

## Mobile Civilization of Tribes and Nomads, the Ancient Capital of Cultural Tourism of Iran: A Case Study in Central Plateau of Iran

Hamideh Beigi<sup>1\*</sup>, Mohammad Hossein Ramesht<sup>1</sup>, Mehri Azani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Natural Geography, Faculty of Geographic and Planning Science, University of Isfahan, Iran; <sup>2</sup>Department of Geography, Faculty of Humanities, Najafabad Branch, Islamic Azad University, Najafabad, Isfahan, Iran

\*E-mail: [beigi198isfahan@yahoo.com](mailto:beigi198isfahan@yahoo.com)

### Abstract

Mobile civilization is the oldest method of human living, which survival to the present is among the biggest attractions of this way of living. Nomadic tribes, over the centuries and for many years, attempted to preserve their traditions and customs in an incredibly attractive manner and this originality has become an attraction for the tourism industry. Strategic location and climatic conditions in Iran and especially its center of civilization namely the Central Plateau of Iran, underlies the various nomadic tribes and their flourishing culture. In this paper, with the aim of promoting tourism industry in Iran, we review the existing library documents and field research and investigate the cultural tourism attractions of the nomadic tribes of the central Plateau of Iran and introduce their tangible and intangible cultural assets.

**Keywords:** Mobile Civilization, Tangible Assets, Intangible Assets, Cultural Tourism, Central Plateau of Iran

### Introduction

Mobile civilization is among the earliest forms of social life which has survived since the first times of formation of human social life. Historical investigations attribute the development of mobile civilization to 5,000 years ago (Isfahani Salahi, 28: 2013). In the aspect of living and deployment pattern, a large number of people and tribal communities, are among migrant and mobile communities of which can be a large number of ethnic groups and tribes, nomads in Central Asia, Afghanistan, Kashmir Pakistan, Iran, Turkey, Iraq, Syria, Tunisia, Cross-Country nomads Arabian Peninsula, the North and North West Africa.

In some geographical areas of other continents such as America and Europe, the history of nomadic life style based on pastoral livestock existed as well, among which are the remnants of this life in the central and north-western Europe and some parts of North and South America (Blench, 2001).

During socioeconomic and cultural evolutions and developments of societies, migration and settlement method, forms of exploitation and other aspects of tribal life compared to urban and rural centralized communities, have transformed slightly (Akbari and Mizban, 2004). These features caused the tangible and intangible cultural heritage of mobile civilization of nomadic tribes attract tourists. Tribes' housing and their lifestyle, language and music, local cuisine, crafts, dance and costumes and rituals of the wedding and local celebrations are among the most important assets of cultural tourism.

Central Plateau of Iran that its scope is limited to fertile lands of Damghan, Semnan, Rei, Tehran, Qazvin, Saveh, Qom and Kashan, is the refuge of eight large tribes including Bakhtiari, Qashqai, Shahsavan Baghdadi, Moghan, Sangesari, Hadavand and Kalhor. This range of quality and variety is followed by a broad extent of cultural attractions.

## Materials and Methods

### *The central plateau of Iran*

The study area of Iran's central plateau is located between the latitude of 32 degrees 48 minutes and 36 degrees 48 minutes North and the longitude of 49 degrees 55 degrees and 40 minutes East. It is covered by Qazvin plain to the North West, and Damghan to North East, the South West is limited to Kashan Sialk and South East is covered by Kavir plain. This area is located adjacent to the tropic and northern temperate zone. The short distance from the Tropic of Cancer led to pass the desert strip of the northern hemisphere through the area and dominate certain natural conditions. Figure 1 shows the location of the study area.



