



TARAZ, AS A SHARED CULTURAL HERITAGE OF THE TURKIC WORLD: HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Taraz is one of the oldest urban centers in Central Asia and has played a significant role in the historical development of the Turkic world. Besides its numerous historical architectural monuments, the city holds special importance in the cultural history of Turkic communities due to rich archaeological findings, including epigraphic, numismatic, and other material evidence. Situated on the Silk Road, Taraz functioned as a major center of civilization and exerted its influence over a vast geographical area extending from north of the Caspian Sea to the Western Desht-i Kipchak, and from the southern Caspian regions to Syria, Iraq, Anatolia, and the Balkans. It served as an important political, economic, and cultural hub that connected Central Asia with the western regions of the Turkic world, particularly Anatolia. This article examines the historical and architectural significance of Taraz within the framework of Turkic-Islamic civilization. Using comparative historical and architectural analysis, it investigates medieval monuments of Taraz and identifies their stylistic and structural similarities with Seljuk architectural traditions in Anatolia. The research is based on archaeological data, medieval written sources, and modern scholarly interpretations. The study emphasizes that Taraz represents a shared cultural heritage of the Turkic world and highlights the importance of preserving its historical monuments for future generations.

Keywords: Taraz, Turkic World, Silk Road, Seljuk Architecture, Cultural Heritage.

TÜRK DÜNYASININ ORTAK KÜLTÜREL MİRASI OLARAK TARAZ: TARİHİ VE MİMARİ BAKIMINDAN

Research Article

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ÖZ

Orta Asya'nın en eski şehir merkezlerinden biri olan Taraz, Türk dünyasının tarihsel gelişiminde merkezî bir rol oynamıştır. Çok sayıda tarihî mimari esere ev sahipliği yapan bu şehir; epigrafik, numizmatik ve diğer arkeolojik buluntulardan oluşan zengin kültürel envanteri sayesinde Türk topluluklarının tarihî geçmişinde müstesna bir konuma sahiptir. İpek Yolu üzerinde konumlanan Taraz, bir medeniyet merkezi sıfatıyla geniş bir coğrafyada etkili olmuş; Hazar Denizi'nin kuzeyinden Batı Deşt-i Kıpçak'a, güneyde ise Suriye, Irak, Anadolu ve Balkanlar'a uzanan geniş bir sahada kültürel etkileşime zemin hazırlamıştır. Aynı zamanda Orta Asya'yı Türk dünyasının batı sahalarıyla ve bilhassa Anadolu ile bütünleştiren stratejik bir siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel köprü işlevi görmüştür. Bu makale, Taraz'ın Türk-İslam medeniyeti bağlamındaki tarihî ve mimari değerini incelemektedir. Karşılaştırmalı tarihî ve mimari analiz yönteminin benimsendiği çalışmada, şehirdeki ortaçağ anıtları ele alınarak bu yapıların Anadolu'daki Selçuklu mimari gelenekleriyle sergilediği üslup ve strüktür benzerlikleri ortaya konulmaktadır. Araştırma; arkeolojik veriler, ortaçağ yazılı kaynakları ve güncel bilimsel yaklaşımlar temelinde şekillendirilmiştir. Sonuç olarak çalışma, Taraz'ın Türk dünyasının ortak kültürel mirasının asli bir parçası olduğunu vurgulamak ve bu eşsiz tarihî dokunun gelecek nesiller için muhafaza edilmesinin gerekliliğine dikkat çekmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Taraz, Türk Dünyası, İpek Yolu, Selçuklu Mimarisi, Kültürel Miras

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Introduction

Taraz is one of the oldest cities in Central Asia, with a history spanning more than two millennia. Throughout its long historical development, the city played a significant role in the political, economic, and cultural life of the region. Its continuous existence across different historical periods reflects a high level of urban development and the adaptive capacity of its urban community¹.

Owing to its advantageous geographical location, Taraz became one of the key nodes of the Silk Road, which connected East Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.²

Its position at the crossroads of major trade routes facilitated Taraz's transformation into an important center of international commerce and cultural exchange. Not only goods such as silk, metals, ceramics, and spices but also ideas, religious doctrines, artistic styles, and technological innovations circulated through the city.³

Within these multi-layered interactions, a distinctive cultural environment emerged in which local traditions intertwined with external influences. In this regard, Taraz functioned not merely as a transit point, but as an active participant in broader Eurasian historical processes⁴.

