



## Review Article

# Transoxiana and Beyond: Cultural ties between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan in the 20th Century

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## ABSTRACT



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The article seeks to provide a comprehensive analysis of the cultural interactions that took place between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan in the 20th century. The study will examine the pivotal elements and significant events that influenced their strong bond and facilitated its expansion. These bonds have been reinforced via reciprocal esteem, common traditions, and a shared history. In the 20th century, the relationship between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan underwent a transformation, entering a new phase marked by increased collaboration and cross-cultural exchange. Additionally, it aims to furnish readers with information regarding the pivotal and sophisticated phases of their relationship's progression during the designated timeframe, while also serving as a valuable resource for individuals seeking to explore this subject in greater depth. The aim of this study is to analyze the key components and occurrences that have significantly contributed to the formation of a robust and mutually advantageous relationship between the involved parties. The Afghans and the people of Transoxiana have historically maintained significant and continuous cultural and social connections. Our relationship with Uzbekistan, a nation that safeguards the historic Transoxiana culture, has transitioned into a new era in the twentieth century.

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## Introduction

Afghanistan has harbored numerous civilizations throughout its history. Multiple conflicts, invasions and political upheavals have taken place. Due to its role as a destination and refuge for migrants, it has also been referred to as a "graveyard for empires," as described by Western media. This country, renowned for its profound literary and architectural heritage, has seen substantial historical influence as a result of Turkish immigration. The Turkish culture is deeply entrenched in its historical origins. The nation is cognizant of and reverent towards this tradition. This country's geographic isolation and preservation of its distinctive traits can be attributed to two factors, notwithstanding the adverse impacts of years of war. Firstly, it is important to note that the nation has never been subjected to invasion or colonization by imperialists. Furthermore, the country's continuing conflicts have hindered the dissemination of its popular culture. Similar to other groups in the region, the Uzbeks of Afghanistan have successfully maintained their traditional attributes and consider this additional precaution (Amini, 2006). Continuing its literary legacy, the literatures derived from Chagatai literature typically adhere to its structure and themes. A diverse array of literary works explored themes such as nationalism, profound attachment to one's homeland and language, collective identity, solidarity,

challenges, migration and journeys, longing for home, and nostalgia. During that era, Soviet literature also explored themes such as labor, populism, and the consolidation of different ethnic groups. Notable personalities from Turkish history, such as Ali-Shir Nava'i, Sultan Husayn Bayqara, Muhammad Shaybani, Zahir-ud-din Muhammad Babur, and Shah Gharib Mirza, are often mentioned in literary works. The promulgation of the Afghan Constitution has sparked a growing interest in writing in Afghan-Uzbek. (Khan, 1874) In addition, there are various privately owned and government-run radio and television networks that broadcast a wide variety of content. Additionally, there are many newspapers and journals that publish information in the original language. The nation's intellectual and artistic scenes are thriving. This development brings optimism for the future of Afghan-Uzbek literature. Faryab Province is the primary hub for the creation of Afghan-Uzbek literature. Contemporary Turkish Dialects and Literatures have been neglected due to restrictions in research and study. A more comprehensive investigation is needed to explore the unexplored domain of Afghan Uzbek literature. I desire to witness this deserving region achieve enduring security and tranquility, much like how Rumi serves as the origin of Sufi leaders who prioritize human benevolence and tolerance. My vision is for Afghanistan to rapidly transform into a tranquil sanctuary. Review of the Afghan conflict dynamics and the actions taken by Uzbekistan's leadership in the

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mid-1990s reveals that armed conflicts in neighboring countries had a substantial influence on the development of Uzbekistan's foreign policy and national security strategy (Toplu, 2017). The establishment of the National Security Council in 1995 had a crucial role in safeguarding Uzbekistan's defense and security during that period. In addition, the formation of the Academy of the Armed Forces in 1995 ensured the provision of defense and security for the nation. The Military Doctrine (1995), the Law "On the Basic Principles of Foreign Policy of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (1996), and the Law "On Approval of the National Security Concept of the Republic of Uzbekistan" (1997) were legislative acts that addressed the situation in Afghanistan and the threats it posed to Uzbekistan's security. The 2012 Foreign Policy Concept of Uzbekistan gave significant attention to the Afghan problem and placed a strong emphasis on it.

