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**Indo-Turkic Cultures and Civilization Exchanges
between Central Asia and South Asia (c. 700-1500 CE)**

*Hint-Türk Kùltürleri ve Orta Asya ile Güney Asya Arasındaki
Medeniyet Etkileřimleri (y. MS 700-1500)*

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Abstract

Central Asia is located at the nexus of many great world civilizations, including the Persian, Indian, Turkic, and Chinese, and it has been the crossroads of the diverse cultures and civilizations since antiquity. It is an incredibly multi-cultural region that has played a unique role in human history. As the homeland of the Indo-Aryans who brought Hinduism to India, the region later became home to Zoroastrianism, and adopted Buddhism and Islam. It is considered the heart of Asia because of its centrality, but its crucial importance to the human story is little appreciated by the general public. The people of Central Asia, like those of India, have historically improved scientific and cultural practices of global importance, as well as innovating new technologies and enriching learning in all fields. This paper explores the exchanges of Indian and Turkic cultures in this essentially Persian cultural sphere during the period 700-1500 CE. This period spans the early Arab-Islamic conquests, the medieval Golden Age, the Mongol invasion, and the emergence of the major early modern civilizations of the Ottoman, Safavid, and Mughal empires. This period saw remarkable socio-cultural development with the fusions of many ethnic and cultural artefacts that were steadily reconciled and integrated into a remarkable civilization in its own right. While Islam provided the matrix for this remarkable exchange, it also included the contributions of peoples of diverse faiths and backgrounds, in a culture that celebrated diversity and multi-faith spirit, rather than merely tolerating others. It presents a valid illustration of the collaboration of human minds and the influences of intellectual and civilizational links on native traditions, belief, literature and arts. This analysis of Indo-Turkic cultures and civilizational exchanges between Central Asia and South Asia is based mainly on Arabic, Persian, Urdu and English sources, focused on the intellectual legacy, achievements, and role of Muslim polymaths in the preservation and development of wisdom, language, arts, architecture, culture, sciences, medicine, philosophy, and literature in relation to the Turkic and Indian cultural spheres.

Keywords: Central Asia, Persian, Indian, Turkic, Chinese, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Islam

Öz

Orta Asya, İnan, Hint, Türk ve Çin gibi birçok büyük dünya medeniyetinin bağlantı noktasında yer alır ve antik çağlardan beri çeşitli kültür ve medeniyetlerin kavşağı olmuştur. İnsanlık tarihinde benzersiz bir rol oynayan inanılmaz derecede çok kültürlü bir bölgedir. Hindistan'a Hinduizm'i getiren Hint-Aryanların anavatanı olan bölge, daha sonra Zerdüştlüğün yuvası olmuş, Budizm ve İslam'ı benimsemiştir. Merkezi konumu nedeniyle Asya'nın kalbi olarak kabul edilmesine rağmen insanlık hikayesi için hayati önemi genel halk tarafından pek takdir edilmez. Hindistan halkları gibi Orta Asya halkları da tarihsel olarak küresel öneme sahip bilimsel ve kültürel uygulamaları geliştirmişler, yeni teknolojiler tatbik etmişler ve her alanda öğrenimi zenginleştirmişlerdir. Bu makale, MS 700-1500 döneminde bu esasen Fars kültürel alanında Hint ve Türk kültürlerinin etkileşimlerini araştırıyor. Bu dönem, erken Arap-İslam fetihlerini, Orta Çağ'ın Altın Dönemi, Moğol istilasını ve Osmanlı, Safevi ve Babür imparatorluklarının başlıca erken modern uygarlıklarının ortaya çıkışını kapsar. Bu dönem, istikrarlı bir şekilde uzlaştırılan ve kendi başına dikkate değer bir medeniyetle bütünleşen birçok etnik ve kültürel eserin kaynaşmasıyla dikkate değer bir sosyo-kültürel gelişme gördü. İslam, bu dikkate değer etkileşimin matrisini sağlarken, aynı zamanda, sadece başkalarına müsamaha göstermekten ziyade, çeşitliliği ve çok inançlı ruhu kutsayan bir kültürde, farklı inançlara ve geçmişlere sahip insanların katkılarını da içeriyordu. İnsan zihinlerinin iş birliğine ve entelektüel ve uygarlık bağlarının yerli gelenekler, inanç, edebiyat ve sanat üzerindeki etkilerine dair geçerli bir örnek sunuyor. Hint-Türk kültürlerinin ve Orta Asya ile Güney Asya arasındaki medeniyet alışverişinin bu analizi, esas olarak Arapça, Farsça, Urduca ve İngilizce kaynaklara dayanmaktadır ve Müslüman âlimlerin Türk ve Hint kültürel alanlarıyla ilişkili olarak hikmet, dil, sanat, mimarlık, kültür, bilim, tıp, felsefe ve edebiyatın korunması ve geliştirilmesindeki rolüne ve entelektüel mirasına, başarılarına ve rolüne odaklanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Orta Asya, İnan, Hint, Türk, Çin, Zerdüştlük, Budizm, İslam.