The medieval period was of particular importance in the city's history, as Taraz became one of the prominent centers of Turkic-Islamic civilization⁵. The adoption of Islam by Turkic dynasties, most notably the Karakhanids, led to profound transformations in the political structure, cultural life, and architectural landscape of the city.⁶ During this era, a new urban identity was formed, combining Turkic traditions with Islamic religious and cultural norms. The architectural monuments of Taraz provide clear material evidence of this synthesis.⁷

In recent decades, the concept of the «Turkic world» has attracted increasing attention in the humanities, where it is viewed as a space of shared historical memory, cultural values, and civilizational heritage.⁸ Within this scholarly framework, cities that played a decisive role in the formation of Turkic culture acquire particular significance. Taraz occupies a unique position among them as one of the early centers of Turkic urban culture, which influenced the development of cultural models in other regions of the Turkic world.

Despite its historical and cultural importance, Taraz remains relatively underrepresented in international academic research, especially in the English-language scholarly literature. In contrast to widely studied Silk Road centers such as Samarkand and Bukhara, the potential of Taraz as an object of interdisciplinary and comparative analysis has not yet been fully realized.⁹ This situation underscores the need for a more comprehensive and systematic examination of the city within an international context.

¹ Bartold, V. V. "Otchet o poezdke v Srednyuyu Aziyu s nauchnoy tsel'yu". 1893-1894. // Soch. M., 1966. T. IV. p. 30–58.

² Masson, M. E. *Sredneaziatskie mosty proshlogo i problemy ikh izucheniya*. Tashkent: [Publisher], 1978, 95-100

³ Baipakov, K. M. *Srednevekovye goroda Yuzhnogo Kazakhstana i Zhetysu [Medieval Cities of Southern Kazakhstan and Zhetysu]*. Alma-Ata: [Publisher], 1986, 256.

⁴ Bernshtam, A. N. Pamyatniki stariny Talasskoy doliny. Istoriko-arkheologicheskiy ocherk. Alma-Ata, 1941, 66.

⁵ Bernshtam, A. N. Novye epigraficheskie nakhodki iz Semirech'ya // Epigrafika Vostoka. 1948. № 2. 105-113.

⁶ Soucek, Svat. *A History of Inner Asia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000, pp.112–115.

⁷ Bernshtam, A. N. Pamyatniki stariny Talasskoy doliny. Istoriko-arkheologicheskiy ocherk. Alma-Ata, 1941, 66.

⁸ Golden, Peter B. *Central Asia in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 178.

⁹ Baipakov, K. M. & Erzakovich, L. B. *Drevnie goroda Kazakhstana*. Almaty, 2007, p. 210.

The aim of this article is to analyze Taraz as a shared cultural heritage of the Turkic world by examining its historical development and architectural legacy. Particular attention is paid to identifying similarities between the medieval monuments of Taraz and Seljuk architecture in Anatolia, which makes it possible to trace cultural continuity and the transmission of architectural traditions within the Turkic world. In addition, the study emphasizes the importance of Kazakh–Turkish academic cooperation as an effective means of exploring common historical roots and strengthening intercultural dialogue.

2. Research Methods

This study adopts an interdisciplinary methodological framework combining historical, archaeological, and architectural approaches. The main methods employed include:

Historical-source analysis, involving the examination of medieval Chinese, Arabic, and Persian texts that reference Taraz as a Silk Road city and political center.¹⁰

Archaeological analysis, based on published excavation reports and material findings from the Taraz settlement and its surrounding monuments.¹¹

Comparative architectural analysis, focusing on structural forms, construction techniques, decorative elements, and symbolic meanings of monuments in Taraz and Seljuk Anatolia.¹²

Cultural-historical interpretation, used to contextualize architectural parallels within broader processes of Turkic migration, Islamization, and cultural transmission.

This integrated approach allows for a comprehensive assessment of Taraz’s historical and architectural significance within the Turkic-Islamic world.

3. Taraz in the History of the Silk Road

The earliest references to Taraz are found in Chinese, Arabic, and Persian sources, where the city is described as an important settlement along the Silk Road.¹³ Taraz occupied a strategically significant geographical position at the intersection of trade routes linking China, Central Asia, the Middle East, and Eastern Europe.¹⁴ As a result, the city emerged as a key hub through which not only goods, but also ideas, technologies, and religious and cultural traditions were transmitted.