**Figure 1. Map of study area in central plateau of Iran**

**Table 1 shows the geographical distribution of nomadic tribes in Central Plateau of Iran.**

Table 1: Geographical distribution of nomadic tribes in Central Plateau of Iran	Tribe	Geographic dispersion
	Qashqai	Nain
	Bakhtiari	Nain, Ardestan
	Shahsavani	Saveh, Buin Zahra
	Hamedan Kurd	Saveh
	Moghan	Saveh, Karaj
	Sangesari	Damghan, Semnan, Karaj, Robat Karim, Firuzkuh
	Hadavand	Tehran, Damavand, Shemiranat, Robat Karim, Karaj
	Kalhor	Tehran

### *Mobile civilization*

Mobile civilization is a cultural major geographic and anthropologic phenomenon which comes from human's relationship with the environment. The current values system among this group of people constitutes all social and economic areas and transmitted from generation to generation and in fact, this way of living of the early stages of the human life and his relationship with nature and constantly is in search of food and required raw materials, thereby is displaced to provide the necessities of life (Bakhshandeh Nosrat, 2005). Mobile civilization, due to the kind of displacement is divided into two categories:

**Horizontal mobile civilization :** This type of civilization is formed more in down latitudes as well as the next tropical areas and lowlands. This types of population nodes when live in a settlement begin to exploit the natural environment around them so far as environmental resources

be ended and then are forced to move to another location. This type of population displacement is not related to dominant season of that area and the location is causing the movement of populations (Baba Jamali, 2012).

**Vertical mobile civilization :** In this social Geo-Ecology, each year several different geographically contiguous units are living together. These units consist of mountains, foothills and plains and in mountains and foothills from early spring to late summer is the season of growth of natural grass fields. These kinds of population movement are based on the season's calendar and in fact coincides with the time movements.

Arid and semiarid lands form the realm of vertical displacement of the mobile population nodes and generally the absolute maximum temperature in summer is 50 degrees above zero in plain areas and in winter minimum temperatures in mountainous areas reaches to 20 below zero. In the aspect of rainfalls in the plains areas, annual rainfall is about 250 mm and in mountainous areas it is more than 600 mm. Geographic intervals between mountainous and plain units may be up to 500 kilometers (Geravandi, 2010).

Cold in summer pastures are called Yaylak and warm in winter pastures are called Kishlak, the distance between warm and cold areas are foothills which called Mian Band (Varjavand, 1965) Sangesari, Hadavand and Arab Sarhangi and Parvari and Beh Elikayi tribes in Semnan Province have this type of migration (Salahi Esfahani, 2013).

#### ***Cultural Tourism***

Cultural tourism is a debate about a part of the tourism industry with shows a particular attention to the cultural attractions. Cultural tourism, as defined by Richards (2001), is not just exploiting past cultural expressions, but also considers the culture and lifestyle of modern people, communities and regions as well. This definition emphasizes that as cultural tourism pays attention to heritage and history of a place, it pays attention to their lifestyle as well. Zippel and Hall (1992), divided cultural tourism into two groups of heritage tourism and art tourism.

Art tourism more seems as a contemporary phenomenon which generally exists now and belongs to a particular location and it is natural to be considered more tangible and experimental compared to heritage tourism. All conflicts in the definition of culture, have affected the definition of cultural tourism as well and hence, cause many definitions (Mohammadi Meikshosh, 2012). Cultural tourism includes a wide range of cultural indices which are divided into tangible and intangible cultural heritage categories.

#### ***Tangible cultural heritage***

Including physical cultural heritage such as monuments and historical sites, sculptures, books, documents, artifacts, etc. this heritage, in turn, consists of movable heritage, which is easily transferable from one place to another, and unmovable heritage, which are not transferable to another place. (Momenzadeh, 2007).

#### ***Intangible cultural heritage***

Intangible cultural heritage refers to the non-physical aspects of a culture and usually includes the customs of the society in a specific period or way of behaving in society which usually are public official rules to function in a specific cultural environment. In other words, the spiritual heritage includes a part of our culture which we inherited them orally. These items include social values, traditions, customs and practices, aesthetic and spiritual beliefs, artistic expression, language and other aspects of human functioning. It is generally more difficult to maintain the spiritual heritage compared with preserving material cultural heritage (Parmoon, 2013).

