

Cultural and Religious Fusion Among Central Asia, Turkey, and Pakistan: Impact on the Future Multilateral Strategic Partnership

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1. Introduction

The culture and religious foundations of Central Asia and Turkey have been infused with the ancient civilization in the subcontinent. Pakistan and Central Asian states not only have close economies and strategic ties but also share its religious and ethnolinguistic affinities. This multifaceted historic heritage continues to have a deep influence seen in 21st century and creating linkages amid these regions.

The whole of Central Asia, Pakistan, Turkey, and Afghanistan have remained under the Turkic influence since ancient times. The regions comprising both Pakistan and Turkey have been mutually influenced by contiguous Persian, Hellenistic, Arab and Turco-Mongol cultures at various points in history. By the fifth century BC, ancient Persia spread from Anatolia to the Indus River, introducing Persian cultural and political traditions to these regions. Their influence spread far and wide in the region of Turkey, and even Europe.

After the advent of Islam, the majority of the region converted to Islam, which spread along the cultural and trade routes in the entire region. Sufism, a mystical form of Islam has flourished in the Muslim world for centuries which placed a distinctive stamp on the religious practices in various Arab states as well as in Africa, Turkey, and particularly, in Central Asia. Likewise, in a decentralized global faith such as Islam, the practice of Sufism had varied tremendously

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across different regions and countries over time. Exponents and followers of Sufism concentrated on the spiritual purification through mystic and ascetic principles that attract Muslims and non-Muslims, distinct it from conventional forms of Islamic practice.

The influx affected all aspects of life in South Asia. Contemporary Pakistani society has a diverse set of cultures that has its roots in Central Asia. The art of manuscript book writing in Central Asia belongs to a Silk Roads heritage with origins spanning centuries. Cities such as Baghdad, Bukhara, Samarkand, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tabriz were renowned centers of such fabrication between the 8th and 16th centuries. The development of this craft is closely tied to the art of calligraphy, manuscript illumination, and miniature painting which also reflects in the art inclination of the sub-continent.

Central Asian influence affected also the apparel worn in the areas in Pakistan. Traditional subcontinent attire consisted of draped clothing such as *dhoti* and *sari*. Central Asian influences introduced not only the concept of stitching but also transformed the dress imprint.

Cultural integration between the two regions reached an unprecedented level under the Mughal dynasty which has remained the most pertinent era in the context of religion, language, culture, architecture, arts and crafts, and, language. Not only the architecture structures but even designs and motifs had Central Asian influence. More importantly, the integration of preexisting smaller kingdoms into a single Mughal Empire led to the need and birth of a new, unified language for the first time since the Aryan era. The newly born Urdu language has also been influenced by languages spoken in Central Asia, Persia, Turkey and India.

Sufism plays an essential role in the development of Islamic culture in the areas that stretch from Pakistan to Central Asia and Turkey. An inflow of Sufi scholars and philosophers led to the revival of social fabric of the sub-continent. Sufi culture was instrumental in bringing about tolerance and harmony that was much required in multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian societies of South Asia and beyond.

The asymmetry of this exchange is evident in the fact that since Gandhara the flow has been from central towards South Asia. The reasons varied from new opportunities to conquests, to being sent

as cultural envoys. One of the reasons why Central Asian influences was felt more strongly in the subcontinent was preservation of Islamic heritage in Central Asia. Legacy inherited from Central Asian origin attracted the people of South Asia. Home to not only mosques and castles built by great Muslim leaders, Central Asia is also home to shrines of saints. The Hanafi school of thought, a form of Islamic law practiced in Pakistan and Turkey, was implemented by both the Ottoman Empire and Mughal Empire.

Thus, Central Asia is currently one of the most attractive locations not just strategically or economically but in some contexts culturally as well.

This paper analyzes the cultural and religious fusion among Turkey, Pakistan, and Central Asian states and the future prospects of the multilateral strategic relations. It specifically probes whether a unique model, based on inclusiveness and commonness of religion and culture, may be the foundation to create new opportunities and interconnectivity between these countries. This paper is organized as follows. The next part gives a brief account of historical connection between Pakistan, Turkey, and Central Asia. Third part elaborates on the Central Asian influence on the sub-continent in the context of historical ties, religious bonding, cultural and artistic affinities as well as similarities in everyday life. The final part presents a discussion on whether these connections may provide the foundation for a future multilateral strategic partnership.

2. Reclaiming Pakistan's Central Asian Heritage

Central Asia had a significant influence on the sub-continent in the context of historical ties, religious bonding, and cultural association so much that the historical and cultural geography of Pakistan is a part of Central Asia more than South Asia. Historically linked by religion, politics, and trade, Pakistan and Central Asia shares a historic legacy, which is based on thousands of years of interaction between the Central Asian and South Asian civilizations.

2.1. Ancient Empires of the Sub-Continent



Figure 29.1. Connections between Turkey, Central Asia and Pakistan

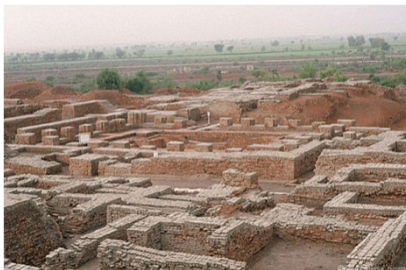


Figure 29.2. Moenjodaro: Indus valley civilization



Figure 29.3. Harappa: Indus valley civilization

The history of the Indian sub-continent begins in its north-western region with the emergence of the Indus civilization which is considered to have evolved around 2600 BC. Built on the ruins of fortified towns near Kot Diji, it is now believed to have emerged from farming communities of the area. The civilization boasted immense cities like Moenjodaro and Harappa (Indus valley civilization). Their people developed an advanced script which still remains undeciphered. The ecological environment provided better conditions for the emergence of the first village culture. Their settlements began to grow in size and after a few thousand years the Indus valley gave rise to cities and civilizations.¹ Silk Road networks connected the

¹ Wannaporn Rienjang and Peter Stewart (eds.). *The Geography of Gandhāran Art*. (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2019).



