroyed by minds against/blind to scientific developments (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samarkand>).

#### **i- Registan**

Registan means "sandy field" or "desert" and was the center of the city during the Timurid Empire. It has functioned as a square where the people come together and different needs are discussed. The

square is surrounded by three madrasas (Ulugh Beg, Tilla Kari, Shir Dar). These are typical madrasas with courtyards and four iwans (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

### **ii- Shah-i Zinda**

The word Shah-i Zinda means “living sultan/king” and is a necropolis located in the north-east of the city. It is located on the southern slopes of the Afrasiyab hill, in a sacred area. There are nearly twenty buildings in the complex, which was formed over the centuries. The remains of mausoleums dated to 11-12th centuries, which are thought to belong to the Karakhanids, were found in the excavations in the region. In addition, the remains of a madrasa built by Tamacha Khan in approximately 1066 were found. The majority of the structures and tombs in the Shah-i Zinda cemetery are dated between the 14th and 15th centuries. The complex is entered through a crown door built during the Ulugh Beg period. Most of the rectangular structures draw attention with their tile and mosaic decorations. In this complex, Quthum ibn Abbas, Qadi Zada al-Rumi, Shadi Mulk Aga, Emir Zade, Emir Hussein, Shirin Bika Aga, Ashteq, Arab Shah, Toman Aga tombs and mosques, and the Davlat Kushbeg madrasah (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486; Bektaş, 2010, p. 267-269).

### **iii- Ulugh Beg Madrasa**

It is an educational institution built by Ulugh Beg in Registan Square, the center of Samarkand, between 1417-1420 during the Timurid Dynasty. In the inscription on the entrance door, it is written who had it built, and in the inscription above the main door, it is written in what year it was completed. In the madrasa, besides religious sciences, scientific sciences were also taught. The madrasa building is crowned with a blue fluted dome. Exterior wall coverings are decorated with geometric patterned navy blue, light blue, yellow and white tiles. The structure of the madrasa is in the form of an expanding rectangle (Bektaş, 2012, p. 129-130).

### **iv- Shir Dar Madrasa**

The name of the madrasa (gate with lion) comes from the interpretation of the two tiger-sun reliefs on the crown gate as lion-sun. Because it is said that there is no difference in symbolism between lions and tigers among Turkish communities. This relief is considered among the typical features of the building. It was built by the Architect Abduljabbar between 1619 and 1636 with the order of Yalangtush Bakhodur. Although it is of late date, it has the architectural features of the Timurids and exhibits the magnificence of the ruler. It is said that the Ahmad Yasawi mausoleum in Turkestan was the inspiration for this structure (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

### **v- Tilla Kari Madrasa**

It is an education and teaching building built around Registan Square between 1646-1660. It forms an integrity with the Ulugh Beg and Shir Dar Madrasa around Registan Square. It was included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001.

### **vi- Gur-i Amir**

Gur-i Amir, which has an important place in Central Asian architecture and was built for Timur, means “king tomb”. It is called by this name because Timur himself also is buried there. This mausoleum, whose construction was started in 1403 during the Timurid period and completed in 1404, is considered as the inspiration for the Babur Gardens in Kabul, Humayun's Mausoleum in Delhi, and the Taj Mahal in Agra (Berndl, 2005, p. 318–320). There are also tombs of Shah Rukh and Miran Shah (sons of Timur), Ulugh Bey and Muhammad Sultan (grandchildren of Timur) and Sayyid Bereke (teacher of Timur) in this complex of mausoleums. The madrasa, located on a side of the building, has

the basic features of Timurid architecture. It has the appearance of a square from the outside and an octagon from the inside, and there is also a funeral floor. With its tiled dome, it is one of the architectural symbols of Samarkand (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

#### **vii- Mausoleum of Bibi-Khanym**

This mausoleum, whose construction started in the late 1390s and finished in the early 1400s, is considered one of the architectural masterpieces of Samarkand. Although the exterior appearance of the mausoleum is not very striking, the interior, decorated with ivory colored stalactites, is incredibly eye-catching.

#### **viii- Mausoleum of Murad Auliya**

The mausoleum, which was built in the nineteenth century, is located in the west of Samarkand. It looks like a synthesis of Central Asian and Persian architecture. The mausoleum, which is in the UNESCO World Heritage List, is one of the main places of visit for people who are facing various worldly troubles.

#### **ix- Mausoleum of Imam Bukhari**

The mausoleum of the famous muhaddith Imam Bukhari is located in the town of Harteng, which is 25 km away from Samarkand. The tomb, which was neglected for centuries, was restored in 1998. There are Imam Bukhari's tomb, a mosque, a madrasah, and a library in the monumental building.