#### ***Tribe-path***

The trajectory of moving and relocating nomads from summer to winter and vice versa, is called migration path. Nomads' traditional routes is called "tribe-path". Nomads usually in tribe-path

trade with a group of tribe people and neighboring villagers. The longest tribe-path is related to Sangesari tribes which by 1500 km length begins from Semnan nomadic areas to Taleghan County. (Jadidi, 2013)



**Figure 2. Tribe-path of Nomad in central plateau of Iran**

### **Discussion**

#### ***Tangible assets of cultural tourism of nomadic tribes of Central Plateau of Iran***

##### ***The garment symbols***

Understanding the culture of a society is not possible without understanding and studying the traditional clothing of communities, that is why, by recognizing people's garment, we can recognize lifestyle, climate conditions and beliefs and customs, religious, political and economic conditions of a society. In this way, factors affecting the constitution of this garment include religion, environmental conditions and factors, social status, non-farming activities and social dignity. Due to the geographical dispersion of nomadic tribes in the Central Plateau of Iran, the various garment symbols of Men and women will be investigated.

**Bakhtiari tribe:** Almost all the inhabitants of the Bakhtiari realm wear similar costumes. In local garment only two colors of black and white are used. This costume includes Khosravi hat, Chogha, scarf and black baggy trousers known as Debit and the shoes named Giveh which is famed as Maleki Giveh. Generally, depending on the season of cold and heat, coat and shirt are worn under a Chogha which selection of their color and material is optional. Chogha covers body from shoulders to knees. The shoulders' and back images of Chogha suggest that irregular lines (broken and half -mast broken and rose from the black) and white rose form the hearts blackness.

The lines resemble that in the dark, white columns have emerged and although some of them are broken and interrupted but at the end, elevated the black and have seen the light. A typical Bakhtiari woman garment respectively are, Lachak, Meyna, long shirt, Gheri pants and Giveh. The age of people saliently affects the color they select. Domestic materials are used entirely to sew this type of garment. Figure 3 shows the garment of men and women of Bakhtiari Tribe.



**Figure 3. The garment of men and women of Bakhtiari Tribe**

**Qashqai Tribe :** Qashqai's men's clothing and how to wear them have specific and identified criteria. Men's clothing including 2-lab hats or Barak which its raw material is a rare type of goat wool which after picking goat wool are collected in trace amounts and used for making hats, Arkhalogh which is their original dress men is worn on the shirt and shawl and Chegheh and Zenhareh as decorative segment which worn on Arkhlogh.

Qashqai's women's clothing, according to the pastoral life and permanent migration and considering safety issues and veil, includes kerchief which is a delicate and thin fabric that is sewed in specific form and used as scarf, Yaghlugh (kerchief), King is a long shirt and up to just below the knee and Arkhalogh (female) is worn as warm clothing but that's why it is a beautiful and preserving garment and is the reason of dignity of the clothing, and is used in most seasons. Figure 4 shows the cover of Qashqai's men and women.



**Figure4. The garment of men and women of Qashqai Tribe**

**Hamedan Kurdish and Kalhor Tribes :** Kurdish clothing is one of the most beautiful and most covering worn clothes that is unique within the culture of world people as travelers wrote on their itinerary. Clothing for Kurdish men and women include gossamer, caps and footwear which differ according to the season, type of work and livelihood and celebrations. Although clothing of various parts of Kurdistan such as Uraman, Saqqez, Baneh, Garoos, Sanandaj, Marivan etc. are different, but to cover the whole body, they are all identical. Men's clothing is:

Chookkeh, a cotton or wool jacket, Pantul a baggy pants with a narrow foot, Maleki a jacket without collar which is closed by bottom from down to top, Lafkeh Sorani; a shirt with wide and long sleeves and with a triangular tang at end of sleeve which normally swirled around the wrist or arm, Shawl which is fastened on the clothing around the waist, Turban or " Kalagheh " which is used instead of cap, Kalleh Bal is a kind of covering felt which shepherds wear in their herds in the desert.