Taraz is one of the oldest urban centers located along the Silk Road and played a significant role in the historical development of Eurasian civilization.¹⁵ Due to its favorable geographical position, the city became a key hub connecting East and West, as well as North and South, facilitating long-distance trade, cultural exchange, and political interaction. Scholarly understanding of Taraz’s role within the Silk Road system emerged primarily from archaeological and historical research conducted from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century.¹⁶

¹⁰ Nazer, Z. & Rabb, P. (2025). Metric Based Comparative Analysis of Seljuk and Byzantine Architectural Practices in Medieval Anatolia. *DEPARCH Journal of Design Planning and Aesthetics Research*, 4(1): 78–92.

¹¹ Baipakov, K. M. *Srednevekovye goroda Kazakhstana na Velikom Shelkovom puti*. Almaty, 1998, 45

¹² Baipakov, K. M. *Srednevekovye goroda Kazakhstana na Velikom Shelkovom puti*. Almaty, 1998, 212

¹³ Baipakov, K. M. *Srednevekovye goroda Kazakhstana na Velikom Shelkovom puti*. Almaty, 1998, p. 212

¹⁴ Litvinsky, B. A., et al., eds. *History of Civilizations of Central Asia*. Vol. III. Paris: UNESCO, 1992, 152–153.

¹⁵ Bartold, V. V. “Otchet o poezdke v Srednyuyu Aziyu s nauchnoy tsel’yu”. 1893–1894. // Soch. M., 1966. T. IV. S. 30–58.

¹⁶ Bartold, V. V. *Ocherk istorii i arkheologii Yuzhnogo Kazakhstana i Zhetysu*. St. Petersburg, 1894, 36–40.

In 1893–1894, the prominent orientalist V. V. Bartold undertook a scientific expedition along the route Shymkent–Aulie-Ata–Merke–Pishpek–Issyk-Kul–Verny, which became a milestone in the study of the history and archaeology of Southern Kazakhstan and Zhetysay. In his report published in 1894, Bartold systematized medieval written sources, presented a historical essay, and described the most significant archaeological and architectural monuments of the Talas and Chu valleys, including the ancient settlement of Taraz, the Akyltas complex, and the urban sites of Tuyme-kent and Kulan-key nodes of the Silk Road network.¹⁷

Under Bartold's scholarly influence, the Turkestan Circle of Archaeology Lovers was established in Tashkent in 1895. Its members included representatives of the regional administration, educational institutions, officials, and military personnel. Within the framework of this organization, researchers such as V. A. Kallaür, V. P. Lavrentyev, N. P. Ostroumov, and A. A. Divaev discovered and documented numerous archaeological sites in the Talas and Chu valleys.¹⁸

Among these scholars, V. A. Kallaür made an exceptional contribution to the study of ancient heritage. His works focused on identifying the locations of medieval cities and describing urban ruins, burial grounds, and stone sculptures. He was also the first to discover and scientifically describe Old Turkic runic inscriptions in the Talas Valley.¹⁹

4. Medieval Taraz and Turkic-Islamic Civilization

Taraz, frequently mentioned in Chinese chronicles as well as Eastern Roman (Byzantine), Arab, and Persian sources, served as one of the administrative centers or an important administrative, cultural, religious, and economic center during the periods of Turkic-origin dynasties from the Huns (3rd century BC–3rd century AD) to the Karakhanids (927-1212)

After the 10th century, as the adoption of Islam by Turkic tribes gained momentum, many cities were established between the Talas and Syr Darya rivers, including Isfijab, Yesi, Savran (Sauran), Taraz, Özkend, Otrar, Siganak, and Yesi, Barçınlıkent, Yenikent, and Sütken.²⁰

Ahmed Yesevi was born in the city of Isfijab, which had long since embraced Islam. Considering that the settlements stretching from Isfijab to Balasagun were called Arghu cities, it can be said that Ahmed Yesevi was from one of these Arghu cities. Balasagun is located northeast of Evliya Ata, that is, in Eski Taraz. During this period, the language of the Arghu Turks was the same as Hakani Turkish. Ahmed Yesevi also spoke this Turkish. By his time, the Oghuz Turks had left these lands. However, Oghuz Turkish was also influenced by linguistic remnants and some connections with the Oghuz Turks who remained in Bukhara and Syr Darya.²¹

¹⁷ Kallaür, V. A. «Drevnetyurkskie runicheskie nadpisi Talasskoy doliny [Old Turkic Runic Inscriptions of the Talas Valley]». *Zapiski Turkestanskogo kruzhka lyubiteley arkheologii* 4 (1898): 1–28.