Figure 29.4. Aryans: Indo-Iranian origin

people of Indus Valley with Central Asia leading to an exchange of goods and ideas between the two regions.

The Indus civilization's decline started around 1700 BC by the arrival of Aryans who entered the subcontinent from the north-west of India (Central Asia). Aryans overcame the Indus people and their civilization and created the Aryan civilization in which they incorporated and consolidated the achievements of the Indus civilization. There is still a debate on whether it was an invasion by the Aryans or gradual migration or even whether Aryan's arrival was the main reason behind Indus civilization's downfall.

The cultural relations between Pakistan and Central Asia run wide and deep into the civilizational ethos of the two regions. Gandhara culture united Pakistan and Central Asia over two thousand years ago, under the Bactrian, Scythian, and Kushan empires. The invasion of North India by Central Asia started in 2000 BC. Central Asian tribes, Bactrian Greeks, Shaka, and Kushans invaded north-India and established a dynasty from 78 BC to 200 CE. In 455 CE, Huns from Central Asia and other Central Asian tribes invaded India and destroyed the Gupta Empire in India. They ruled until 528 CE.

The Hellenic influence of the Greco-Bactrian Kingdom 250-180 BC, with historical origins in northern Afghanistan and Tajikistan, led



Figure 29.5. Greco-Bactrian Kingdom Shingerdar stupa, Swat Valley, Pakistan



Figure 29.6. Kargah Buddha, rock carvings found in Gilgit- Baltistan, Pakistan

to the splendor of Gandhara sculptures, as well as influenced the city planning, architecture, and arts of Indus Valley. Gandhara was an ancient state, a *mahajanapada*, in the Peshawar basin in the northwest portion of the ancient Indian subcontinent, present-day Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The Gandhara region centered around

the Peshawar Valley and Swat river valley, though the cultural influence of “Greater Gandhara” extended across the Indus river to the Taxila region in Potohar Plateau and westwards into the Kabul and Bamiyan valleys in Afghanistan, and northwards up to the Karakoram range.[27][28] The center of the region was between the Kabul and Swat rivers, bounded by the Sulaiman Mountains on the west and the Indus River in the east. During the Achaemenid period (the first Persian Empire) and the Hellenic period, its capital city was Pushkalavati, modern Charsadda. Later the capital city was moved to Peshawar by the Kushan emperor Kanishka the Great in 127 AD.

Scythians, who created the first Central Asian nomadic empire in 400 BC- 200 AD, entered the Gandhara and Indus Valley and left a lasting imprint on present-day Pakistani culture. They were the ones after which the Sindh province is named. Scythians were also the origin of the word ‘Kand’, placed at the end of the names of cities or places such as Samarkand, Tashkent, or Malakand. They continued to practice Buddhism and rock carvings found in Gilgit-Baltistan are similar to those found in Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan.



Figure 29.7. Takht-i-Bhai, Kushan Empire, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan

The Central Asian Kushans overran Bactria and ended Greek rule there. Around 80 BC, the Sakhas, diverted by their Parthian cousins from Iran, moved into Gandhara and other parts of Pakistan and

Western India. The Kushan Empire inherited the Greco-Buddhist traditions of the Indo-Greek kingdom they replaced, and their patronage of Buddhist institutions allowed them to grow as a commercial power.

During the 100- 300 AD, Buddhism, patronized by the Kushans, extended to China and other Asian countries through the Silk Road. As the golden age of the ancient history of Pakistan and Central Asia, the Kushan Empire laid the foundation of cultural affinities of Pakistan with Central Asia. The term Shahenshah of modern times originated from Shaonano Shao of the Kushan period. Shalwar Kamiz and Sherwani, which later became the national dress of Pakistan, originated from Kushans, costumes.

The Hun invasion was also, like that of the Sakhas, one of the greatest migrations of Central Asian nomadic tribes in the history of Pakistan and the sub-continent. The Huns (400-600 AD) built up a mighty empire in Central Asia which extended into the Indus Valley. The particular branch of the Huns, which was encamped in the Oxus Valley and which came to Pakistan, was known as Epthalite or White Huns.



Figure 29.8. White Hun Coin

However, Huns were accompanied by a number of other tribes including the Gurjars. They started coming in wave after wave from the middle of the 5th century A.D. onwards and very soon became rulers of Pakistan. One of their mighty rulers was Mehar Gul whose capital was Sakala (Sialkot).

As landowning tribes, Rajputs of Indus Valley earned social respect in society, which continues till today. In Pashtun speaking tribes of Afghanistan and Pakistan, the Hun system of land tenure is still part of customary practices. Gul, which is used as the second part of one's name especially among Pashtuns, is also a remnant from the Huns.