Kurd women's clothing is Jafy a kind of pants similar to men, Kalanjeh a jacket which worn on the long shirt, Scarf or hat made of cardboard and Kalkeh is a scarf or turban used by women instead of hat. Figure 5 shows the Kurdish garment of men and women in Central Plateau of Iran.



**Figure 5. The Kurdish garment of men and women in Central Plateau of Iran**

Shahsavani Tribe : Now, Shahsavani's men's clothing is similar to men's in rural and urban areas although due to job requirements, lifestyle and habits and tastes, their clothing is not equal to urban men in terms of color and luster, but in summer or winter used clothing composition or a variety of hats and shoes are the same by slight small difference in the type of their material. However, Shahsavani's women somewhat have kept the traditional context of their clothes and even in some cases did not enter any new pattern or composition into their traditional dress.

Shahsavani's women's clothing has 9 pieces including Koinak, Tuman, Yaeliq (scarf), Allyn Yaeliq, Arkhchen (skullcap), Yal (a simple jacket that worn over in winter), Jalgha (a sleeveless jacket), socks, Bashmaq (shoes).

Sangesar Tribe: Women's clothing; Kajin Shui, relatively long silk dress that generally is red and its only feature is an eye-catching specific needlework art at the bottom of the skirt and sleeve edges, Sargira, Makneh, long silk scarf (Kajin) which is used as a head cover, Farakh Shaval Sarpareh Dar (Gherdarshowl), a dark and long skirt that its down end is decorated by diagonal cuts and re-sewn silk cloth.

#### *Art symbols*

During Iran's colorful history, the art was the largest theme and character of each period. Given the importance of symbols in Iran and Iranian art, in the past, which led to the inseparable relationship between art and life, the artistic symbols of nomadic tribes of the Central Iranian Plateau are introduced.

Kilim weaving: Kilim is a carpet without nap which is woven by wool or cotton with involvement of warp and woof and used as mat or decoration (Daneshgar, 470: 1997). Kilim is common as a feminine handicraft industry in the Central Plateau of Iran. The instrument for weaving Kilim such as carpet have horizontal or vertical gallows. This tapestry due to the low cost has public consumption. Each Kilim's features have a direct connection with factors such as type and material of warp and woof, the spinning, color, weaving style and final details (Hall and Vioveska, 29: 1998). Kilim in Central Iranian Plateau has a varied repertoire of designs based on areas which is weaved there. Figure 6, shows the various tribes' kilims of the Central Plateau of Iran.

Shahsavani Tribe's Kilim: their most important fabric is "Sesomak" which in the local language is called "Verni". In general, the broken geometric patterns with gentle colors are used and you rarely can find two Savani Kilims in similar design and color. The best horse cover in Iran is Savani Horse Jol in six pieces with different colors (the Yavari, 2010).

Lor Kilim: Loris weave quality kilim which mostly by black, green, blue and white colors and specific patterns were recognized. The best Lor fabric is for big cantinas for home furnishings. Their margin are weaved such as carpet to be tough.

Qashqai Kilim: Qashqai kilims' feature is intense and cheerful colors but contrasting colors are used besides red and yellow colors. Geometric patterns is an essential part of the Qashqai patterns. Such as octagonal, eight-spoke star images of peacock, goat and deer.



**Figure6. Killim's Pattern, Left, Shahsavani kilim, Center, Lori Killim, Right, Qaghqai Killim**

Palās weaving: A fabric which its warp and woof are the fibers of goat hair. Palās as long and short width rectangular components is weaved by nomad women. Then the pieces are sewed from the edges and acquire large pieces which are the same portable nomadic roof (Black-Tent) which is raised by rope, wood, wooden or metal tip and large nails. Figure 7, shows an example of a nomadic Black-Tent.