Introduction

The region of Central Asia is a meeting point of Europe and Asia, stretching its frontiers from the Caspian Sea in the west to the frontier of China in the east; to its north lies Russia, and to its south lie Iran, Afghanistan, and India. The region comprises an area of 1,545,741 square miles (4,003,451 square kilometres), encompassing the modern states of Uzbekistan (pop. 33 million), Kazakhstan (18 million), Tajikistan (9 million), Turkmenistan (6 million), and Kyrgyzstan (6 million). The approximate total population of the area was about 72 million in 2019. The languages spoken in the region are largely Tajik and Turkic. The five major ethnic groups are Kazaks, Kyrgyz, Tajiks, Turkmens, and Uzbeks. All are Turkic in origin and language, apart from the Persian Tajiks. Due to Russian and later Soviet colonialism, the immigration of a range of ethnic groups took place, including Russians, Ukrainians, Ashkenazi Jews (aside from the pre-existing ancient Jewish communities), Germans, and Koreans. After the breakdown of the Soviet Union, hundreds of these migrants left the freshly autonomous Central Asian republics (Beatrice, 1998; Britannica, "Central Asia").

South Asia is defined in both geographical and ethno-cultural terms, referring to the broadest interpretation of the Indian Subcontinent, including eight modern countries (Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives), most of whose people are adherents of Hinduism, Islam, and Buddhism. Covering an area of about 5.2 million km² (2.0 million square miles), it comprises over a tenth (11.71%) of the Asian continent, and 3.5% of the world's land surface area. The population of South Asia was estimated at almost 2 billion in 2020, encompassing a quarter of the world's population, making it both the most populated and most densely populated geographical region in the world. Overall, it accounts for about 39.49% of Asia's population, over 24% of the world's population, and is home to a vast array of people (Britannica, "South Asia").

The region of Central Asia was a conduit between its own impressive cultural and economic production and that of surrounding civilizations, acting as the gateway for the vast realms of South Asia beyond. This set the scene for one of the most important civilizational encounters in human history during the Islamic period. South Asian history has captivated the dynastic, political and military history of the peoples of Central Asia, largely drawn here as including not only Transoxiana, the land beyond the Oxus River, and East Turkistan (in Chinese-occupied territory), but also Khurasan or eastern Persia, what is now Afghanistan, the north-western parts of the Indian subcontinent, from Sindh to Kashmir, and, on the eastern fringes, Mongolia and Tibet (Gibb, 1970; Britannica, "South Asia").

Early History and the Arrival of Islam

Central Asia is a unique region that has passed through the tremendous number of historical experiences that are reflected in its multi-cultural composition and legacy. The major world religions all crossed through this region, including Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, and Islam, and all of them left an incredible mark on artistic production, ranging from cave paintings to distinctive ceramics, aside from the more profoundly important scientific and literary production of the region. Research interest in Central Asia has never been commensurate with

its great importance, partly because of its continuing role as a frontier region – between Russian and British colonial interests during the 19th century, between the Soviet Union and US interests during the Cold War, and more recently between the Islamic Republic of Iran, Russia, and the US, with broader implications for India and China. While the more recent geopolitical impasse based on colonialism has in general entrenched cultural and socio-economic stagnation, the historical cultural exchange in this cultural borderland led to incredible cultural fertilization and functioned as an artery of global economics (Litvinsky, 1996; Green, 2017).

Both Central and South Asia have been innovators and developers of ideas since the dawn of history. However, the Turkic role has been submerged beneath the deliberate adoption of Persian culture by Turkic peoples (such as the Mughal dynasty, which originated in modern Uzbekistan and ruled in India from the early 16th century). This is reflected in the lack of a Turkic script before the 8th century CE. The earliest local written language in Central Asia was Sogdian, from the 3rd century, although the inhabitants widely used other Iranian languages, and the Manichaean and Syriac alphabets. As the masters of the Silk Road, they played a key role in transmitting ideas and innovations (as well as products) throughout Asia, acting as the conduit of the civilizations and cultures of China, the Byzantine and Persian Empires (and their barbarous western and northern hinterlands), and India. The arrival of Islam in the region from the mid-seventh century further galvanized this role, effectively creating a single polity and Arab-Islamic civilization from the Atlantic in Iberia and Morocco to Sindh in South Asia, removing many traditional barriers to the flow of trade and culture (Litvinsky, 1996; Vaissiere, 2005; Green, 2017).