¹⁸ Barthold, V. V. *Orta Asya Türk Tarihi Üzerine Dersler*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları, 2006, 46-47, 79.

¹⁹ Kallaür, V. A. «Drevnetyurkskie runicheskie nadpisi Talasskoy doliny [Old Turkic Runic Inscriptions of the Talas Valley]». *Zapiski Turkestanskogo kruzhka lyubiteley arkheologii* 4 (1898): 1–28.

²⁰ Bartold, V. V. «Otchet o poezdke v Srednyuyu Aziyu s nauchnoy tsel'yu». 1893–1894. // Soch. M., 1966. T. IV. S. 30–58.

²¹ Denike, B. P. *Iskusstvo Srednei Azii [The Art of Central Asia]*. Moscow: Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR, 1927, pp. 32-33.



In this respect, Taraz's role during the Karakhanid period is particularly invaluable. The rise of the Karakhanid dynasty marked a crucial turning point in the history of Taraz. As one of the first Turkic dynasties to adopt Islam, the Karakhanids played a decisive role in the formation of Turkic-Islamic civilization in Central Asia.²² Under their rule, Taraz evolved into a flourishing religious, educational, and cultural center, becoming a hub of spiritual and intellectual life where sciences, arts, and religious practices developed intensively.²³

During this period, a significant number of mosques, madrasas, mausoleums, and other religious structures were constructed, reflecting a harmonious integration of Turkic building traditions with Islamic architectural principles. Special attention was paid to decorative elements, including intricate ornamentation, symbolic motifs, and ritual design features, all of which underscored the city's cultural richness and spiritual significance. Taraz thus became a unique site where nomadic Turkic heritage merged organically with sedentary urban culture, producing a distinctive cultural synthesis that defined the urban identity of the city.

This synthesis extended beyond the local context of Taraz and Central Asia, exerting influence on other regions of the Turkic world, including Anatolia. Through the movement of scholars, architects, and artisans, cultural models, architectural techniques, and artistic motifs were transmitted across regions, laying the foundations for architectural traditions that later manifested in Seljuk monuments in Asia Minor.²⁴ The circulation of ideas and technical knowledge demonstrates Taraz's role not merely as a local center, but as a node in a wider Eurasian intellectual and cultural network.

Additionally, Taraz played a vital role in the educational life of the region. Its madrasas and learning centers attracted students and scholars from across Central Asia and the Middle East, facilitating the exchange of knowledge and strengthening ties between various cultural and religious centers.²⁵ The city became a place where intellectual, scientific, and religious life converged, contributing significantly to the dissemination of Turkic-Islamic civilization.

Thus, during the Karakhanid era, Taraz was not only a political and economic hub but also a major center of cultural and religious activity in the Turkic world. Its architectural monuments, educational institutions, and cultural production left a lasting imprint on the formation, development, and spread of Turkic-Islamic civilization across Central Asia and beyond. The city exemplifies the dynamic interaction between nomadic and sedentary traditions, local innovation, and broader transregional influences, highlighting its enduring significance in the historical and cultural landscape of the Turkic world.

The study by Kızırali and Babayarov on the tomb inscription in the city of Taraz, where ancient architectural monuments are located, and known among the people as «Daut-bek Kesene», reveals that the tomb belongs to the Karakhanid circle, which held an important position in the history of Turkic communities both culturally and politically. Accordingly, it has been shown that the name, mistakenly read as «Davud-bek» by previous researchers such as V.V. Bartold, is actually Dad-Bek (full name Kutluğ-Tonga Uluğ-Bilge İlik-Han / İkbāl-Han Dad-Bek İsfesalar). Furthermore, it has been understood that this person was the last

²² Nazer, Z., and P. Rabb. *Metric Based Comparative Analysis of Seljuk and Byzantine Architectural Practices in Medieval Anatolia*. DEPARCH Journal of Design Planning and Aesthetics Research 4, no. 1 (2025): 78–92.