#### **x- Mausoleum of Imam Maturidi**

It is thought that the foundation of the tomb was laid in the tenth century. The mausoleum was destroyed in the 1930s. With the initiative of the President of Uzbekistan, the mausoleum was rebuilt on an area of four hectares in 2000 on the occasion of the 1225th anniversary of Maturidi's birth. The height of the mausoleum is 12 meters and the height of the dome is 15 meters.

#### **xi- Mausoleum of Rukhabad**

It was built in 1380 by the order of Timur on the tomb of Burhaneddin Sagardzhi, who played an important role in the spread of Islam among the nomadic Turkish communities. The mausoleum has become one of the most respected religious places in Samarkand after end of its construction. In fact, it is reported that Timur always dismounted to show his respect while passing by the mausoleum.

#### **xii- Ulugh Beg Observatory**

This structure, also known as the Samarkand Observatory, was built by Ulugh Beg, one of the famous scientists of the Timurid period and also Timur's grandson. In addition to Ulugh Beg's open mind to scientific exploration, socio-economic, military and commercial reasons were also effective in the establishment of the observatory (Fazlioglu, pp. 1-66). During its establishment, talented mathematicians and astronomers were invited to this observatory, and important discoveries were made in the fields of Mathematics and Astronomy. Both the establishment process of the observatory and the studies conducted here are important proofs of how successful Turkish scientists are in the field of science. It is thought that the original of the structure, where only the meridian measurement was made, survived to the present day, was in a multi-storey cylindrical form (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486).

#### **xiii- Bibi-Khanym Mosque**

One of the most important monumental structures of Samarkand, Bibi-Khanym Mosque draws attention with its striking architectural style. It is considered one of the typical architectural

structures of the Timurid period. When Timur returned from his Indian expedition in 1399, he gave the order to start the construction and the mosque was completed in 1404. Timur had this mosque built for his favorite wife Saray Mulk Khanum, Chagataian Kazan Khalil Khan's daughter, and gave the mosque her title. This structure is an important work in terms of showing both the power and splendor of the Timurid state and Timur's own personal power. At the time it was built, it was the most magnificent and widest mosque in the entire Islamic world. Brick was used in the construction of the mosque, which has a large rectangular area. The dome height of the mosque, which has four iwans and a courtyard, is forty meters. While some claim that the lotus domes in Central Asia were taken as an example in the construction of the dome, some others named these domes as the original onion domes (Çoruhlu, p. 484-486; Beksaç, 1992, p. 125-126).

#### **IV- Statesmen and Scientists Lived in Samarkand**

##### **i- Maturidi**

Maturid, which is attributed to the famous commentator and jurist Imam Maturidi, the founder of the Maturidi school, is located on the outskirts of Samarkand. Both the language and style he used in his works and the fact that Samarkand and its surroundings, where he lived, is a region where Turks are the majority, are indications that Maturidi is of Turkish origin. Known for his works in the fields of kalam, tafsir, jurisprudence and sects, Maturidi's *Kitab Al Tawhid* is one of the classical works of Sunni theology. His work *Ta'wilat al-Qur'an*, also known as *Ta'wilat Ahl al-Sunnah* or *Tafsir al-Maturidi*, is an original work in terms of tafsir. This work also contains detailed information in the fields of kalam, fiqh and scientific methods. His followers gave him titles such as "shaykh, imam, sheikh al-Islam, imamul-huda, alamul-huda, head of the shaykhs of the Samarkand, narrating imam, correcting the belief principles of Muslims, imam of Ahli sunnah" (Özen, p. 146-151).

##### **ii- Timur**

Timur, the founder of the Timurid dynasty, was born in 1336 in the village of Ilgar, near Kesh (Shahrisabz). His father is Taraghai, the Emir of the Barlas tribe, and his mother is Tekina Khatun. Timur, who participated in the struggles between the Mongol and Chagatai Khanetes when he was in his twenties, and established close friendships and strong alliances in this process, came to the throne in Samarkand in 1370. A brave warrior and a successful statesman, Timur quickly took control of Central Asia and organized expeditions to India, Iran and Anatolia. He brought talented architects and masters from the conquered countries to Samarkand and assigned them to the construction of the city. Timur, who was very tough and ruthless towards his enemies, is known for his friendly and protective attitude towards his friends, scientists and craftsmen. He was a leading commander who could lead massive armies and a skilled soldier who knew war strategies. At the same time, he was a statesman who kept the Turkish tradition alive. Timur made Samarkand, which is identified with his own name, the capital city and made great efforts in the development of the city. He founded villages around the city, and prepared vineyards and gardens. The most eye-catching building constructed during his reign is the Bibi-Khanym, also known as the Samarkand Mosque. Gur-i Emir, where he and some dynasty members are buried, also built by him (Aka, p. 173-177).