Islam spread in Central Asia in two parallel movements. The first was formal military incursion, spearheaded by the expedition of Abdullah b. Amir in 28/648-49 to Mawara an-Nahr, and followed in the early eighth century by the brilliant young leader Qutaybah b. Muslim (d. 715). Alongside these formal activities of the Arab-Islamic state, Muslim traders and Sufi preachers dispersed along the Silk Route (in addition to the Indian Ocean maritime routes), spreading the essential principles, beliefs, and rules ordained in the Qur'an. The Samanid (819–999) Iranian elite of the region pioneered the cultural propagation of Islamic religion, and increasingly local Islamicate culture and aesthetics, which subsequently cascaded to the Turkic inhabitants and the Turko-Mongol hordes of the Steppe from the 9th century onwards.

This was contemporaneous with the increasing incursion of the Turks into the Arab-Islamic empire, and the Abbasids recruited whole tribes *en masse* as mercenaries to defend their lands. Al-Mu'tasim (r. 833-42) built Samarra as a garrison town for such peoples during the 9th century, to accommodate an influx of Turks from Central Asia, paving the way for subsequent Mamluk (Turkic) hegemony in the Muslim world. Locally, this was reflected in the increasing autonomy of local Turkic rulers in Central Asia, such as the Ghaznavids (977-1186), who dominated trade, commerce, governance, and culture during the late Abbasid period (al-Tabari, 1964; al-Dinawari, 1888; al-Baladhuri, 1932; Najeebabadi, 2000; Nadvi, 2006; Eaton, 2019).

Cultural and Linguistic Impact

The arteries of trade were galvanized by the emergence of the Islamic world from the 7th century onwards, with Arab and other merchants on the Indian Ocean maritime trade routes and Turkic

and Persian traders on the Silk Road linking China, Southeast Asia, India, Persia, Arabia, and East Africa. Alongside goods, trade brought great cultural cross-fertilization. The Abbasid civilization represented the epicentre of global scientific progress, based on a massive state-sponsored translation project and lavish patronage of scholars of all kinds, ethnicities, and religions. Arabic facilitated scientific progress by providing a *lingua franca* for scholars traditionally working in Middle Persian, Greek, Syriac, Coptic, and Latin. Indian scientific texts translated into Arabic included works on medicine, mathematics, astronomy and philosophy. Like the monastic scribes of benighted Europe after the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th century, these translators played an essential role in the continuation of science, and many works from antiquity only survived thanks to their efforts (Shibli 1989; Litvinsky, 1996).

The wholesale incorporation of ancient and contemporary learning by the translation movement under the Abbasids enabled intellectuals to comprehend and develop learning in all fields, and to greatly develop many fields of science, of which mathematical progress (e.g., the development of Euclidean geometry and the invention of algebra) was the most significant in terms of its long-term impacts in the history of science. Polymath Islamic scholars like Al-Razi (860–932), al-Biruni (973-1048), Ibn Sina (980–1037), and Ibn Rushd (1126–98) were produced by this milieu, and their services to medicine, other sciences, philosophy, and history are beyond evaluation.

Under Persianized Turkic dynasties and patronage, scholars revived Persian, in its classical incarnation, drawing richly upon Arabic vocabulary and forms of verse, and rigorously reiterating its initial structure. This Persian renaissance was marked by poets like Firdausi (c. 940–1020), Al-Ghazali (1058-1111), Jaluddin Rumi (1207-73), and Hafiz Shirazi (1315-89); and historians like Rashiduddin Fadlullah (1248-1318) and Abu Jafar Muhammad b. Jarir al-Tabari (839-923), whose *Tarikh* is perhaps the greatest classical Islamic history. They were among innumerable intellectuals and institutions representing the glories of their Islamic civilization and human progress, which fundamentally contributed to subsequent scientific development worldwide (Shibli, 1989; Lapidus, 2002; Eaton, 2019).

Regional Turkic Rulers in the Late- and Post-Abbasid Periods

The Persian culture of Turkic vassals of the Abbasids was brought into India with the militaristic incursions of Turkic rulers. Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna (r. 998-1030) launched numerous expeditions into India, and his court was a galaxy of famous scholars and poets. Sultan Mahmud adored Unsuri (d. 1039-40), whose *qasidas* commemorated court events and the delights of music and other entertainments. Mahmud was also the benefactor of Firdausi, Biruni, and a swarm of historians who narrated the events of the era, and whose work was characterized by its cultural anthropology, including descriptions of Indian and Turkic lands, cultures, and people. Although the Seljuq court during the 11th and 12th centuries was increasingly oriented toward its western conquests in “Rum”, its poets necessarily remained anchored in the Persian tradition and culture of Central Asia (Lapidus, 2002; Eaton, 2019).

