Cultural Presentation of the ‘Turk’ in the history of Pakistan: From Monarchy to Modern State

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Abstract

History represents itself in language and historiographical performance reflects cultural patterns. Both history and historiography not only pass through cultural windows but also create certain cultural impressions of understanding that become the dominant agent in the extension of historical meanings and identity. The importance of history is developed both with the reflection of cultural codes and creation of its own system of understanding. This relationship between the history and culture is important and diverse in case of Pak-Turk relations. Politically, Pak-Turk relations started in 1947 after the creation of Pakistan. On the other hand, this relationship dates back to the dates that encompass the history and historiography of Pakistan, the advent of Arabs in Sind for example. Following the historiographical patterns of historiography of Pakistan, this paper takes the advantage of time and analyzes the cultural representation of the ‘Turk’ from the early medieval period till now to have a cultural outlook of political, social and religious formations that represented the ‘Turk’. It focuses on the historical dialogue between different shades of political relations, Social formations and religious proximities. Paper argues that although ‘Turk’ is an integral part of ‘History of Pakistan’ yet its cultural representation through history and historiography is different on the basis of time. Its presence is essential as compared to its mode of presence. It has passed through different formations of time and its current locale is modern. Continuity of Pak-Turk relations requires more modern symbols for the representation of meaning of their recent historical ties. It also stresses on the question of existential irrelevance of traditional cultural understandings of relationship and focuses on the establishment of future contingent means for strong relations.

Keywords: Turk, Sultanate, Mughals, Modernity, Pakistan, History

Introduction:

Representation of Turk in the History and Historiography of Pakistan carries certain cultural influences. These influences not only help the historiographers to extend the historical meanings but also express the nature of relationship between the two lands. On
the one hand the history of relationship between the areas those comprise Pakistan and the people and lands that are branded as ‘Turk’ dates back to early medieval ages. This historical relation is diverse and carries different impressions. The study of these impressions and their impact on the historiography is significant as history and historiography in Pakistan have preserved the ‘Turkish’ element with utmost care. They are presented with a positive tone and as real cultural agents whose participation in the understanding of history of Pakistan is essential. This research describes the discussion in four parts that represents the eras of piety and racial supremacy, cultural integration, pan-Islamic political affinity and modern era of brotherhood. The division of these eras is based on the changing historical patterns of political contexts in which the relationship existed and is represented. The first part covers the Sultanate period that combines piety and claims of racial superiority. This combination is manifested in the office of sultan that shows allegiance with the caliph at one end and maintains a social distance from the subjects on the basis of superior racial claims. It also analyzes the representation of this combination in history. Second part covers the Mughal era that manifests the efforts of Mughals in the social integration. This is an era of social and political confidence and it shows how Mughals managed their Turkish claim while promoting Persian culture and bringing the indigenous population in their political influence. It also describes the historical representation of an alienated segment of ‘Tūrāni’ who ethnic identity is contested on the basis of their Central Asian background. Third part deals with the colonial period and describes the way in which question of caliphate and sentimental affiliation of Muslims of subcontinent is represented in the historiographical accounts. In a way this part is most strong in the conceptual understanding of the relations between Turkish world and Pakistan. The changing character of Turkish Political institutions from Caliphate to Modern state is also handled carefully in the writing of History of Pakistan Movement. Fourth part discusses the representation of Turk in the most recent modern times. It is for the first time in the history that relations between the two soils are equal on the basis of political status of modern states. This equality is not only cherished in regional context but also in the context of realization of a true Islamic republic. This aspect is unique in the
sense that still this equality and political analogy is missing in Pakistan’s relations with rest of leading Muslim countries i.e. Iran and Saudi Arabia.