**Figure7. Nomadic Black-Tent**

***Intangible cultural tourism assets of nomadic tribes of Central Iranian Plateau  
Linguistic symbols***

The language's scope not only includes communication between humans but also is crucial as the ability to create the possibility for thought, the formation of character, making personal and social identity, constitute culture and at the end, shaping of evolved human society in a particular community. Subjective meaning and concepts have linguistic symbols and without language no concept and meaning and eventually thought and mind will exist.

Language is a symbolic system. The language symbols refer to a part of the signs which transfer special text messages to others. Text messages can be written such as written texts on the coins, flags, written discs etc. and can be unwritten and oral such as popular proverbs (Faiazi and Jabbari, 2011).

Nomadic tribes of the Central Plateau of Iran, each speak with a specific dialect and accent that the introduction of these linguistic symbols as an intangible cultural heritage will attract many interested tourists.

**Kurdish Dialect:** Kurdish dialect is common among Kurdish clans and the tribes such as Kalhor Tribe.

**Lori dialect:** This dialect is common among Bakhtiari clans and the tribes and has various accents such as Small Lor and Bakhtiari.

**Semnani dialect:** That's why Semnan Province's people speak by various dialects, the province is famed as "accents Island". Many features of this ancient Iranian languages are preserved in this dialect and belongs to the category of dialects in which Mad and Part people spoke with them. In general accent of Semnan people and the surrounding areas can be divided into five major categories: Semnani, Sangesari, shahmirzadi, Sorkheh-e, Lasgardy. Among these dialects, Semnani language is the oldest and great number of words, terms and proverbs are its attributes.

**Turkish language:** The language is a branch of foremilks languages. Turkish language spoken in Iran has different dialects: Qashqai Turkish, Turkmen Turkish, Khalaji Turkish, Khorasani Turkish and Shahsavani Turkish. Two dialects of Qashqai and Shahsavani are common among Central Iranian Plateau tribes.

**Arabic language:** This language is common among the tribes and clans of the Central Plateau of Iran such as Arab Sarhangi and Arab Sahnaiee.

### ***Music***

Tribes' Music represent a migration memories and sufferings and struggles with nature. Music and dancing in tribal communities have been more inspired by nature. Music is very important in nomad's proceedings. That's why it is applied both in the funeral ceremony and celebration. In this community, music is a way for reducing difficulties and pain treatment, lullaby for children, romantic songs in praise of their beloved or songs that carpet weaver women sing. Bakhtiari tribe's music can be considered a branch of Lori music. This music is played by instruments such as Surna, Kurna and timpani and brass instruments smaller than Surna and Kurna.

Qashqai's Music Unlike traditional Iranian music is not aligned. Qashqai's Music is divided into groups such as the Asiklar music, Changi music and cameleers' music (Gorgin Poor, 1995). Shahsavan's tribe's music is Asiklar. Asiks poems are more epic and romantic or describing bravery and honor and patriotism (Azizi, 2008). Sangesar Tribe's music often has a certain weight and the less used parts with free weights. The theme of the poems is in the context of the customs of the tribe, history, New Year, lullaby, whistle, convent, love and epic. Kalhor and Hamadan Kurd Tribe's music is Kurdish. Many Kurdish songs such as Kaboki, Shaik Deh gery, Gul Nishan Gul Nishan and most Heiran songs are common in Dastgāh-e Šur.

### ***Traditional food***

Traditional food plays an important role in the construction of sites and tourism destinations. Climate, culture and history of a region shape its food personalities and since food is considered as a subset of cultural tourism or heritage, each area's traditional food is the region's local cultural symbol and no trip is completed without tasting the local food. Natural, geographical and climatic conditions and consent of the people, cultures and neighbors communities are effective factors involved in the formation of the local cuisine.