Persian culture resurged during this period in a multitude of locales that became increasingly integrated across Central Asia and India. In the ninth century, Sijistan, Khurasan, and

Transoxania were the foremost centres of the new Persian literary progress. The centre for a new civilization was set at the courts of the Tahirids (821-73) of Nishapur and Marv, the Samanids of Bukhara, and the Ghaznavids. By the 11th century the new Persian language and literature produced in eastern Iran had become the normative intellectual tradition of West and South Asia, and during the ensuing period Saljuqs (1038-1194), Ghurids (c.1126 - c.1215), Ilkhanids (1256-1353), and Timurids (c.1370-1507) marked their own influences on the common culture. The Persian ethos emphasized the prestige of Iranian style, and also had a vibrant stimulus upon the advancement of Muslim culture in Inner Asia, India, and the maritime civilization of Southeast Asia. While Arabic remained the language of religious discourse, and heavily affected Persian and (later) Urdu, the predominant cultural voice of intellectual and artistic styles was Persian in the eastern Islamic world (Lapidus, 2002).

After waves of Mongol invasions from the 1220s onwards, particularly following the Fall of Baghdad in 1258, the Turko-Mongol political class completely dominated the scene, reflected in the Ilkhanids ruling from the Levant to Sindh. While the Arab-Persian cultural heartland of Baghdad faded, vibrant Turkic centres arose, including Bukhara, Nishapur, and Samarqand, with a notable scion in Mamluk Egypt, which affected the Maghreb beyond. In place of the traditional Abbasid court's cultural hegemony, which had even attempted to impose uniform doctrines (under the Mutazalites), each centre created its peculiar fusion of Islamic styles and local cultures. Islamic structural design now varied from state to state; Samanid masonry, Ghaznavid minarets, Isfahan domes, and Fatimid shrines were symbolic of a new eclectic artistic assortment. Within this multiplicity, the geographical boundaries of the former Abbasid caliphate were bifurcated into two linguistic and cultural zones. In the western provinces of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt, as well as North Africa and Spain, Arabic remained the prevalent spoken and literary language. In the easterly provinces, comprising Greater Persia and Transoxiana, Persian became the prevalent intellectual language, with Turkic languages and patois being the most spoken. Intellectuals of both spheres were fluent in both Persian and Arabic, and the two cultural zones continued to share a collective structure of spiritual ideals and traditions (Lapidus, 2002; Eaton, 2019).

South Asian Engagement with Central Asian Culture During the Pre-Mongol Era (c. 700-1220s)

Islam arrived in the ports of India long before the emergence of Muslim political power in Central Asia and South Asia itself, and even in its pre-political phase it made a substantial effect on the lives of native inhabitants, with the traders of the Arabian seafaring communities fetching eminence for fair-dealing and beneficence amongst the Indian ports and afar, shortly the region of Sindh became an opening to Islam in the northwest. All over the Subcontinent the intercultural history of the region has constantly been exemplified by an amazingly diverse society, varied into diverse groups belonging to assorted castes and creeds. Consequently, the arrival of Muhammad b. Qasim al-Thaqfi (d. 716) in the fertile Indus Valley region was seen not as an epochal, fundamental change by the indigenous people, but rather as yet another new ideological and cultural phenomenon entering the bustling scene, and (from the Indian perspective), an extension of the monotheistic civilization of Zoroastrian Persia that had

coexisted with the Vedic civilizations for centuries (al-Baladhuri, 1932; al-Kufi, 1983; Lapidus 2002; Islam, 2001).

The Muslim presence in Sindh introduced the Islamic world to Indian mathematics, astronomy and medicine, and Indians were hired by al-Ma'mun (r. 813-33) in Bait al-Hikmah in Baghdad. During a grave illness of Harun's al-Rashid, an Indian *vaidya* (physician), Manka al-Hindi, was dispatched to Baghdad to take care of the Caliph. Several Indian polymaths were involved in Abbasid high culture and the rendering of Sanskrit masterpieces into Arabic. This signifies a distinct change over in the centre of Islamic political power to the East during the Abbasid Caliphate, indicating the larger fiscal and cultural significance of Central and Southern Asia (Ibn Usaybah, 1884; Ibn Nadim 1884; Shibli 1989; Khan, 1990; Islam 2022). This general coherence persisted until the rise of the Ghaznavids in the 11th century, and their consecutive incursions of Northern India up to Punjab, the most famous of them being Subuktigin (r. 977-97) and his son Mahmud. Lahore became the Ghaznavid headquarters and a main centre of Islamic learning that fascinated literati from Central Asia. The Ghaznavids were succeeded in India in 1186 by the Ghurids, who ruled Lahore, Multan, and Sindh (Gardizi, 1928; Nazim, 1973; Shibli, 1989; Islam, 2011).