##### **iii- Ulugh Beg**

Ulugh Beg is grandson of Timur. Father of Ulugh Beg is Shah Rukh and his mother is Gawhar Shad. He was born in 1394 in Sultaniye city of Azerbaijan. He was educated in religious studies, logic, mathematics and astronomy. When he was fifteen years old, he was assigned to the management of Samarkand and its surroundings by his father. He has been the manager of this region for many years.

During his reign, Samarkand became the center of both scientific and religious sciences. Beside his managerial side, Ulugh Beg is known as a mathematician, astronomer, writer and poet. He invited successful and talented scientists and artists of his time, such as Qadi Zada al-Rumi, Jamshid al-Kashi and Ali Qushji, to Samarkand. He had an observatory established in Samarkand for the development of scientific activities (Unat, p. 127-129).

#### **iv- Ali Qushji**

It is estimated that Ali Qushji, a famous Turkish astronomer and mathematician who grew up in Samarkand during the Timurid period, was born in Samarkand at the beginning of the fifteenth century. He was known by the nickname of birdman because of his father's profession as "falconry chief". He took lessons from Ulugh Beg, who loved science and people dealing with science. He went to Kirman for a while, took scientific courses and wrote books. With the support of Ulugh Beg, he went to China to conduct scientific research and calculated the area of the world on his return. After the murder of Ulugh Bey, he worked first under the auspices of Uzun Hasan in Tabriz and then under the auspices of Mehmed the Conqueror in Istanbul. Fatih assigned him to the Hagia Sophia Madrasa as a teacher. He has works on Astronomy, Mathematics, Language, Grammar, Fiqh and Kalam. He died in 1474 in Istanbul. His grave is in the Eyup Sultan Mosque burial ground (Aydın, p. 408-410).

#### **Conclusion**

Samarkand, located in Uzbekistan, is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia and has a long history. When the surrounding cities are taken into account, it is seen that Samarkand continues its function as a settled city without any interruption in the historical process. Having hosted different ethnic elements and communities believing in different religions in different periods of history, Samarkand draws attention with its rich cultural background.

Samarkand, which is one of the crossroads of the historical Silk Road route starting from China, passing through Central Asia and Iran and extending to Anatolia and the Mediterranean basin, has been a popular city for years with this advantage. The merchants traveling from East to West and from South to North for trade made serious contributions to the development of the city. The city's enrichment with commercial activities and the fact that it is equipped with fertile lands and green gardens naturally increased the interest for the city. For this reason, people of different nationalities came to the city, settled and lived.

In the historical process, Samarkand has been a settlement that all empires and dynasties wanted to seize and keep under their control. From the famous Turkish khan Alp Er Tunga to Alexander the Great, from Genghis Khan to Timur, many commanders and leaders are identified with the history of the city. As a matter of fact, Alp Er Tunga, also known as Afrasiyab, is the name of the old settlement of the city. Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan are largely commemorated with the destructions in the city. Undoubtedly, one of the biggest contributions to the city's glamorous appearance belongs to Timur. Timur contributed to its development by making the city the capital of his empire. He took talented and successful craftsmen from the countries he conquered and brought them to Samarkand and benefited from them in the reconstruction of the city. As a result, magnificent architectural works that are still standing and fascinate people have emerged.

The fact that the city is located both on a commercial road and in a fertile valley has led many people to visit the city. In addition, people belonging to different religions came to this multicultural city and lived. When we look at the history of the city, Manichaeism and Zoroastrianism became widespread in the city during the periods when Iranian influence was dominant. Buddhist monks, who had to flee

India during first century BCE till second century AD, followed the Spice Road route and came to cities such as Samarkand and Bukhara, where there is cultural diversity. It is mentioned that some Bukhara-based Jews also existed in the city. Samarkand also became a settlement area for Nestorian Christians who could not find shelter in Anatolia and Iran. With the arrival of the armies of Islam in the city in the eighth century AD, the city began to Islamize. In some sources, it is claimed that the temples of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism were destroyed during this period.

The fact that it is the first place where paper was used in the geography of Central Asia can be considered as an indication that Samarkand will come to the fore as a science center. The establishment of the paper mill is an important turning point in the development of scientific activities in the city. The first paper mill established here, later spread to the western regions, making a serious contribution to the spread of science. This situation will also pave the way for the establishment of an observatory in Samarkand in terms of being the first starting place for scientific activities. Thus, it became possible to calculate the meridians, observe the stars, and make different mathematical calculations. Maturidi, who is considered as one of the most important scholars of the Islamic world and whose books are still read, is a scholar identified with the city. Ulugh Beg and Ali Qushji, who also made important researches and wrote books in the fields of astronomy and mathematics, are counted among the scientists who left their mark on the history of the city.

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