



An Analysis of Local History of Vist: From Ancient Symbols to Collective Memory

Mohammadhossein Foroughi^{1*}

^{1*}- PhD in Islamic history, Payam Noor University and Researcher of Isfahan History and Culture, Isfahan, Iran. vistygol@yahoo.com

Article Info

ABSTRACT

Article type:**Research Article****Received:****23/04/2025****Accepted:****26/12/2025**

Local history, as a fundamental branch of historiography, plays a pivotal role in safeguarding collective identity, recording and representing historical memory, and explaining the political, social, cultural, and economic transformations of small communities. From this perspective, research in regions that, despite an ancient background, lack documented written history, can provide a basis for a more accurate reconstruction of national history. The village of Vist, a dependency of Khansar which has recently been upgraded to a city, is a prime example of such a region; an area that, with evidence of three thousand years of habitation and rock carvings dating back over ten thousand years, still lacks a comprehensive written history. The main research question is: How can the historical past of Vist be rediscovered through archaeological evidence, historical documents, and oral narratives? The research findings, obtained through a descriptive-analytical approach relying on fieldwork and written sources, indicate that this region, due to its rich water resources, fertile lands, and strategic location on the caravan route between Isfahan and Borujerd, has always been one of the important centers for agricultural production and commercial and cultural exchanges, playing an effective role in the economic structure of the region. Various pieces of evidence, such as millennia-old rock carvings, the ruins of a historical castle registered in the National Heritage List, ancient *qanats* (underground aqueducts), inscriptions, stone pillars, an engraved *minbar* (pulpit), and the 'Zeheni Baft' (Mental-Weave) Chaharbagh carpet registered in the National Heritage List, all serve as clear testimony to the historical and cultural significance of this area. Furthermore, contemporary historical documents and narratives, in interaction with the collective memory of the residents, reveal the hidden layers of Vist's history.

Keywords: Local History, Vist, Collective Memory, Timareh Rock Carvings, Visti Carpet, Vist Castle.

DOI: 10.30479/hvri.2025.21957.1069



© The Author(s).

Publisher: Imam Khomeini International University

Introduction

Vist is one of the historically significant regions of Khansar. Despite its archaeological and cultural importance, it has been less systematically studied. Research indicates that Vist holds a special place not only archaeologically but also in terms of continuous human habitation. Evidence from Timerah petroglyphs and the historical mound of Vist reflects patterns of stable settlement, which were based on access to water resources, favorable climate conditions, and exploitable agricultural lands. Investigation of ancient qanats and local water-related toponyms highlights the significance of water management in sustaining the social and economic life of Vist. Moreover, its location along the Isfahan–Borujerd communication route has given Vist not only a productive role but also an important cultural and communicative function.

Materials & Method

This research follows a descriptive–analytical approach. Data were collected from library sources, historical documents, archaeological surveys, oral history interviews with residents, and analysis of hand-woven local carpets. Fieldwork played a significant role in complementing the findings. Surveying stone monuments, qanats, and historical structures, alongside interviews with residents, allowed for the correlation of oral narratives with tangible evidence. Analysis of the symbolic patterns in Vist's carpets provided cultural insights into the continuity of historical patterns in everyday life. This triangulation of methods strengthened the validity and reliability of the findings.

Discussion

The findings indicate that Vist was not only a sustained settlement but also a key hub for agricultural production and regional economic activity. Ancient qanats and water management practices demonstrate the use of advanced agricultural methods to maintain economic stability. Cultural artifacts, including rock carvings, columns, pulpits, and carpet motifs, reveal persistent religious and cultural patterns, highlighting the transmission of collective memory across generations. In addition, Vist's role as a caravan route facilitated exchanges of goods, ideas, and culture, reinforcing its regional significance. Analysis of local traditions and cultural elements shows that these served as vital mediators for historical knowledge, preserving memory in the absence of written records. The interplay between environmental resources, economic activity, and cultural practices demonstrates a complex system of sustainable human–environment interaction that persisted over millennia, revealing mechanisms of resilience and adaptation. Furthermore, integrating archaeological, documentary, and oral evidence allows a more nuanced

understanding of social hierarchies, local governance, and economic networks that shaped community life.

Results and Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that Vist has not only served as a stable settlement but has also been a central hub for agricultural production and economic activities in the region. The ancient qanats and water management systems reflect the residents' sophisticated agricultural practices, which sustained the local economy over millennia. The analysis of rock carvings, stone columns, pulpits, and the symbolic patterns of Vist's handwoven carpets reveals enduring cultural and religious motifs, highlighting the continuity of collective memory and the transmission of knowledge across generations.

Historical documents and oral narratives suggest that Vist functioned as a caravan route and a center for trade and cultural exchange, reinforcing its pivotal role in regional connectivity. Agricultural evidence, including fertile lands, orchards, and irrigation networks, shows that local production not only met internal needs but also supplied neighboring towns, illustrating the integration of Vist into wider economic circuits. Cultural elements, such as Vist carpets and local rituals, served as historical carriers, acting as intermediaries for transferring historical knowledge alongside material evidence.

Moreover, the study emphasizes the dynamic interplay between environment, economy, and collective culture, showing how Vist's inhabitants adapted to and shaped their surroundings. The persistence of settlement, sustainable resource management, and continuity of cultural practices collectively underpin Vist's enduring historical significance. Documentation of local history here provides a model for studying other areas lacking written records, demonstrating how cultural artifacts, oral histories, and physical remnants can reconstruct a comprehensive historical narrative. In conclusion, Vist exemplifies a profound integration of natural, economic, and cultural systems over millennia, offering invaluable insights into the mechanisms of local identity formation and regional historical development, while serving as a resource for future scholarly research and heritage preservation.