Muizz al-Din Muhammad Ghuri (r. 1202-06), was one of the supreme rulers of the Ghurid dynasty, who laid the groundwork of Muslim rule in South Asia and defeated Raa of Ajmer in the famous battle of Tarain in 1192. After Muizz al-Din's death in 1206, his slave Nasir al-Din Qubacha (r. 1203–1228) established Multan and Uchh as key points of political, socio-cultural, and intellectual activities. His court became a significant meeting place of scholars, celebrities, poets and renowned ulama from distant lands, personifying the intellectual legacy of Central Asia, Khurasan, Ghur, and Ghaznin after the Mongol annihilation of the classical civilization of Central Asia (Minhaj, 1954; Ahmad, 1972). Noteworthy scholars of this period included Sadid al-Din Muhammad Awfi (1171-1242), Shams al-Din Muhammad al Khatib Balkhi, Fadili Multani and Zia al-Din Sijzi.

Shams al-Din was an excellent calligrapher, whom Awfi equated with Ibn al-Bawwab and Ibn Muqlah. In 1226 the renowned historian Minhaj al-Din 'Umar b. Siraj al-Din Muhammad al-Juzjani (fl. 1193-1260) was welcomed in the court of Qubacha and assigned the position of *mudir* (principal) of the Madrasa-i-Firozia in Uchh, and the *qadi* of his son's army. Nasir al-Din Qubacha was a benefactor of scholars, while his Prime Minister, Ain al-Mulk Husain Ash'ari, was a benefactor of art and literature and his residence was a centre for intellectuals. Sadid al-Din Muhammad Awfi joined Qubacha's court in 1220 as the imperial imam and *wa'iz* (preacher) and was thus confirmed in the status of chief qadi (Minhaj, 1954; Awfi, 1906; Eaton, 2019).

Awfi rendered into Persian the famous Arabic book *al-Faraj ba'd al-Shiddah* of Qadi Abu al-Hasan b. Ali Muhammad b. Daud (d. 994), and dedicated it to Qubacha. He also composed *Lubab al-Albab*, generally believed to be the initial known collection of *tazkirah* (biographical reminiscences), which became an important form in Persian poetry, and which set the foundation for this genre of literature, sponsored by 'Ain al-Mulk Husain al-Ash'ari. He also began the compilation of *Jawami al-Hikayat wa-Lawami al-Riwayat* on the instruction of Nasir

al-Din Qubacha, but it was only completed in the court of Iltutmish. Similarly, a key Arabic source, *Minhaj al-Masalik* or *Fathnamah-i-Sindh* on the history of Sindh, was rendered into Persian by Ali b. Hamid b. Abu Bakr al-Kufi in 1216 (widely known as *Chach-Namah*) and dedicated to Ain al-Mulk Husain al-Ashari. On the suggestion of Shaykh Baha al-Din Zakariya Multani, Qasim Daud Khatib prepared the earliest version of '*Awarif al-Ma'rif*' into Persian and dedicated it to Taj al-Din Abu Bakr Ayaz (Al-Kufi, 1983; Nazir Ahmad, 1972; Hadi, 1995).

Qubacha's dynamic drive to encourage literary and academic activities could be judged from his selection of Minhaj al-Siraj Juzjani, the famous author of *Tabaqat-i-Nasiri* as well as a poet of great prominence, as the principal (*mudir*) of Madarsa-i-Firozia in Uchh, and the founding of another institute and caravanserai in Multan for Qazi Qutb al-Din Kashani, one of the most famous intellectuals of the age. Juzjani's spectator accounts of the political, cultural, and demographic outlooks and biographies of the slave rulers, their role in the founding of the Delhi Sultanate, and the descriptions of early Mongol Khans, particularly Genghis Khan. Juzjani passed his remainder life as a Muslim intellectual serving as judge, imam, executive, and at times an itinerant preacher. Qubacha's keen interest and patronage of scholars created a positive ambience in the region for the writing of substantial works on the religious and literary sciences (Barani, 2005; Farishta, 1884-85; Minhaj, 1954).