Whereas the Hun Empire disintegrated into several Turkish tribal states, they sustained their rule and formed a new agricultural order in the territory of Pakistan containing Kashmir until they were succeeded by numerous Turkish states. Neither the Huns nor the Turks were amalgamated into nationhood. Both of them merged different tribes into one political and economic structure, in which both Pakistan and Central Asia emerged into one cultural zone. Pakistan's ethnic relations with Central Asia continue as of today since many Bokharis, Smarqandis, Tirmizis, Kashgaris, Azbakiz, and Mughals live in Pakistan and have blood relations across the border.

2.2. Muslim Empires in Indian Sub-continent

The Arabs reached the sub-continent in 644 towards the end of the caliphate of Umar when they invaded the Makran coast in north-western India. The city of Makran was finally conquered under the first Umayyad caliph, Muawiya (661-80). From the 8th century onward, Arab traders also settled on the western coast of India. Nevertheless, they were primarily interested in trade and profit and did not engage in spreading Islam.

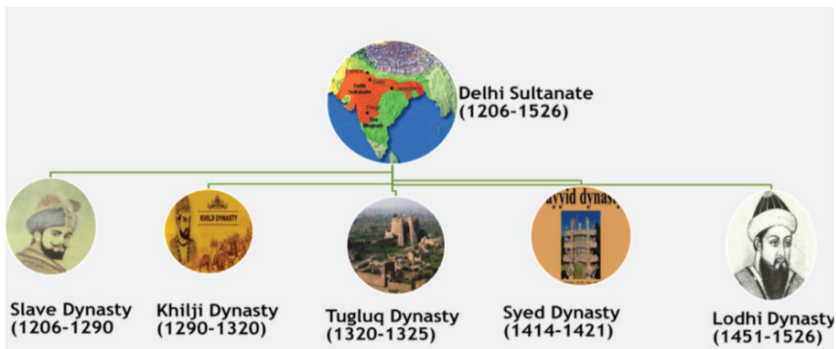


Figure 29.9. Muslim Empires in Indian-Subcontinent

There was no further political or economic expansion by Arab Muslims until the Central Asian- Turkish and Afghan invasions in the 11th century. Muhammad bin Qasim arrived at the coast of Sindh in 712 AD and established a kingdom covering the area of Sindh Province and the southern part of Punjab comprising Multan. The Arab kingdom in Sindh lasted for four and a half centuries and then was destroyed by the Turkish Muslims of Central Asia. The Turkish invaders defeated the Arabs in Sindh first in 1010 and finally in

1175 AD. Between the 7th and 11th centuries, in politically decentralized northern India, the Brahmanic and more popular Shamanic traditions continued to co-exist, with the latter being more persistent.

The invaders from Central Asia, particularly Muslim rulers have given a new form to the Indian cultural

traditions. Indian sub-continent was distinguished into Muslim India in 1018 AD, with the arrival of Ghaznavids from Afghanistan. The Ghaznavi dynasty had been established by Alaptegin, a Turk tribesman of slave origin from Ghazni in Afghanistan. Abu Mansur Subuktigin, the adopted son of Alaptegin, ruled from 977 to 997 A.D. Subuktigin was of Turkic origin born around 942 CE in Kyrgyzstan.

The empire reached its zenith during the era of Mahmud Ghaznavi (971-1030 AD) and cultural links of Central Asia were enhanced through their foreign initiatives.

Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered Punjab and the north-central kingdom of India which commenced Muslim rule in the Indian sub-continent. Under the Ghaznavi empire, the Central Asian Muslim culture, which by then had assimilated and developed the cultures of ancient civilizations, such as the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Romans, and the Syrians, found its way into South Asia.²



Figure 29.10. Masjid Muhammad Bin Qasim, Sindh, Pakistan

² Raazia Hassan Naqvi, Muhammad Ibrar, and Salman Bangash. "Cultural History of Indian subcontinent; with special reference to Arts and Music," *Journal of Law and Society* 41, no.57-58 (2011): 37-56.



Figure 29.11. Tomb of Mahmud Ghaznavi, Afghanistan



Figure 29.12. Qutub Minar, Delhi, India

Ghaznavids spread their influence first in Gilgit then in Balochistan and Sindh. But the most powerful force that became prominent in the southern part of Pakistan was the Baloch tribe which are today scattered in Turkmenistan, Iran, Afghanistan, and all the provinces of Pakistan.³

Ghakhars of Iranian/ Central Asian origin in Punjab and Sammas in Sindh established relations with the states in Central Asia. For

³ Nabeela Akbar, "Socio-cultural and Economic impact of Central Asian Muslim rulers in Sub-Continent (India)," *Journal of Indian Studies*, 1, no. 2 (2015): 57-68.

trade purposes, the caravans moved freely between Samarqand, Multan, and Lahore. The Turkish, Persian, and Afghan - Central Asian- invasions of northern India from the 11th century also carried the Turko-Persian elements into the formation of the Indo-Islamic culture. The roots of this evolving Indo-Islamic settlement preceded the establishment of the Delhi Sultanate and can be traced to the occupation of Punjab by the Ghaznavids between 1001 and 1186.



Figure 29.13. Allauddin Khalji's Tomb, Delhi, India



Figure 29.14. Tughladabad Fort, Delhi

It was the combination of economic and political imperatives that caused Mahmud Gori, a Turk, to invade India a century and a half later in 1192. Mahmud Gori defeated Prithviraj Chauhan, a Rajput chieftain, in the battle of Tarain in northern India and paved the way for the establishment of the first Muslim Sultanate, with its capital in Delhi by Qutub-ud-Din Aibak.⁴

The Delhi sultanate lasted from 1206 to 1526 under the leadership of four major dynasties- the Mamluks, Khaljis, Tughlaqs, and Lodhis.