²³ Togan, A. Z. *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*. Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi. 1981, s. 245

²⁴ Nazer, Z., and P. Rabb. *Metric Based Comparative Analysis of Seljuk and Byzantine Architectural Practices in Medieval Anatolia*. DEPARCH Journal of Design Planning and Aesthetics Research 4, no. 1 (2025): 78–92.

²⁵ Togan, A. Z. *Umumi Türk Tarihine Giriş*. Istanbul: Enderun Kitabevi. 1981, s. 245

Karakhanid ruler who remained in power in Taraz until 1262. This date shows that local dynasties (as vassals) continued to exist even during the Genghisid period after the Mongol invasion. Indeed, the juxtaposition of the Shah-Mansur relic and the «Daut-Bek Kesene» indicates that Taraz was an important cultural and spiritual center during the Karakhanid period. The study also addresses the debates surrounding the place of residence of the Karakhanid poet Ahmed Yüknēkī, and it has been determined that the famous poet lived in the town of Yüknēk in the Otrar region (near the city of Yesi in Turkestan).²⁶

5. Architectural Heritage of Taraz

The architectural heritage of Taraz occupies a unique and significant place in the history of Turkic-Islamic architecture in Central Asia. As an important political and cultural center along the Silk Road, the city absorbed centuries-old building traditions that illustrate a synthesis of nomadic Turkic culture with sedentary urban civilization. Archaeological research demonstrates that, already in the early medieval period, Taraz possessed a well-developed urban planning system featuring fortifications, residential quarters, craft zones, and religious structures, reflecting both strategic and functional urban design.²⁷

The key architectural monuments of Taraz include the mausoleums of Aisha Bibi, Babaji Khatun, and Karakhan, which are widely regarded as masterpieces of medieval architecture. These structures fulfilled memorial and religious functions while simultaneously symbolizing political authority and the spiritual culture of their era. Their architectural forms and decorative elements demonstrate a high level of engineering skill and artistic craftsmanship characteristic of the Karakhanid period.

The Aisha Bibi Mausoleum is a singular monument distinguished by its rich terracotta cladding composed of dozens of types of ornamental tiles. The geometric, floral, and symbolic motifs adorning the façades reflect a complex worldview embedded within Turkic-Islamic culture. The ornamentation serves not only aesthetic purposes but also conveys profound symbolic meanings associated with ideas of eternity, harmony, and divine order.²⁸

The Babaji Khatun Mausoleum is notable for its rare ribbed dome, one of the few surviving examples of this type of construction in Central Asia. The architectural solution of the dome indicates an exploration of new forms and technical possibilities in medieval building practice. Its restrained exterior decoration contrasts with the structural expressiveness of the building, emphasizing both functional efficiency and architectural austerity.

The Karakhan Mausoleum represents monumental architecture associated with the ruling elite of the Karakhanid state. Its scale, symmetrical composition, and prominent portal reflect notions of political power, legitimacy, and religious authority. The use of baked brick, characteristic masonry techniques, and decorative bands link this monument to other Karakhanid architectural works across Central Asia.²⁹

In addition to these individual mausoleums, archaeological excavations at the Taraz

²⁶ Kıdırılı D. & Babayar, B. *Taraz'da Bulunan Son Karahanlı Hükümdarlarından Birine Ait Mezar Anıtı*. *Gazi Türkiyat*, Spring 2016/18: 19-41.

²⁷ Masson, M. E. *Arkheologicheskie issledovaniya v doline reki Talas* [Archaeological studies in the Talas River valley]. Moscow–Leningrad: Izdatelstvo AN SSSR., 1936, p. 45..

²⁸ Denike, B. P. *Iskusstvo Srednei Azii [The Art of Central Asia]*. Moscow: Central Publishing House of the Peoples of the USSR, 1927, pp. 32-33.

²⁹ Bernshtam, A. N. *Pamyatniki stariny Talasskoy doliny: istoriko-arkheologicheskiy ocherk*. Alma-Ata, 1941, p. 65.



settlement have yielded invaluable data. Remains of mosques, public buildings, residential houses, and defensive structures allow scholars to reconstruct the medieval city's appearance and trace the evolution of its urban and architectural space. The city's planning structure demonstrates a high degree of urban organization and a clear influence of Islamic principles in city planning, indicating a sophisticated understanding of urban functionality and spatial hierarchy.