Amir Khusrau, born to a noble family of Uttar Pradesh in 1253, was an ingenious child from an early age, and he began to compose verses and *ghazals* that drew interest and appreciation from the elders. Primarily, he was under the tutelage of Sultan Balban's nephew Malik Chajju, and afterwards he came to Bughra Khan, the Governor of Bengal; later he was attached to the court of Balban's eldest son Prince Muhammad at Multan. Amir Khusrau adored exceptional prowess over all styles of poetry. After Prince Muhammad's demise, he composed bemoaning elegies in *Hukm-al-Hikam* for his *diwan*, including *Wast-al-Hayat* (Middle of Life), in which he portrayed the catastrophe at Multan and the horrific demise of the prince (Barani, 2005; Badauni, 1868; Bakhshi, 1927; Habib, 2005; Mirza, 1962). Khusrau was an Indian poet whose profound endeavours were acknowledged by the Iranians. He was a copious writer of both prose and rhyme, and he left a vast corpus of both genres. In prose, his *Ijaza-i-Khusravi* (5 volumes) and *Khazain al-Futuh* are very eminent. In poetry, further historical *mathnavis*, he has left behind various anthologies of his poems. He served seven Sultans, and was reckoned among the very close adherents of Shaykh Nizam al-Din Auliya (d. 1325). He died on 18 Shawwal 725/26 September 1225 and was buried next to the tomb of his *pir* (spiritual guide), Shaykh Nizamal-Din Auliya (Khusrau, 1949; Mirza, 1962).

Amir Hasan Sijzi (d. 1336) was the renowned scholar and author of *Fawaid al-Fuad*, the anthology of *malfuzat* (sayings) of Shaykh Nizam al Din Auliya (d.1325). This collection of Sufi discourses over a fifteen-year period is a comprehensive and charming testament of the socio-cultural and sacred life of the period. From a literary perspective, his *ghazals* (odes) are of a very high standard of exceptional fascination. Zia al-Din Barani (d. 1357) was a reputed historian, jurist and political theorist and the author of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* and *Fatwa-i-Jahandari*. *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* is a treasured source of the Delhi Sultanate from the reign of Sultan Balban (r. 1266-87) to that of the first six years of Firoz Shah's reign (r. 1351-88), while *Fatawa-i-Jahandari* is a book on political ideas and authority that deals with the guiding

principles to rulers for good governance. He is the earliest historian known to have documented the socio-economic conditions of the time, remarkably to the Delhi Sultanate (Sijzi, 1894; Nizami, 2002).

The Sufi *malfuz* (annals) and *insha* (*belles-lettres*) anthologies of the 14th to 15th centuries offer fascinating testimony of the rapport between the rulers of Central Asia, Iran and India. *Fawaid-ul-Fuad*, the *malfuzat* of Shaikh Nizamuddin, contains information about the Central Asian Mongol invasion of India. Another *malfuzat* entitled *Khair-ul-Majalis* by Shaikh Nasir al-din Chiragh Dilli (c.1274-1337) covers several stories that gives an interesting picture of the life and culture of Delhi at the time of Mongol invasion (Qalandar, 1959; Siddiqui, 1993).

The Creative Role of Muslim Intellectuals

During Ali Mardan Khalji's (d. 1212) rule of Bengal, Rukn al-Din Samarqandi (d. 1218) was the Imam and Chief Qadi of Lakhnauti (Bengal). He mastered Sanskrit from Bhujar Brahmin, a Hindu yogi from Kamrup, and thus translated Amritakunda, a classic work on yoga entitled *Hauz al-Hayat* (The Pool of Life) into Persian. He further rendered this work into Arabic under the title *Mirat al-Ma'ani fi Idraki-Alam-i-Insani* (Mirror of the Meanings of Perceptions of Human Reality). This was a pioneering attempt in opening the usually secret and spiritual expertise and beliefs of India to the foreign realm. It was further rendered into Persian under the title *Bahr al-Hayat* (The Ocean of Life) by Muhammad Ghaus Shattari Gwaliori (d. 1562) (Habibullah, 1976; Hadi, 1995; Rashid, 1969).

Sultan Iltutmish appointed Malik Taj al-Din Reza, a highly respected Persian poet born in India, as his *dabir* (secretary). Because of his excellent poetries, he received appreciation from the elite of Delhi. Reza recited an excellent *qasida* on the auspicious occasion of accepting the meritorious robe of honour sent by the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mustansir (r. 1226-42) to Iltutmish. On the triumph of the Gwalior fort by Iltutmish, Reza composed premeditated verses which were later engraved on the fort's gate. He penned poems both to Rukn al-Din Firoz (d. 1236) and his vizier Malik Nizam al-Mulk Junaidi. During the reign of Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud (r.1246-66), Reza wrote a verse when Shams Dabir was assigned the office of the *mustaufi-i-mamalik* (Auditor-General of the Sultanate). The Sultan bestowed upon him the title *Malik al-Kalam* (Lord of Eloquence) due to the virtue of his poetry (Qawwas, 1999; Badauni, 1868; Bakhshi, 1927; Farishta, 1884-85).