These Central Asian (Turkish and Afghan) rulers primarily ruled over northern India, but more powerful sultans like Alauddin Khalji (1296-1316) and Mohammad bin Tughlaq (1325-1351), made invasions far into the Deccan.

2.3. *The Mughal Dynasty*

Mughal dynasty, also spelled as Mogul, referring to Mongol in Arabic, is a Muslim dynasty of Turkic-Mongol origin which ruled most of northern India from the early 16th to the mid-18th century. The Mughal dynasty was distinguished for its more than two centuries of effective rule over much of India.



Figure 29.15. Babri Mosque Ayodhya, India

The dynasty was founded by a Chagatai Turkic prince named Babur (ruled during 1526-30), who was descended from the Turkic conqueror Timur (Tamerlane) on his father's side and from the Chagatai, second son of the Mongol ruler Genghis Khan. From his

⁴ Farhat Asif, "Pakistan's ties with Central Asian States Irritants and Challenges", *Conflict and Peace Studies* 4, no. 1 (2011): 2-8.

base in Kabul (Afghanistan) he was able to secure control of the Punjab region, and in 1526 he routed the forces of the Delhi Sultan Ibrahim Lodi at the First Battle of Panipat. At his death in 1530, he had controlled all of northern India from the Indus River on the west to Bihar on the east and from the Himalayas to Gwalior in the south.



Figure 29.16. Humayun's Tomb, Delhi, India



Figure 29.17. Sher Shah Suri tomb, Sasaram

Babur's son Humayun (reigned 1530-40 and 1555-56) lost control of the empire to Afghan rebels, and an ethnic Pashtun, Sher Shah took control of the Mughal Empire in 1538 but Humayun's son Akbar (reigned 1556-1605) defeated Hemu at the Second Battle of Panipat (1556) and thereby reestablished his dynasty in India. The

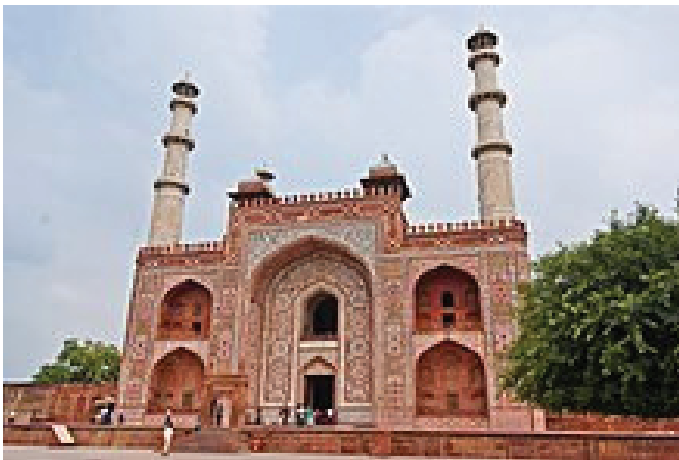


Figure 29.18. Akbar's Tomb Uttar Pradesh, India.



Figure 29.19. Jahangir Tomb, Shahdara, Pakistan

greatest of the Mughal emperors and an extremely capable ruler, Akbar reestablished and consolidated the Mughal Empire. Through incessant warfare, he was able to annex all of northern and part of central India. He adopted pacifying policies toward his Hindu subjects and sought to recruit them in his armies and government service. In 1605, at the death of Akbar, the empire extended from Afghanistan to the Bay of Bengal and southward to the Gujarat state and the northern Deccan region.



Figure 29.20. Jamia Masjid Delhi, India



Figure 29.21. Taj Mahal, Agra, India

Akbar's son Jahangir (led 1605-27) continued both his father's administrative system and his tolerant policy toward Hinduism and thus proved to be a legitimately successful ruler.⁵ His son, Shah Jahan (reigned 1628-58), had an insatiable passion for building, and under his rule, the Taj Mahal of Agra and the Jamia Masjid of Delhi were constructed. The construction of the Taj Mahal employed some 20,000 artisans under the supervision of a board of architects led by Ustad Ahmad Lahauri. His era marked the cultural zenith of the Mughal Empire.

Shah Jahan's Successor, Aurangzeb annexed the Muslim Deccan kingdoms of Vijayapura and Golconda and thereby brought the empire to its greatest extent. During the reign of Muhammad Shah (1719-48), the empire began to break up, a process hastened by dynastic warfare, and separatist rivalries. The last Mughal, Bahadur Shah Zafar (reigned 1837-57), was exiled to Yangon, Myanmar (Rangoon, Burma) by the British.

In the Mughal era, Muslims from Central Asia permanently, settled down in India, and they conquered and inter-married with Indian inhabitants. The five epochs under Turkic sultans as well as two centuries of Mughal emperors from Central Asia led to a combination

⁵ S. R. Sharma, *Mughal Empire in India*, (New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 1999).

of social, cultural, economic, and religious values between Central Asia and India.

Goods, tradesmen and preachers moved in either direction between Central Asia and Pakistan. The city of Peshawar became a great emporium of Central Asian trade and its Hinduko language became the dialect for this international trade. All the urban centers from Peshawar to Dera Ismail Khan adopted this language for trade and these cities welcomed new business entrepreneurs.

Agricultural products were exchanged between Pakistan and Central Asia. A lift irrigation system became popular and the Turkish system of baths was introduced.

Mongol period in the 13th century AD was a dividing line in the history of Asia, a new order was established where the barriers between China, Central Asia, the Arab world, and the Bulgar and other Slavic states on the Volga were lifted.