In 1994, a dedicated United Nations mission was established in response to the escalating impact of the Afghan conflict on the security and stability of Central and South Asia. Uzbekistan played a crucial part in this endeavor. In September 1995, a specialized meeting-seminar focusing on security and collaboration in Central Asia took place in Tashkent, Uzbekistan. The focus of the conversation revolved around the situation in Afghanistan. Uzbekistan proposed many recommendations during the 50th session of the UN General Assembly in October 1995, with the goal of reducing the violence in Afghanistan. An essential recommendation was to enforce a prohibition on the importation of firearms into the country. The European Parliament passed a resolution on January 16, 1996, regarding the state of affairs in Afghanistan. This resolution incorporated the majority of the recommendations put forth by Uzbekistan. In June 1996, the United States imposed an arms embargo on Afghanistan (Khan, 1874). On December 17, 1996, the Council of Europe implemented a "Common Position" that includes a prohibition on the provision of weapons to Afghanistan. It is important to note that Uzbekistan proposed these ideas in the early 1990s, taking into account the worsening conditions in Afghanistan. The withdrawal of the former Soviet Army from Afghanistan in 1989, the global interest in the country diminished, and the significance of events occurring there decreased. The United States has initiated the gradual reduction of its participation in the Afghan conflict. In March 1990, Congress received testimony regarding the necessity of allocating substantial funds and time for the reconstruction of Afghanistan after the war. Consequently, they supported a position against interference in domestic matters of a nation. The US's approach in Afghanistan during the 1990s, mostly influenced by its ties with Pakistan, lacked a strong national interest as its driving force.

## Review of literature

In the early 20th century, Tashkent emerged as the focal point for scholarly investigation into our languages, literature, history, ethnography, and certain aspects of oral tradition. The establishment of academic orientalism research facilities at Tashkent National University and the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan facilitated the progress of this field of study. The academic works on the culture of Afghan people in Uzbekistan started with publication of the following two works: *Translation of Afghan language* by A. Effimov (Effimov, 2011) and *Grammar and Vocabulary of Pashto Language* by Tumannovich. Researchers argue that the former is a textbook which was intended to teach Pashto. Researchers have determined that the former is a didactic guide specifically designed for teaching Pashto. This textbook, published in Tashkent in 1907, comprises more than six hundred terms accompanied by their respective pronunciations and definitions. Its focus is on the dialects spoken in Central Asia. A year later, the Pashto Language Grammar and Vocabulary was also released in Tashkent within the same category. Linguists assert that the latter encompasses specific grammatical

components (Hazara, 1912). The Russian translation of the book "A Guide to Qatghan and Badakhshan" was published in Tashkent in 1926. Later researchers have regarded M.S. Andreev's study on the etiquette, traditions, and the distinctive Dari Persian pronunciation of the inhabitants of the Panjshir valley as an innovative and influential resource. The research findings were published under the title "Ethnology of Afghanistan: Panjshir Valley" in Tashkent in 1927. Data was collected throughout the user's four-month stay in Afghanistan. The initial section of the introduction to Afghan literature is significantly influenced by the scholarly contributions of two additional experts, Aziz Nialov and Kashivarov. Their publications predominantly center on the social and developmental facets of Afghan literature. The essay authored by Kashivarov bears the title "Kabul's Poets." This work focuses on the translation of printed poetry from Kabul magazine in 1932 into Russian. The analysis examines the prosodic elements of these poems and focuses on the linguistic idiosyncrasies of the Kabuli dialect. This work was published in the literary journal of Uzbekistan, particularly in issues 4-5 of 1945, in Tashkent (Akyuz, 2012). Aziz Nialov examines the innovative verse of 17th-century poets Khushal Khan Khattak and Abd al-Rahman Moomand in Star of the East, namely in issue number 3 published in 1946. Nialov draws comparisons between Pashtun and Menjanies of Pamir narratives and expresses admiration for Afghan collections of folktales such as National Anthem and National Mirror. Additionally, in 1949, he authored another article on Afghanistan which was published in the Uzbek Academy of Science magazine. Tashkent has authored many publications covering various cultural subjects, as well as essays and articles pertaining to Afghanistan's history, geography, anthropology, agriculture, and economy. The essay titled "On Afghanistan Agriculture" authored by A. A. Guarisci was published in Tashkent in 1927. The primary subject of the essay revolved around the cultivation of cotton in Afghanistan. In 1950, N. G. Sapinco completed his doctoral dissertation in Tashkent, which specifically examined the topographical and economic situation of Afghanistan. Research on Afghan culture underwent a new phase in the latter part of the 20th century, building upon the existing materials. However, the concluding years of the preceding era established the foundation for this productive phase (Qarash, 2015). The Independent Oriental Faculty, founded in 1944, served as a subsidiary of Tashkent State University. The foundation was established for the inclusion of Afghanology and other oriental languages in this university program. In addition to instructing Persian Dari, the faculty also commenced teaching Pashto, which was incorporated into the curriculum as an independent course in 1948. Professor Baqi Khalidov was appointed to teach this topic. The curriculum of the Persian Dari department of the Faculty of Oriental Studies incorporated the study of Pashto language and literature, as stated earlier. Tashkent State University's Oriental Studies Faculty has recently established a dedicated department focused on the teaching and research of Pashto language and literature. Abd-al-Hafiz Qanirov, after finishing his postgraduate studies in orientalism in Moscow, returned to Tashkent and began teaching at the Oriental Studies Faculty (Aymak, 1980). This marked a great advancement in the field of Afghan studies in Uzbekistan. He revamped the curriculum for Afghan studies and immediately began teaching. Aref Osman, a former student of the Pashto department of the Oriental Studies Faculty, recalls the anticipation among the students for the homecoming of their young teacher, Abd-al-Hafiz Qanirov, in 1955. Qanirov commenced teaching pupils in the fields of contemporary and classical Afghan literature. The first group of students successfully finished their studies in the Pashto department in 1957. Dr. Aref Osman, a meticulous scholar of Eastern cultures, was also part of their group. Initially, there were five individuals, but the number of graduates in the second generation increased to eight. The teaching of languages, literature, and culture of Afghanistan