Zia al-Din Barani was a famous historian, jurist, and political theorist, and the author of *Tarikh-i-Firoz Shahi* and *Fatwa-i-Jahandari* important source of the Delhi Sultanate. Maulana Zia al-Din Sunami, a reputed scholar of religious sciences, was an authority on *tafsir* and *fiqh*. He was a *muhtasib* (Supervisor of Public Morals) during the reigns of Ala al-Din Khalji and Muhammad Tughluq. Maulana Zia al-Din wrote a treatise in Arabic entitled *Nisab al-Ihtisab*, as a manual for *muhtasibs*. In this book, he explained the definition, importance, and objectives of *hisbah* (promoting civic ethics), and discussed in detail the duties of the *muhtasib*. It served as a reference book for a number of judicial works, including *Fatawa-i-Firozshahi* and *Fatawa-i-Hammadiyah* compiled during the 16th century (Barani, 2005; Jackson, 2003; Hadi, 1995; Islam, 2005; Zilli, 2015).

Maulana Razi al-Din Hasan al-Saghani (d. 1252), a native of Badaun, started his career as *naib-i-mushrif* (Deputy Account Officer) in Koil (Aligarh). He rose to be a great scholar and later compiled *Mashariq-al-Anwar*. It was the most popular hadith collections throughout the medieval period, and constituted an integral part of the syllabus. Qazi Kamal al-Din Jafri, a judge of Badaun, was known for his piety and scholarship. He compiled a book on *fiqh* entitled *Munfiq*. Kabir al-Din, son of Taj al-Din Iraqi, was a court historian of Ala al-Din Khalji, and an expert in *dabiri* (secretarial) skills and the art of *insha*. He was appointed as *Amir-i-dad-i Lashkar* (Administrator of Lashkar), and composed *Fathnama* (Letters of Victory), which ran into several volumes. He also composed *Tarikh-i-Alai*, which appraised the career and achievements of Ala al-Din Khalji. Ahmad Hasan Abdusi, known as Taj al-Mulk, a noble of Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq (1320-24) who joined Sultan's Lakhnauti expedition in 1324, and authored *Basatin al-Uns* and *Sadr-i-'Ala*. *Basatin al-Uns* (Garden of Love), a Hindu tale written in a style of metaphorical Persian, was completed in 1325. Muhammad Tughluq promoted him as *Dabir-i-Khas* (Special Secretary), assigning him the title *Taj al-Mulk* (Crown of Kingdom) ((Sijzi, 1894; Qalandar, 1959; Nizami, 2002; Rashid, 1969; Jackson, 1999)

The most prominent literary figure during the Tughluq period was Malik Ain al-Mulk, commonly known as Ain al-Mulk Mahru, who compiled a number of works on different sciences including *Tarassul-i-Ain al-Mulki*, commonly known as *Insha-i-Mahru*. It was a collection of letters which testifies to his literary skill and is regarded as a model of the *insha* literature. It is also a very important source of historical information regarding the period. Tatar Khan, an adopted son of Ghiyas al-Din Tughluq, and the Governor of Zafarabad, was a poet who used to compose verses to appease the temper of Muhammad Tughluq. Malik Shams al-Din Abu Rija, alias Ziya al-Mulk, the *mustaufi-i-mamalik* (Comptroller General), was an intelligent and accomplished *qasida* writer under Firoz Shah (Barani, 2005; Afif, 1891; Zilli, 2000).

Perhaps one of the most famous figures of this era worldwide was Ibn Battuta (1304-68), who journeyed to India in 1333. After traversing the Indus, passing *en route* to Delhi through difficult and dangerous terrain crossing various towns in India, Sultan Muhammad Tughluq offered Ibn Battuta a position as a judge in Delhi, with an additional sinecure as a Hospice Administrator. He moved to visit different cities and towns of India and he left Delhi in 1342. Battuta wrote a lengthy poem in honour of Sultan and his travelogue *Tuhfat al-Nuzzar fi Gharaib al-Amsar wa Ajaib al-Asfar*, widely known as his *Rehla*, a worthy work for the 14th century Muslim world. Under Sultan Firoz Shah Tughluq (r.1351-88), Malik Qabul Qara Khan, a jurist composed *Fatawa-i-Qara Khani*, a legal digest for the guidance of *qadis*. Firoz Shah appointed Aziz al-Din b. Abdullah (Mutahhar of Kara) as *qadi* of Kara (near Allahabad). He is renowned for his *qasidas* (elegies) hailing various activities of the Sultan and his heir Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah, such as commemorating a new palace. Under Sultan Nasir al-Din Mahmud Shah Tughluq (r.1394-1413), Qazi Zahir Dihlavi was an outstanding poet whose *Diwan* (anthology) is filled with *qasidas* in honour of Sultan Mahmud (Afif, 1891; Ibn Battuta, 1953).