A new level of civilization appeared, scientific and economic developments were freely exchanged, spiritual mysticism gained ground, education received a new impetus, and art and architecture got integrated into a new shape. This creative spirit reached its climax in the period of Timurids when the whole of Central Asia was united under a new spirit of the lyrical medium, poetic creation, artistic excellence, and spiritual yearning under the inspiration of Islam. Pakistan was a part of this whole historical process.⁶

3. Contemporary Ties between Turkey, Pakistan, Central Asian Entities

The rich shared civilizational legacy of Central Asia has been overshadowed by the 20th century politics, when autonomous regions of Central Asia, such as the Emirate of Bukhara and the Khanate of Khiva were integrated into the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. After the dissolution of Soviet Union, Central Asia is divided into five sovereign states, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Turkmenistan on the basis of ethnolinguistic distinctions. Turkey, on the other hand, is located in Asia Minor and a small portion of Europe. It is bound in the west by the Aegean Sea, the northwest by the sea of Marmara,

⁶ Peri Pamir, "Turkey the Transcaucasus and Central Asia," *Security Dialogue* 24, no. 1, (1993): 49-54.

Greece and Bulgaria, north by the Black sea, east by Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Iran, in the south by Iraq, Syria, and the Mediterranean Sea.

The Central Asia were once the focus of various nomadic empires and tribes, including the Mongols and Turks. The Central Asian languages, comprising Persian and Turkic languages, were spoken in what is now Pakistan, and the cultural blend between these two regions led to the development of a new language in the 18th century known as Urdu, which is presently the national language of Pakistan.

The cultural imprints of Central Asia on the social fabric of Pakistan is reflected in its religion, arts, music, cuisine, architecture, folklore, language, literature, customs and religion. Ghandhara culture amalgamated Pakistan and Central Asia over two thousand years ago, under the Bectrain, Scythian, and Kushan empires. Silk Road structure connected the people of Indus Valley with Central Asia and consequently, became a conduit for cultural interaction as well.

3.1. Religious Ties

Islam has its roots in Central Asia since the advent of Islamic history. It is the foundation of the bonds Turkey, Pakistan, and Central Asian entities. Islam is the only religion which is practiced in Pakistan, Central Asia, and Turkey. Legacy inherited from Central Asian attracts the people of South Asia. Home to not only mosques and castles built by great Muslim leaders, but Central Asia is also home to shrines of saints. The Hanafi school of thought, a form of Islamic law practice in Pakistan and Turkey, was prevalent both in Ottoman Empire and Mughal Empire.⁷



Figure 29.22. Madrasa in Samarkand

⁷ Bayram Balci, "Reviving Central Asia's Religious Ties with the Indian Subcontinent? The Jamaat al Tabligh," *Religion, State and Society* 43, no.1 (2015): 20-34.

Islam came to Central Asia in the early part of 8th century as part of the Muslim conquest of the region. The invaders who came from Central Asia brought Islamic culture to Pakistan, whose spread was facilitated by trade, missionaries, and changes in the political structure of Islamic society. Many well-known philosophers, and theologians, Central Asia made an influence in the subcontinent.

Imam al-Bukhari was a Persian Islamic scholar who was born in Bukhara (Uzbekistan). He wrote the hadith collection known as *Sahih al-Bukhari*, considered as one of the most authentic hadith collections by Sunni Muslims. Imam al-Termezi, a significant Persian Islamic scholar who composed *al-Jami as-Sahih* is buried in Termez in Uzbekistan. He also inscribed various books such as *Al-Adab al-Mufrad* and recognized as a prominent scholars in Muslim history. Samarkand and Bukhara remained the centers for the Islamic religion and the people of Pakistan have their affiliation with these cities.



Figure 29.23. Mausoleum erected over Muhammad al-Bukhari's grave. Samarkand, Uzbekistan

In addition to traditional scholars, Sufism plays an essential role in the development of Islamic culture in the areas that stretch from Pakistan and Central Asia to Turkey. An inflow of Sufi scholars and philosophers led to the revival of the social fabric of the sub-continent. Sufi culture embraced and promoted traits of tolerance and harmony which was much needed in the multi-ethnic and multi-sectarian societies of the South Asian region.



Figure 29.24. The Mausoleum of Imam Al Tirmizi

Sufism, a mystical form of Islam, has flourished in the Muslim world for centuries, placed a distinctive stamp on the religious practices in

various Arab states as well as in Africa, Turkey, and particularly, in Central Asian countries. Distinct from conventional forms of Islamic practice, exponents and followers of Sufism concentrated on spiritual purification through mystic and ascetic principles that attract Muslims and non-Muslims.

Many Sufi and saints from Central Asia descended in South Asia. Ali Hujwiri (1009-1072) known as Data Ganj Baksh by Muslims of the Indian subcontinent, was an 11th century Iranian Sunni Muslim who contributed significantly to the spread of Islam in South Asia through his preaching. After him, Lahore earned its title as Data Ki Nagri as the legendary saint was from Bukhara, Uzbekistan in Central Asia.

The Suhrawardi silsila was founded in India by Shaik Bahauddin Zakaria (AD 1182-1262). Baha-ud-din Zakariya was a Sunni Muslim scholar, a Sufi saint and a poet who established the Suhrawardiyya order of Baghdad in medieval South Asia, later becoming one of the most influential spiritual leaders of his era.