Thus, the architectural heritage of Taraz constitutes a coherent complex of monuments reflecting key stages in the development of Turkic-Islamic architecture. It not only exemplifies the artistic and technical achievements of its period but also serves as a critical resource for studying cultural connections, architectural continuity, and the shared heritage of the Turkic World.

6. Architectural Parallels between Taraz and Anatolia

With Genghis Khan, a new era began in the regions inhabited by the Turks. In this new period, where urban life was largely disrupted, only Sufi movements survived in the religious life of the region. Under the influence of these great Sufis, Sufis from Syr Darya and Khwarazm came to Anatolia. These Yesevi and Kubrawi dervishes made significant contributions to the formation and development of Turkish architectural, culture and literature in Anatolia. The second half of the 13th century witnessed a period of rapid expansion of Turkish Sufism. After the initial devastating effects of Genghis Khan's invasion subsided, the Turkish Sufi movement found new opportunities to spread in the Anatolian region under the rule of the Ilkhanids and the Golden Horde. From the mid-13th century, that is, from the beginning of Ilkhanid rule to the mid-14th century, when the Ottoman state was completed, religious and social organizations in Anatolia showed a rich diversity for about a century.³⁰

A comparative analysis of the architectural heritage of Taraz and Seljuk-era monuments in Anatolia reveals profound and enduring parallels, demonstrating the existence of a unified cultural and historical space within the Turkic world. These similarities are manifested not only in individual decorative elements but also in overarching principles of form-making, structural solutions, and the symbolic content embedded within architectural designs.

One of the primary shared features is the extensive use of baked brick as the fundamental building material. In Taraz, bricks served not only structural purposes but also played a significant role in decorative façade composition. A comparable approach is evident in Seljuk architecture in Anatolia, where brick masonry was integrated with ornamental surface treatment, producing rhythmic and visually expressive architectural compositions.

Geometric ornamentation occupies a central role in the architecture of both Taraz and Anatolia. Repetitive geometric patterns symbolize the notions of infinity and divine order, reflecting the aesthetic and religious principles of Turkic-Islamic civilization. Such motifs are prominently featured in the Aisha Bibi Mausoleum in Taraz and find direct parallels in the decoration of Seljuk madrasas, mosques, and caravanserais across Asia Minor.

Monumental portals constitute another important element of architectural continuity. In Taraz, portals highlighted the social and political significance of a structure and served as a visual focal point. In Anatolian Seljuk architecture, this tradition was further refined, with

³⁰ Kuban, D. *The Style of Seljuk Architecture in Anatolia and Its Relations to Islamic Architecture in Central Asia*. Istanbul: Eren Yayıncılık. 1995, p.168.



richly decorated portals becoming a signature element of the style while retaining their Central Asian architectural origins.

Domed structures similarly illustrate the transmission of architectural knowledge. Early dome forms characteristic of Taraz mausoleums provided a foundational model for subsequent dome construction in Anatolia. Technical solutions, including the transition from square bases to circular domes and the incorporation of drums and ribbed structures, reflect the movement and adaptation of construction techniques across regions.

The emergence of these parallels is closely linked to historical processes, particularly the westward migration of Turkic tribes and the accompanying movement of craftsmen, architects, and scholars during the period of Seljuk expansion. Alongside political and military developments, there was a significant transfer of cultural models, artistic traditions, and architectural canons. Consequently, Anatolia became a space in which Central Asian architectural traditions were both preserved and adapted to local environmental and cultural conditions.³¹

In summary, the architectural similarities between Taraz and Anatolia underscore cultural continuity and interconnectedness across the Turkic world. Taraz can thus be regarded as one of the foundational centers that significantly influenced the architectural identity of Turkic-Islamic civilization, with its monuments serving as a vital link in the chain of historical and cultural development stretching from Central Asia to Asia Minor.

7. Taraz as a Shared Cultural Heritage of the Turkic World

In contemporary academic, cultural, and socio-political discourse, Taraz occupies a distinctive position as a symbol of the shared cultural heritage of the Turkic world. The city embodies the centuries-long historical experience of Turkic peoples, processes of ethnocultural interaction, the spread of Islam, and the formation of common artistic and spiritual values. The history of Taraz is closely linked to key stages in the development of Turkic civilization, making it significant not only for Kazakhstan but for the entire Turkic space extending from Central Asia to Anatolia.