Yahya b. Ahmad Sirhindi, a noble of the Saiyid ruler Mubarak Shah (r.1421-34), wrote *Tarikh-i-Mubarak Shahi* as a token of gratitude to the Sultan. Masnad-i-'Ali Mian Bhu'a, the vizier and *sadr* of Sultan Sikandar Lodi (r.1489-1517), had a particular interest in *ilm-i-tibb* (medicine),

and compiled the *Tibb-i-Sikandar Shahi*. Mian Bhu'a, after gaining mastery over Sanskrit, erudite the Ayurvedic method of treatment which he combined with *tibb-i-unani* (Greek medicine) to produce *Ma'adan al-Shifa-i Sikandar Shahi*, acquiring different Sanskrit classics like *Ja Deskarat*, *Ras Ratnako*, *Suangdhar*, and *Chintama* as his prime source (Bhu'a, 1877; Chandra, 2003; Badauni, 1868; Mushtaqi, 2002; Rashid, 1969).

Over the ensuing eight centuries the people of India found the Persian language the most apt for generating their works on the different topics including astrology, astronomy, chemistry, ethics, law, logic, mathematics, medicine, metaphysics, music, mysticism, philosophy and the other fine arts, biography, geography, history, religious studies, travelling, sociology and the others. Various Sufi *Silsilahs* (orders) and the proponents of the leading intellectuals of jurisprudence migrated from Persia to India, most of whom were Persians, who continued to shape and develop their ideas in a Persianized Indian atmosphere. Poetry has constantly been a greatly recognized art and pursuit in the Indian Subcontinent. The masterpiece composition of *Sherul Ajam* (Poetry of Persia) by Allama Shibli No'mani (1857-1914) expounds the manifestation of Persian scholars in India and their effect on Urdu poetry. Hafiz Shirazi (1315-90) and Omer Khayyam (1048-1131) stay on admired in the Indian Subcontinent, while Iqbal (1877-1938) is eminent in Iran. His renowned *masnavis* (anthologies) *Asrar-i-Khudi* (Secrets of the Self), *Rumuz-i-Bekhudi* (Mysteries of Selflessness), *Payam-e-Mashriq* (The Message of the East), and *Javed Nama* (The Song of Eternity) in Persian obstinately ubiquitously prevalent in Iran (Nadeem, 2014; Nadeem, 2015; Azmi, 2021).

Conclusion

The crude reductionism of modern, Western-dominated cultural and political configurations struggle to comprehend sophisticated national and cultural phenomena that have characterized Asian life since time immemorial. This paper has attempted to provide a brief illustration of the incredibly rich and vibrant cultural and civilizational exchanges that took place between the Indo-Turkic peoples of South and Central Asia, c. 700-1500 CE. It is clear that the people involved in this vast and cosmopolitan historical process were not exercised by the nationalist complexes that plague modern inhabitants of the realms of the region; rather they were concerned with issues of truth and beauty, in the astonishing cultural tapestry they wove over the centuries.

While both South and Central Asia gave and took cultural phenomena along with the flow of maritime and terrestrial trade, Central Asia was the main intellectual clearing house in this movement, funnelling Islamicate cultural exports and Turkic peoples into India as it had formerly done for the Indo-Aryan progenitors of Vedic civilization. While Central Asia and the Abbasid metropolis received and benefitted from Indian knowledge and scholars, along with Turks from Central Asia, its ebb and flow led to a later efflux of intellectuals into India when it fell to the Mongols during the 13th century. Under the Ilkhanids and Timurids the Turco-Mongol peoples imbibed Islamicate culture and resumed the cultural continuum with South Asia, while the earlier Persian-speaking émigrés from Central Asia intensified the veneration of Persian as the language of high culture among Indians, stimulating an astonishing outpouring of scientific and cultural production by Indians in Persian (Eaton, 2019).

The modern “civilization” of globalization and hyper-corporatism has little to say on the subject of culture and pure learning, beyond what can be commodified and monetized, but in the political arena we see the retrenchment of primitive nationalisms and the rise of hysteria and anomie among the masses, exploited by political entrepreneurs. The historical example of Central and South Asia offers a compelling example of how sophisticated and authentically diverse human communities can be organized in harmony, enabling people to flourish and develop on a footing of respect and mutual cooperation and benefit, regardless of the vicissitudes of geopolitical traumas.

This paper therefore invites readers to consider abandoning the suffocating comforts of parochial nationalisms that divide the peoples of this historically Islamicate but multicultural realm to embrace and celebrate the greater cultural unity of the peoples who continue to reside in the region, regardless of religious and ethnic differences, in order to resume their historical role as a conduit of global trade and cultural enrichment to benefit themselves and the whole world.

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