1. Fusing Piety, Racial Supremacy and Social Liberty

*Bandagān-i-Turk* was the first Muslim group of power elite in Subcontinent. Their rule started with the demise of Muʿīz-al-Dīn Ghaurī. Their dynasty is termed as *Khāndān-i-Ghulāmān* or Slave Dynasty. They were the council of Turkish slaves who were trained on the royal patterns. This council which provided the sovereigns and also acted as an establishment was also known as *Umṛā-i-Chahalgānī* (The Forty Nobles). Turk Salāṭīn filled the ranks of their civil and military bureaucracy from the council of forty and all the prominent seats were reserved for the Turks. Especially, the first one hundred years of the slave dynasty are marked by historians as a period of Turkish racial superiority. All the other racial and religious groups were kept at distance from the administration. Malik ʿīz-al-Dīn Kābīr Khān Ayāz, Malik Saif-al-Dīn Kūchī, Niẓām-al-Mulk Junaidī, Ikhtiyār-al-Dīn Altūniyā, Ghayāth-al-Dīn Balban were among the prominent noble under Iltutmish and his descendants. Indigenous people who embraced Islam meanwhile were denied the equal stature with the Turks. This political and administrative distancing is managed by the religion. At one end, Turk Sultan extended his identity through the use of Islamic Symbols in the title and nomenclature. At second their claims of racial superiority are compensated with historiographical display of Islamic piety especially, in the case of Qutb-al-Dīn Aibak and Shams-al-Dīn Iltutmish. They also attracted the Muslim mind by giving more strength to the offices of *Qāḍī-al-Quḍā* and *Ṣadar-al-ṣudūr*. Jamal Malik narrates the mechanism of legitimacy,

“Sufis did not hesitate to appropriate the ruler as an Islamic hero, as can be read from both Suhrawardī as well as Chishti accounts, such as Siyar al-ʿArafin, a classical Indian hagiography written by Suhrawardī court poet Hamid Jamali Kanboh, and the Chishti Fawa’id al-Fu’ad. So it was that Iltutmish received legitimacy from the highest Muslim authorities and thus transformed himself into a Muslim king now holding a
title used by earlier Muslim kings to highlight their conquest of non-Arab lands.”

Another aspect of the cultural compensation of the claims of racial superiority is the social and cultural liberty that Turks offered to the local population of India. They remained vigilant of the central and provincial administration and did not interfere in the individual’s personal and social life. Malik explain the situation as, “... Sultans were pragmatic enough to intimate existing types of coinage with Hindu deities such as Lukshmi and Shiva, and Sanskrit letters, or popular indigenous motifs, such as Rajput horseman on the one side and Shiva’s bull on the other”. Even the change of monarchs and dynasties did not impact the smoothness of life of a common man in India. This phenomenon not only minimized the possibility of political resistance but also enabled the historian to draw a positive sketch of the political elite. The racial identity of the Turks got neutralized with the introduction of absolute monarchies of Ghayāth-al-Dīn Balban, ʿAla-al-Dīn Khiljī and Muhammad Bin Tughlaq. Exercise of absolute authority marginalized the racial claims. Ghayāth-al-Dīn Balban’s policy gave a death blow to the power of the Forty and, in a way, ended the superior Turkish claims.

Slave dynasty was succeeded by Tughlaq and Khiljī dynasties. Muhammad Bin Tughlaq and ‘Ala-al-Dīn Khiljī were the most prominent representatives of their respective dynasties. They shifted the Turkish element with the efforts on good governance and socio-political and socio-economic reformation. Sādāt and Lodhi dynasty changed the racial character of the Muslim state in Subcontinent. The end of Sultanate period witnessed the changing role of Turks. They were no more sovereigns of Delhi but were exerting power in peripheries. A new Turkish stock in the shape of Mughals was trying to overpower the political power of Lodhis.

2. Social Integration of Mughals and Turkish Identity:

Sultanate of Delhi ended with the fall of Ibrahim Lodhi and it was a beginning of a new era in the history of Subcontinent. Zahīr-al-Dīn Muhammad Babur laid the foundation of Mughal Dynasty. Mughal also claim the Turkish origin. Babur himself wrote poetry and prose in Turkish language and his prominent contribution is
This book got translated in Persian, English and other languages. He and his predecessors had to compromise their Turkish identity and accept the Persian language and culture. The term ‘Mughal’ represents a Turkish inner rapped in Persian and Indian covers. This Persianisation was, initially, the result of political and military support of Safavids that they extended to Babur and Hamayun but there were some other reasons as well as described by Peacock and McLary,

A series of factors – namely, the paralysing effect of Navāʾī’s unique genius; the changes in Persian literary taste in the sixteenth century that made the literary tradition that Navāʾī adopted as a basis for his own Turki version outdated; the lack of poets who could have been able to compose quality content in Turki; and, last but not least, the lack of royal support for poetry in Turki in a basically Persian literary environment – all played their role in the disappearance of Turkish as a popular medium for creating literary products by the second half of the sixteenth century.