Taraz functions as a «bridge» between different regions of the Turkic world, integrating nomadic and sedentary traditions, ancient beliefs and Islamic culture, as well as local features with supra-regional civilizational processes.³² Its architectural monuments, urban layout, and archaeological strata reflect shared cultural codes that are recognizable and meaningful across multiple Turkic nations. In this context, acknowledging Taraz as a shared heritage site contributes to the formation of a unified historical narrative and strengthens a sense of cultural kinship.

Interstate and interdisciplinary cooperation is particularly crucial for understanding and interpreting the heritage of Taraz. Joint research projects, archaeological expeditions, academic conferences, and scholarly publications involving researchers from Turkic countries facilitate a more comprehensive and nuanced study of the city's historical past. Such collaboration not only broadens academic knowledge but also reinforces cultural ties and mutual understanding among Turkic peoples.

³¹ Temirbek, A., *Taraz: Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Turkic World*. Almaty: Kazakh University Press, 2015.

At the same time, the preservation and promotion of Taraz's monuments face considerable challenges. These include environmental and climatic factors, ongoing urbanization, insufficient funding for conservation and restoration, and the city's limited visibility in international cultural and tourism networks. Collectively, these factors pose significant risks to both the tangible and intangible heritage of Taraz.

Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive, coordinated approach. State authorities, academic and educational institutions, museums, and international organizations involved in cultural heritage protection must actively participate. The application of modern technologies, such as digital documentation, virtual reconstructions, and innovative museum displays, can significantly enhance both the preservation and accessibility of Taraz's heritage.

Promoting Taraz as a shared cultural heritage site of the Turkic world also holds importance for cultural diplomacy. Integrating the city into international cultural programs, tourism circuits, and educational initiatives can strengthen the global visibility and positive image of Turkic countries, while popularizing their shared historical legacy. This is especially significant for younger generations, whose engagement with the history of Taraz can foster historical awareness, cultural identity, and respect for the common past of the Turkic world.

8. Conclusion

The significance of the city of Taraz and its surroundings for the history of Turkic peoples has not yet been fully understood. However, when the information contained in archaeological finds and architectural works from the Karakhanid period is compared with the information in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish written sources, it becomes clear that the Taraz region is important for the Turkic world. The lack of comprehensive research on the history of the region, and the fact that existing research is mostly regional in nature, is one of the main problems. Taraz, in particular, is significant not only because it is one of the oldest Turkic place names mentioned in written sources, but also because it may represent the beginning of Turkic urbanism.

This article has examined Taraz as one of the key historical and architectural centers of the Turkic world. The city played a significant role for many centuries due to its strategic location on the Silk Road, which connected the East and the West. This position allowed Taraz to become an important hub for economic exchange, cultural interaction, and the dissemination of knowledge, technologies, and religious ideas. Taraz's influence extended across Central Asia and beyond, significantly contributing to the formation of Turkic-Islamic civilization.

The architectural heritage of Taraz, represented by mausoleums, mosques, madrasas, and urban structures, demonstrates the high achievements of medieval Turkic architecture. Comparisons with Seljuk architecture in Anatolia reveal clear stylistic and structural parallels, including the use of baked brick, geometric ornamentation, monumental portals, and domed structures. These similarities indicate cultural continuity, the exchange of architectural knowledge, and a shared aesthetic tradition spanning the wider Turkic world.

Taraz should be regarded not only as a local or national heritage site but also as an important shared heritage of the broader Turkic world. Recognizing the city in this way fosters historical memory, promotes cultural dialogue among Turkic countries, and helps establish a unified narrative of shared history and civilizational heritage.

To gain a fuller understanding of Taraz's role in Eurasian history, further research is

necessary. Promising directions include detailed comparative analyses of architectural monuments, archaeological excavations, study of written sources, and interdisciplinary approaches combining history, architecture, art history, and cultural studies. This comprehensive approach will allow scholars to better evaluate Taraz's contribution to the development of Turkic civilization, its influence on cultural processes in Central Asia and Anatolia, and its role as a center of intellectual and artistic life in the medieval Turkic world.

Ultimately, studying Taraz as a historical, architectural, and cultural center not only expands our knowledge of the past but also emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting this heritage for future generations, strengthening the bonds among Turkic peoples and contributing to the creation of a shared cultural space.