Raw materials of local cuisine of nomadic tribes of Central Plateau of Iran, all are produced within the tribe and most of the food are based on the dairy, wheat and meat, such as Bakhtiari Tribe's breads like Afagh, Qashqai's bread namely Chootag and such as Bakhtiari Tribe's Bree, Qashqai pomegranate soup, Sangesar Tribe Digi, etc.

### **Conclusion**

Mobile civilization is the ancient cultural capital of the Central Plateau of Iran and seen as the most spectacular attraction in the age of technology. Because the society's livelihood economy depends on livestock, moving to relevant location in the aspect of animal food is the main concern of this community.

This issue results in the formation of cultural and ecological differences with decentralized community. The people of the technology era who are tired from the routine industrial environment, are interested in mint cultural environments. Cultural tourism attractions can meet the demands of the tired residents of industrialized societies. Tangible and intangible cultural attractions of nomadic tribes of Central Plateau of Iran are ideal area for cultural tourism and the promotion of communities' economic income. This causes that these communities with pride and a sense of cultural superiority, try to keep most of their cultural heritage, which has been transferred to them chest to chest.

### **References**

- Akbari, A., & Mizban, M. (2004). An introduction to the understanding of the characteristics of the population and tribal communities, *National Studies*, 17 (1).
- Azizi, P. (2008). Investigating Shahsavan's socio-economic structure. Ghomes publication.



- Baba Jamali, F. (2012). Geomorphology components and their impact on civic identity and art of carpet (Case Study: Civics mental and non- mental civilization in Central Iran), Department of Physical Geography, Faculty of Geography and Planning, University of Isfahan, p 39.
- Bakhshandeh Nosrat, A. (2005). Foundations of migration and nomad in Iran. Shahid Rajae Teacher training University, first edition.
- Blench, R. (2001). Pastoralism in the new millennium, Overseas Development Institute, London.
- Daneshgar, A. (1997). The comprehensive lexicon of carpet, Tehran: A Memorial of Asadi.
- Faiazi, M. & Jabbari, M. (2011). Shiite's social representations in being era (language codes), History on the mirror of Research, 8 (1), 137-163.
- Geravandi, A. (2010). The role of geomorphological factors on ice Quaternary processes in fourth period and its relationship with Iran's Central Civic Associations, Master's thesis, Islamic Azad University of Najaf Abad.
- Gorgin Poor, F. (1995). Qashqai Music. Tehran: Iran Music Association.
- Hall, A., & Viovska, L. (1998), Kilims (history, design, texture and identification), translated by Homayoon Far, S and Olfat, N. Tehran: Carnegie Karang.
- Jadidi, H. (2013). Irainan's Students News agency (ISNA), News Code: 92072716672.
- Mohammadi, Meikhosh, A. (2013). The role of cultural tourism in the development of relations between Iran and Azerbaijan, Socio-Cultural Approaches , 2 (5), 147 -176 .
- Momenzadeh, M. (2007). What is Heritage?, Maremat Magazine, XVI, 4.
- Parmoon, Y. (2013). Manual for recording intangible cultural heritage, Cultural Heritage, Handicrafts and Tourism Organization.
- Richards, G. (2001). Cultural Attractions and European Tourism. Wallingford: CAB International .
- Salahi Esfahani, G. (2013). The history and developments of the tribal community with emphasis on Iran, PNU Publications.
- Varjavand, P. (1965). Methods of investigating nomadic tribes of Iran, Institute for Social Studies and Research, Tehran.
- Yavari, H. (2010). Understanding kilim and quasi-kilim of Iran, Azar Publication: Portrait of knowledge.
- Zeppel, H., & Hall, C. M. (1992). Arts and Heritage Tourism, Weiler , B. and Hall, C. M.(eds) Special Interest Tourism, London: Belhaven Press .