Khwaja Moinudiin Chishti (1141-1236), the initiator of Chistiyya order in Indian subcontinent, is another Central Asian saint who



Figure 29.25. Data Darbar, Tomb of Ali Hujwiri, Lahore, Pakistan

spread Islam through the message of love and peace. Syed Muhammad Nizamuddin Auliya (1238-1325) also known as Hazrat Nizamuddin, was a Sunni Muslim scholar and a Sufi in the Indian subcontinent. His predecessors were Fariduddin Ghanishakar, Qutbuddin Bakhtiyar Kaki, and Moinuddin Chisti.

Sayyid Bahouddin Naqshband (1318-1389) was the founder of what would become one of the largest Sufi Muslim orders, the Naqshbandi. The Naqshbandi is a major Sunni spiritual order of Sufism originated from Bukhara which acquired its name from Baha-ud-Din Naqshband Bukhari, who traces its spiritual lineage to the Islamic prophet Muhammad (PBUH) through Abu Bakr Siddique (RA).

Along with the warriors and statesmen, came the men of scientific learning. Ulugh Beg, a well-known astronomer and mathematician, built an observatory considered by scholars as one of the finest observatories in the Islamic world at that time and the largest in Central Asia. Central Asian scholars and intellectuals swarmed



Figure 29.27. Nizamuddin Auliya's tomb Nizamuddin Dargah, Delhi, India



Figure 29.26. The Tomb of Baha-ud-Din Zakariya, Multan, Pakistan

into the Mughal courts which created a cultural renaissance for Muslim India. Abu Raihan Al-Biruni, the illustrious historian from Khwarizm, belonged to a region that encompasses modern day western Uzbekistan and northern Turkmenistan. Al-Biruni is viewed as one of the utmost scholars of the medieval Islamic era who was well-versed in physics, astronomy, mathematics, and natural sciences and was also renowned as a historian, chronologist, and

linguist. He researched and moved in medieval India and contributed to the development of philosophy, history, and science in South Asia.

Pakistan also had attachment to the Ottoman Empire through religious bonds. The Khilafat movement was (1919-1924) an agitation by Muslims of India, associated with Indian nationalists, to force the British government to preserve the authority of the Ottoman Sultan as Caliph of Islam after World War 1.

3.2. Cultural Similarities

The asymmetry of this exchange is evident in the fact that since Gandhara, the cultural flow has been from central to South Asia. The reasons varied from new opportunities to conquests, to being sent as cultural envoys. The subcontinent is known for its attraction of outsiders and Central Asia remains the most attractive locations not just strategically or economically, but also culturally.

The regions comprising both Pakistan and Turkey have been mutually influenced by contiguous Persian, Hellenistic, Arab and Turko-Mongol cultures at various points in history. By the fifth century BC, ancient Persia spread from Anatolia to the Indus River, introducing Persian cultural and political traditions to these regions.⁸

The Silk Road web was the first globalized overland road and maritime network and trading system in the ancient time. Silk Road reinforced the flow of commerce, information, and people across trade routes linking Asia, North Africa, and southeastern Europe. It also allied Pakistani cities like Quetta, Multan, Taxila, and Peshawar straight with the Central Asian metropolises of Samarkand, Bukhara, Merv, and Tashkent among others.

The Central Asian languages, including both Persian and Turkic, were spoken in South Asia and the cultural ferment led to the development of a new language called Urdu in the 18th century, which is presently the national language of Pakistan. There are at least thirty-five non-Turkish ethnic groups, in addition to Turkic

⁸ Meenakshi Khanna, *Cultural History of Medieval India*, (New Delhi: Berghahn Books, 2007).

peoples who speak different Turkic languages, such as the Uigurs, Kyrgyz, Kazakhs, Uzbeks, Balkar, and Azerbaijanis.⁹ The most relevant era was of Babur in the context of language assertion. Under the Mughal dynasty. Cultural integration between the two regions reached an unprecedented level. Not only the architecture, but even designs had Central Asian influence. The integration of preexisting smaller kingdoms into a single Mughal empire led to the need and birth of a new, unified language for the first time since the Aryan era. The language Urdu, also has Central Asian, Persian Turkish, and Indian influences.

The arrival of Islam and the central Asian cultural fusion gave way to the Persian language to enter into the domains of knowledge, culture, and power in South Asia. Iran's national poet Ferdowsi finalized the great Persian epic *Shahnameh* (*Book of Kings*) at the court of Sultan Mahmood in Ghaznavi, inspiring Pakistani poets to express their literary expertise in a similar style in the 20th century Hafeez Jalandhari, the writer of Pakistani national anthem, had earned literary fame for his epic Urdu poem *Shahnama-e-Islam* (*Book of Kings of Islam*). Allama Iqbal, the national poet of Pakistan, wrote his poetry in Urdu as well as in the Persian language. The entire ethno-cultural life of the region, including the literary and intellectual life of Peshawar, Lahore, and Multan, was modernized on the patterns of Central Asia.

The influx of Central Asian invaders and traders affected all aspects of life in South Asia. Traditional subcontinent outfit consisted of draped clothing such as *dhoti* and *sari*. Central Asian influence introduced not only the concept of stitching but also *shalwar kameez*, the national dress of Pakistan adopted from Uzbekistan and other cities of Central Asia. *Shalwar kamiz* and *sherwani*, that became the national dress of Pakistan, originated from Kushan costumes. The dresses worn in Balochistan Province, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, have resemblance with the Central Asian traditional dresses.