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Extended Abstract

Taraz is one of the most significant ancient urban centers of Central Asia and occupies a crucial place in the historical and cultural development of the Turkic world. Located along the Silk Road, the city functioned for centuries as a major political, economic, and cultural hub that connected Eastern and Western Eurasia. Its strategic geographical position enabled Taraz to serve as a key point of interaction between nomadic and sedentary civilizations, facilitating not only trade but also the exchange of religious ideas, artistic traditions, and technological knowledge. As a result, Taraz became an important center in the formation of Turkic-Islamic civilization.

This study examines Taraz as a shared cultural heritage of the Turkic world from both historical and architectural perspectives. The main objective of the research is to analyze the role of Taraz in the development of Turkic civilization and to identify architectural and cultural continuities between medieval Taraz and Anatolian Seljuk traditions. The study emphasizes that Taraz should not be considered solely within the national framework of Kazakhstan but as part of a broader Turkic cultural and historical space extending from Central Asia to Anatolia and beyond.

Methodologically, the research adopts an interdisciplinary approach combining historical-source analysis, archaeological evidence, and comparative architectural interpretation. Medieval Arabic, Persian, and Chinese written sources, as well as modern scholarly literature, are used to reconstruct the historical importance of Taraz. Archaeological data from excavations in Southern Kazakhstan and Zhetyysay provide material evidence of urban development, while architectural analysis focuses on structural and decorative similarities between Taraz monuments and Seljuk architectural heritage in Anatolia.

The findings of the study indicate that Taraz played a central role in the Silk Road network, functioning as a major node of cultural transmission. The city was not only a commercial center but also an intellectual and religious hub where various cultural influences intersected. During the Karakhanid period, Taraz experienced significant urban and cultural development following the Islamization of the Turkic populations. This period marked the emergence of a distinctive Turkic-Islamic architectural style characterized by the synthesis of pre-Islamic Turkic traditions and Islamic artistic principles.

One of the key contributions of this study is the comparative analysis of architectural heritage between Taraz and Anatolia. The research demonstrates clear parallels in construction techniques, decorative systems, and symbolic architectural forms. The widespread use of baked brick, geometric ornamentation, monumental portals, and domed structures reveals a shared architectural language across the Turkic world. Monuments such as the Aisha Bibi, Babaji Khatun, and Karakhan mausoleums reflect sophisticated artistic and engineering achievements that influenced later architectural developments in Anatolia, particularly during the Seljuk period.

The study also highlights the role of Sufi movements in the cultural transmission between Central Asia and Anatolia following the Mongol invasions under Genghis Khan. Sufi dervishes from the Syr Darya and Khwarazm regions migrated westward, contributing to the spread of spiritual traditions, intellectual ideas, and artistic practices. These movements played a crucial role in shaping the religious and cultural landscape of Anatolia during the 13th and 14th centuries, further strengthening historical connections between the two regions.

Another important aspect of the research is the examination of Taraz as a center of cultural memory and identity within the Turkic world. The city represents a shared heritage that reflects centuries of interaction, integration, and cultural synthesis among Turkic peoples. Its archaeological and architectural monuments serve as tangible evidence of historical continuity and intercultural exchange. In this context, Taraz is interpreted not only as a historical settlement but also as a symbolic bridge connecting different parts of the Turkic civilization.

The study further emphasizes the importance of preserving and promoting the cultural heritage of Taraz. Modern challenges such as urbanization, environmental degradation, and insufficient international recognition pose significant risks to the preservation of its monuments. Therefore, interdisciplinary cooperation between historians, archaeologists, architects, and cultural institutions is essential for the documentation, restoration, and sustainable management of this heritage. The use of digital technologies and international research collaboration is also recommended to enhance the visibility and protection of Taraz's cultural legacy.

In conclusion, Taraz represents a fundamental component of Turkic-Islamic civilization and serves as an essential link between Central Asia and Anatolia. Its historical, architectural, and cultural significance extends beyond regional boundaries, making it a shared heritage of the entire Turkic world. The study demonstrates that Taraz played a key role in shaping cultural and architectural traditions that influenced vast regions of Eurasia. Recognizing and studying this heritage contributes not only to historical knowledge but also to strengthening cultural identity and cooperation among Turkic nations.