They adopted the title of ‘Pādshāḥ’ instead of Sultan that shows both their cultural and political preferences. At second it also helped them to keep a distance from any superior claim of caliphate by the ʿUthmānī Turks. This compromise was strengthened with the introduction of the policy of social integration by Jalāl-al-Dīn Muhammad Akbar. While pursuing this policy, he relied more on the Persians and the local influential clans of Hindus. He, by announcing himself a Sultān-i-ʿĀdil, surrendered the superior religious and racial claims of Muslim polity and claimed to be master of all religious and ethnic stocks. He replaced the superior claims of the Turkish political elite with the ‘paternal love’ of Sultān-i-ʿĀdil. Abul Fazal also suggested him to raise himself above the religious and ethnic differences and biases of his subjects. Both religious and ethnic identities were compromised at the cost of nationalism based on indigenous claims. Historical accounts in this regard represent diverse angles. Akbar’s steps are equated with heresy by many historical accounts. On the other hand Indian historiography confers upon him the highest place. Turkish character, it seems, is utilized by the
historians who fused the religious identity in their historical narration. It is evident from the period of Nūr-al-Dīn Jahangir which, again, attracts historical narrations from different angles. His persecution of religious clerics belonging to different religious traditions is treated in detached manner. Again the influence of Nūr Jahān Jantā is also narrated as a Shiite or a Persian influence. It resulted in the symbolic segregation of a class of Central Asians from the royal elite of India and they were precipitated as the group of Tūrānīs in the court in later period. Their ethnic identity reflects the spirit of Turkic proverb translated into English as, “There is no Turk without Iranian, just as there is no hat without a head”. Tūrānīs contested the influence and power of Persians in the court and they were successful in achieving their due share in the period of later Mughals. Contrary to the Mughals, political affairs in Deccan were more suitable for the presence of Turkish symbols. Successor state of Bahmanī Kingdom established close contacts with the Turkish world to be connected with a bigger world and to counter the threatening advance of Mughals in India.

Although, Mughals themselves were the Turk, yet their rule did not enhance the Turkish identity. Medieval India starts with the Superior racial claims of the Turks and ended with the resistance of Turkish Identity. Historiographical accounts of Mughals are also dominated by Persian and indigenous flavors but the later Mughal period witnessed a revival of Turkish language and literature. Turkish also remained alive in the military and cantonment areas. Cultural representation of ‘Turk’ in this period relied more on the social and cultural pragmatics of that particular time. The resistance of Tūrānī’s helped them to came to fore in the later Mughal period.

3. Cultural expansion of ‘Turk’ in Colonial India:

Cultural representation of ‘Turk’ in the historical text related to the history of Pakistan show a remarkable revival of Turkish symbols of authority during colonial rule in India. Interestingly, Turkish Caliph supported the British claims of political control in India. This approval of British authority by caliph was against the will of majority of Muslims in Subcontinent. British strengthened their
rule in India and the people had not only to accept the British authority but they also began to reflect the modernity. This acceptance was in the shape of both resistance and partial integration. Turkish representation in this period can also be divided into some visible parts. Initially, Muslims were focusing on the challenge of British authority and modernity. Contrary to the fact that Caliph supported the cause of Britishers, some corners of Muslim community of India that had raised voice for Turkish in their wars against Russia (1877), Greece (1897), and Italy (1911) and during Balkan wars (1912). It was in the first quarter of the twentieth century that the Turkish question got its place in the social and political spheres in India in a significant manner. Now the Cultural representation of ‘Turk’ was more diverse in a sense that it was related to both the ruling British Elite and their Muslim subjects in India. Turks were a political and regional concern for British on the European soil and for Muslims they were the custodian of sacred institution of caliphate and symbols of universal Muslim authority. This complexity is evident from the different dimensions of the Caliphate Movement in India. This time ‘Turk’ was not symbolizing any royal and political elite in India but it was a manifestation of an extra-territorial relationship based on sacred affiliation. It was a sacred speculation on the part of Muslims of India who ignored the historical claims of racial superiority on the part of Turks besides ignoring the Caliphal support for the British Colonizers of India. They paid political price and social alienation as a result of Caliphate Movement. Although it created challenges for the Muslims but this episode of Muslims struggle for the preservation of caliphate had significant impact on the history and historiography of Pakistan Movement. Question of Caliphate and British response in this regard plays an important role in the historical evolution of Muslim struggle for independence and separate homeland. It worked as a strong justification while stressing on the separate identity of Muslims in India. This movement was started with the collaboration of Congress but its leadership deserted the Muslims. Muslims of India were unable to protect the Institution of caliphate but this movement and its cultural impacts added to the political maturity of the Muslims.
4. Representation of Turk in the era of modern state