The food, utensils, arts, architecture, music, and other aspects of social and cultural life were transformed through contact with

⁹ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Republic of Turkey. "Turkey's Relations with Central Asian Republics", http://www.mfa.gov.tr/turkey_s-relations-with-central-asian-republics.en.mfa.

Central Asian civilizations, especially under the influence of the Mughals.

The cultural imprint of Central Asia on Muslims of South Asia is reflected in the historical use of copper vessels, silver plates, vases, and Chinaware. *Dastarkhan* is a Turkic word meaning “tablecloth” used as a clean surface for food, but it is also used more broadly to refer to the entire meal setting. It is now part of the traditional Central Asian cuisine as well as an integral part of the food culture of Pakistan.

Food like tikka, shish kabab and pilov are derived from the central Asian cuisines. Cuisine from the eastern provinces of Punjab and Sindh are characterized as “highly seasoned” and “spicy”, which is characteristic of flavors of the Indian subcontinent. Cuisine from the western and Northern provinces of Azad Jammu & Kashmir, Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and the Tribal Areas are characterized as “mild” which is characteristic of flavors of the Central Asian region.

Manti or Mamtu is a type of dumpling, a dish most famous in Turkic cuisines, as well as in the cuisines of the South Caucasus, Central Asia, Afghanistan, and Chinese Muslims. The cuisine of Gilgit Baltistan, Peshawar, and Kashmir are much similar to the Central Asian and Turkish Cuisine, sharing such dishes as mamtu,



Figure 29.28. Dastarkhan-
Tablecloth Culture



Figure 29.29. Mamtu



Figure 29.30. Uzbek Pilov/Pilao

Kehva, Turkish roasted lamb, Naan, Curry, etc.

Turkish cuisine includes many different stews of vegetables and meat, *borek*, kebab, and *dolma* and sourdough bread is eaten with almost every meal. Pakistani cuisine also focus on meat, such as beef, chicken, and fish, with vegetables, as well as traditional fruit and dairy. Thus, the influence of Central Asian, South Asian, and Middle Eastern cuisine in Pakistani food is ubiquitous. Baloch food has a regional variance in contrast to the many cuisines of Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Iran. Among the most popular Balochi dishes, Balochi *sajji* and *dampukht* have their origin in Central Asia.

Rice dishes and kebabs feature prominently in Pashtun cuisine. Lamb is eaten more often in Pashtun cuisine than any other Pakistani cuisines, *Kabuli pilao*, *chapli kabab*, *tika* are the most famous dishes. In the further north Chitral and Gilgit-Baltistan regions, Central Asian variants such as salty buttered Tibetan style tea is consumed.

Naan is found in the cuisines mainly of West Asia, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, the Indian subcontinent. Samsy like the

Pakistani samosas were introduced to India by Central Asian traders in the 13th and 14th centuries. In Central Asia, they are always stuffed with meat and onions, baked in the oven, and never fried.



Figure 29.31. Dampukht



Figure 29.32. Sajji



Figure 29.33. Tikka

3.3. Architecture

The spread of Islam in South Asia brought in its wake the tradition of the funerary architecture of Central Asia which adorns the heritage landscape of Pakistan. The mausoleum of Sultan Sanjar Khan, a 12th Century Seljuk ruler in Merv, has a direct architectural influence on the mausoleums of Shah Rukn-e-Alam in Multan and Mahra Sharif in the Gomal Valley, Dera Ismail Khan.



Figure 29.34. Naan



Figure 29.35. Tomb of Shah Rukn-e-Alam (left) resembles the Sultan Sanjar Mausoleum in Merv (right)

The Mughal emperor Shah Jahan (reigned 1628-58), had a voracious passion for building, and under his rule, the Taj Mahal of Agra was built by Ustad Ahmad Lahauri under the influence of Turkish architecture. The Jamia Masjid of Delhi was constructed with three great gates and two 40 meters high minarets. The architectural resemblance of the design of Badshahi Masjid, erected by Shah Jahan's son Aurangzeb at Lahore, Pakistan, is comparable to the Jamia Masjid.

Throughout the Mughal era, some of the greatest cultural achievements were made in architecture. The building in Akbar's capital, Fatehpur Sikri, was based on classical Islamic and Rajput styles. The Buland Darwaza or Great Gateway with its magnificent arch is a manifestation of western-Asian influence while the balconies were decorated with Rajput arts. Buland Darwaza is



Figure 29.36. Taj Mahal, Agra, India



Figure 29.37. Buland Darwaza Fatehpur Sikri, India

the highest gateway in the world and is an illustration of Mughal architecture, symbolizing Akbar's empire.

The Shalimar Bagh/Garden, constructed during the reign of Shah Jahan, was influenced by the older Shalimar Gardens in Kashmir that were built by Shah Jahan's father, Emperor Jahangir. The project was accomplished by Khalilullah Khan. Mughal Gardens were based upon Timurid gardens built in Central Asia and



Figure 29.38. Jama Masjid, Delhi, India (right) and Badshahi Masjid, Lahore, Pakistan (left)