References

Books

- Arab, Kazem & Khorshid, Shaghayegh. (2017). "Rock Carvings of Koucheri, Golpayegan: Analysis and Typology." *Iranian Journal of Archaeological Research*, No. 14, pp. 123–140 .
- Christensen, Arthur. (1988). *Iran in the Time of the Sasanians*, translated by Mohammad Moein. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications .
- Diakonoff, M. (1998). *History of Media*, translated by Karim Keshavarz. Tehran .
- Dianati, Gholamali. (2021). *Golpayegan and Khansar through the Pages of History*. Qom: Andisheh va Farhang-e Javidan Publications .
- Farahvashi, Bahram. (2007). *Pahlavi Language Dictionary*. Tehran: University of Tehran Press .
- Foroughi, Ali Agha. (2018). *Vist Oral History Project: Interview by Mohammad Hossein Foroughi*, interview date: 28 April, Vist, retrieval code: 103 .
- Foroughi, Mahmoud. (2017). *Vist Oral History Project: Interview by Mohammad Hossein Foroughi*, interview date: 26 April, retrieval code: 101 .
- Foroughi, Shokat. (2021). *Vist Oral History Project: Interview by Mohammad Hossein Foroughi*, interview date: 24 June, Vist, retrieval code: 104 .
- Hesouri, Ali. (2002). *Principles of Traditional Agriculture in Iran*. Tehran: Cheshmeh Publications .
- Hughes, H. Stuart. (2002). *The Obstructed Path*, translated by Ezzatollah Fooladvand. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications .
- Jaberí, Ali Mohammad & Ghotbi, Behzad. (1993). "Unknown Aspects of Iranian Carpets." *Specialized Quarterly Journal of Carpets*, Vol. 2, No. 5, pp. 44–54 .
- Jamali, Mohsen. (2023). "A Study of the Cow Motif on the Rock Carvings of Teymareh, Golpayegan." *Journal of Archaeological Research*, No. 36, pp. 91–112 .
- Jamali, Mohsen & Bashash Kanzagh, Rasoul. (2024). "Introduction and Analysis of Newly Discovered Pahlavi Inscriptions in Teymareh, Golpayegan." *Iranian Journal of Archaeological Research*, No. 42, pp. 103–121 .
- Lambton, Ann K. S. (1983). *Landlord and Peasant in Persia*, translated by Manouchehr Amiri. Tehran: Scientific and Cultural Publications .
- Mahdavi, Mosleh al-Din. (2013). *A'lam al-Isfahan*, edited and annotated by Gholamreza Nasrollahi, Vol. 4. Isfahan: Isfahan Municipality Cultural and Recreational Organization .

- Mir-Mohammadi, Hamid Reza. (1991). *Geography of Khansar*, Vol. 1. Mashhad: Astan Quds Razavi Publications .
- Mohammadi, Khairallah. (2005). “The Place of the Number Three in the Culture and Ancient Rituals of Iranians.” *Journal of Social and Human Sciences, Shiraz University*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 149–162 .
- Mojabi, Seyyed Ali et al. (2011). “Classification of Designs and Motifs of Mentally Woven Carpets of Vist.” *Negareh: Scientific-Research Quarterly*, No. 19, pp. 21–35 .
- Mosayebi, Mohammad & Gheyur, Hassan Ali. (1995). “Climatology of the Golpayegan Basin.” *Geographical Research Journal*, No. 39, pp. 137–150 .
- Nateghi, Ali Agha. (2017). *Vist Oral History Project: Interview by Seyyed Mohammad Mirzineli with Master Ali Agha Nateghi (Tandoor-maker)*, 6 March, Vist, retrieval code: 102 .
- Pour-Riahi, Masoud. (1995). *Identification of Iranian Dialects, Book Three*. Tehran: Iranian Cultural Heritage Organization .
- Rahmani Fazli, Abdolreza. (2021). “Notification on the Conversion of Vist Village into a City.” *Ministry of Interior of Iran*, available from official website, news code: 151174, dated 7 April 2021 .
- Razmara, Hossein Ali. (1951). *Geographical Dictionary of Iran, Vol. 6, Sixth Province*. Tehran: Army Geographical Organization .
- Savaqeb, Jahanbakhsh. (2013). “An Analysis of the Status and Components of Local Historiography in the Safavid Era.” *Research Journal of Local Histories of Iran*, Vol. 1, No. 2, pp. 5–29.
- Sha‘bani, Reza. (1990). *Foundations of Iran’s Social History*. Tehran: Qomes Publishing.
- Siroux, Maxime. (n.d.). *Caravanserais of Iran*, translated by Issa Behnam. Tehran: National Organization for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments of Iran.
- _____. (1979). *Ancient Roads of the Isfahan Region and Their Related Structures*, translated by Mehdi Mashayekhi. Tehran: National Organization for the Preservation of Ancient Monuments of Iran.
- Statistical Center of Iran. (1980). *General Census of Population and Housing, November 1976: Golpayegan County*. Tehran: Plan and Budget Organization.
- Tajaddod, Hossein. (2010). *Encyclopedia of Iranian Handwoven Carpets*, edited by Seyyed Hassan Amin. Tehran: Encyclopedia of Iranian Studies Press.

Archival Documents

- National Archives and Library Organization of the Islamic Republic of Iran (NALOIR), files no. 17987/293/97; 8607/250; 640/009/293/97; 94258/240; 22001/297; 094258/240.
- Personal document (1274 AH). Handwritten deed of Hammamin endowments, from the private collection of Mohammad Hossein Foroughi.
- _____. (1292 AH). Handwritten marriage contract, from the private collection of Mohammad Hossein Foroughi.