The end of colonial rule in India is also marked by the establishment of separate homeland for the Muslims. Creation of Pakistan and its adoption of modern political structure with religious identity posed certain cultural challenges in the understanding of history and historiography. It was for the first time in the history of subcontinent that Muslims were having modern political patterns with religious identity in an independent state. Now ‘Turk’ for them was more than a superior racial claim, assertive ethnic group and custodian of sacred institution and places. ‘Turk’ emerged as a symbol of equality, modernization of Islamic political thought and as a friend. In a way, end of colonial rule in India, altogether, changes the orientation of cultural representation of the ‘Turk’ in Pakistani historical narrative. It represents a regional friend and a brother Muslim country. They became allies in US block as both had reservations regarding the advance of Soviet Russia. These friendly relations also materialized in the shape of RCD. So, one can find various patterns of symbols in Pak-Turk relation. That is why Turkiye’s cultural extension in Pakistani history is diverse. Turkish examples are quoted to extend the certain ideological cum political meanings. These examples are diverse and are based on the propagation of certain meanings. Turkish example is presented to advocate the cause of political modernity. Three Muslim countries have significant socio-cultural and political influence in Pakistan i.e. Iran, Saudi Arabia and Turkiye. Among these, Turkiye is the only example of modern political tradition. Although Iranian tradition is also based on alternative modernity, yet, its Shiite element restricts its audience in Pakistani context. It was the end of caliphate in Turkiye that gave rise to the voice of political Islam in Muslim world. On the other hand Turkiye adopted the modern political tradition but they are cautious about the preservation of their historical and cultural inheritance. Both, their modernity and history, have a large number of audiences in Pakistan. Politically, it was during the reign of President Musharraf that Kamal Ata Turk’s vision was appreciated at state level. Post 9/11 world compelled both to co-operate in defense and strategic affairs and took a deterministic shape. The supporters of presidential form of
government also utilize Turkish institutions and personalities. Recent example of symbolic utilization of personalities is the use of stature of President Tayyab Erdegon. It was to pave way for favoring Presidential form of Government after the passage of eighteenth amendment. Last decade of Pakistani politics manifest a major trend in social media where Tayyab Erdegon and Ahmadi Nijad are presented as the best examples to create a rationale in favor of presidential and to oppose the parliamentary form of government. Another medium of expression is the media. By airing Turkish historical dramas with Urdu dubbing, a cultural understanding is being focused.

5. Conclusion

As narrated in the introductory part that history of Pakistan covers the time period of Muslim rule in subcontinent in order to rationalize the context and creation of a separate state for Muslims in India. It begins with monarchy that shows both the trends of allegiance with the Caliph and of absolute monarchy based on divine right of Kingship. Politically, Akbar’s model of Sultān-i-ʿĀdil combined both traditions. It extended the political inclusion to the other religions and racial stocks. Muslims also faced a period of downfall that culminated in the colonization of India by Britishers. The end of colonial rule replaced the monarchial political formation with political structures of modern state. Both India and Pakistan adopted modern identity for the newly independent states. One thing that remains alive during this long period of time is the Turkish element. In the first place it appeared as a racial group in the guise of political elite that was extended to the claims of absolute monarchy by compromising the racial content and with an effort for social integration in India. Colonial period brought Turkish question in a different way and the post independent era witnessed the significant changes in the structural formations of Turkiye and Pakistan. Survival of cultural presence of ‘Turk’ in history of Pakistan is also handled carefully in the historiography. This trend approves the historical strength of the relations between the two nations and states. At one end this relation is based on the historical realities and has survived the historical challenges of the centuries. ‘Turk’ is no doubt an integral
part of historical identity of Pakistan. Cultural end of this historical relationship requires certain new promises. In recent times Turkiye is being represented in Pakistan in all the colors that are described above. From the model of Turkish caliphate to the debates of parliamentary and presidential form of government, political influence of ‘Turk’ is there in symbolism. Sometimes it lack of synchronization becomes evident. Pakistani society and state should be careful while analogizing their particular situations with the Turkish examples. We require and updated exchange of ideas and culture that should not only represent the issues of contemporary world but at the same time could help our reader and the younger generation to keep abreast of their time. History is always more related to the contemporary world so it should focus more on the present instead of bring past in the recent times. Contemporary world is talking more about the environmental issues, political liberties and economic connectivity based on cross regional networking. World powers are offering the socio-economic models like Belt and Road Initiative, Global Gateway and Bring Back Better World. The new representation of Pak-Turk relations should focus on these trends to maintain and strengthen the futuristic possibilities of this historic relationship.
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35 The campaigners on social media in favor of Presidential system in Pakistan use the personality of Turkish president as an ideal representation of authority in Modern Muslim political standards.