Figure 29.39. Shalimar Bagh, Lahore, Pakistan

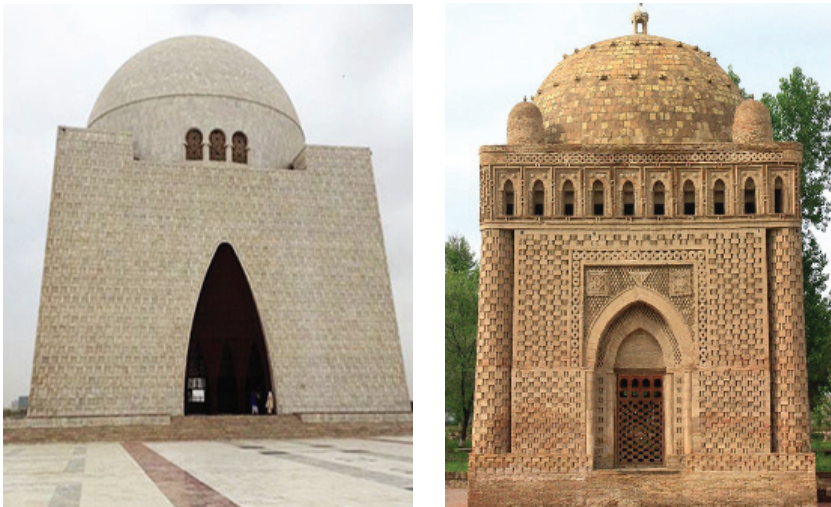


Figure 29.40. Mazar-e-Quaid, Karachi (left) and Samanid Mausoleum, Bukhara (right)

Iran between the 14th, and 16th centuries. Recently, the Uzbek government has initiated a plan for the renovation of Shalimar Bagh, considering it as an integral part of Mughal heritage.

The design of the Mazar-e-Quaid, completed in 1970, was influenced by the Samanid Mausoleum in Bukhara, Uzbekistan, built between 892 and 943 CE. This final resting place of Quaid-e-Azam, Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, is an iconic symbol of Karachi, Pakistan.

3.4. Amalgamations in Arts and Crafts

The art of manuscript book writing in Central Asia belongs to the Silk Roads heritage with origins spanning centuries. Cities such as Baghdad, Bukhara, Samarkand, Shiraz, Isfahan, and Tabriz were renowned centers of such manuscript production between the 8th and 16th centuries.¹⁰ The development of this craft is closely tied to the art of calligraphy, manuscript illumination, and miniature painting, which also reflects in the artistic imagination of the sub-continent. Persian miniaturists are perhaps the best-known Persian artists.¹¹ They portrayed



Figure 29.41. Persian Miniature Painting



Figure 29.42. Calligraphy in Islamic Art

¹⁰ Riazul Islam, *Sufism in South Asia: Impact on Fourteenth Century Muslim Society*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

¹¹ Pratapaditya Pal, *Indian Sculpture Volume II*, (London: University of California Press, 1988).

the Mughal School of painting and its impact is found throughout the Islamic world, Central Asia, the Middle East, and South Asia.

The mingling of foreign Persian and indigenous Indian features was an extension of the patronization of various aspects of culture as initiated by the earlier Turko-Afghan Delhi Sultanate, and the various Central Asian Turkish dynasties, such as the Ghaznavids.

The Mughal painting style is a particular style of South Asian art confined to miniatures, which emerged from Persian miniature painting, and developed largely in the court of the Mughal Empire. Humayun had taken two skilled painters of the Safavid court with him from Persia, Meer Sayyed Ali and Abdus Samad. In Akbar's court, a new Indo-Persian style of painting which is lighter and more vibrant than the pure Persian, was created. The Mughal art reached its peak of artistic manifestation during the Jahangir era.

The emblem of the State of Pakistan is derived from the coat of arms of the Ottoman Empire and the flag of Pakistan also has similarity with the Flag of the Turkish Republic.

4. Conclusion: A Way Forward for Future Multilateral Strategic Partnership

Central Asia had its huge influence on the sub-continent in the context of historical ties, religious bonding, and cultural association. Being positioned at a strategic location, Central Asia provides possibly the best networking opportunities for Pakistan not only with various Central Asian states but with Russia as well.



Figure 29.43. A durbar scene with the newly crowned Emperor Aurangzeb in his golden throne



Figure 29.44. Nilgai (Blue Bull) art during the reign Shah Jahan

The significant projects like Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) Gas Pipeline and CASA-1000 Power Transmission and Trade Project with Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Afghanistan need to be finalized soon. The promotion of shared religious and cultural norms and historical affinities should be the priority of the government of Turkey, Pakistan, and the Central Asian states. Initiatives for the cultural exchange should be taken in this regard to promote a better understanding of each other's culture, art, Islamic values, literature, and language.

Pakistan provides direct passage to the landlocked Central Asian Republics to the Arabian Sea, Indian Ocean, and further to the rest of the globe. Karakoram Highway is a part of an ancient Silk Route between Afghanistan, Tajikistan, China, and Pakistan and gives access to Gwadar Port. This route facilitates a land link to Central Asia through Tajikistan. Pakistani ports of Karachi, Pasni, and Gwadari, which are around 1600 km away from the Central Asian region, are the shortest tracks for economic interaction between Pakistan and Central Asian states. It can enhance bilateral trade. It is anticipated that the development of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative ventures will pave the way for a 21st Century Silk Road, re-connecting Pakistan with Central Asia.

This long historical perspective shows a deep linkage between the people of Central Asia, Turkey, and the Indian sub-continent (Pakistan). Pakistan desires to seek and discover its historical roots, identity, economic and cultural links with the Central Asian region and Turkey as well. In fact, Central Asia has remained a lifeline for land route and trade to Asia, Russia, and Europe. The commercial activity has brought the people and rulers of Central Asia having Turkish origin to the sub-continent and this close contact tied the people of these regions into common political, economic, social, and cultural activities. It is the need of time that we revive our cultural traits and to take possible policy initiatives in this regard.

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