continued in the Dari-Pashto Department and Afghan Philology Department. Professor Abd-al-Rahim Mannanov, a renowned Uzbek scholar, is widely acknowledged for his extensive expertise and research in the field of Afghan studies. Additionally, he holds a degree in Afghan philology. He commenced his professional journey at the Oriental Studies Faculty as a lecturer specializing in Pashto literature, Pashtun folklore, and the Dari language. He shown determination and used diligent effort to attain expertise in philology.

### **Instructive role of Afghan philology**

The Afghan Philology Department at the Faculty of Oriental Studies made a significant contribution by promoting Afghan culture through the instruction of Pashto and Dari languages. In the latter half of the twentieth century, the education and exploration of Afghan philology resulted in the development of a skilled cohort of students who played a pivotal role in promoting Afghan culture. They achieved this by producing scholarly works on languages, literature, and different facets of Afghan culture. Several of these students pursued further education in the same discipline and secured positions in academic institutions in Uzbekistan, specifically the Academy of Sciences and Tashkent State University, thereby contributing to the growth of Afghan studies in Uzbekistan (Qarash, 2015). In the 1960s, teachers specializing in Afghan philology at Uzbekistan's universities had the authority to oversee doctoral applicants in several cultural disciplines, particularly literature and the Pashto and Dari languages. The dissertations of these candidates were finished in the 1970s. Aside from Uzbek students, individuals from Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Russia, and other former Soviet Republics also pursued education in this particular discipline and successfully completed their studies. Philologists from Afghanistan residing in Uzbekistan have introduced modern and up-to-date research methodologies, as well as innovative problem-solving techniques and approaches to interpreting facts and phenomena, through their dissertations and other research publications (Qarash, 2015). Through their significant study endeavors, they familiarized Uzbek and Russian speakers with Afghan culture and languages, and generated several literary works in their respective languages. Additionally, they translated avant-garde and traditional works from Afghanistan into these two languages, particularly Uzbek, in order to familiarize people from Central Asia and Russian speakers with the fundamental aspects of classical and modern innovative literature, as well as Afghan folklore (Asiryana, 2019).

### **Laying the foundations for bilateral cooperation**

Uzbekistan possesses robust border control capabilities due to its 210-kilometer border with Afghanistan. However, it has expressed apprehensions regarding potential security risks originating from Afghanistan. The Uzbek government is concerned about the acts of the IMU and its steadfast objective of establishing "Islamic Khalifat" in Uzbekistan. The administration's endeavor to counteract threats emerging from Afghanistan has proven ineffective in utilizing CST procedures. In 1999 and 2012, it conducted inquiries into the possibility of establishing closer connections with NATO and the United States. It also briefly deviated from the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). While there may not be many ethnic connections between Uzbeks in Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, there are significant bonds among the upper echelons of society.<sup>14</sup> For instance, General Abdul Rashid Dustum, who leads the Uzbek community in Afghanistan, enjoys the endorsement of the Uzbek government. Uzbekistan provided assistance to Dustum and the United Front, often known as the Northern Alliance, in their efforts to combat the Taliban throughout the 1990s. (Effimov, 2011) As part of the TAPI plan, Uzbekistan concurrently attempted to establish financial connections with

the Taliban. However, the excitement may be dampened by apprehensions regarding security. Tajikistan is particularly optimistic about the prospects of its economy and is determined to overcome its transportation isolation. There is a total of 86 of them. Despite Uzbekistan having previously capitalized on several significant strategic opportunities, it remains cautious of any potential adverse consequences arising from South Asia (Akyuz, 2012). Kazakhstan is keen on enhancing its trade relations with South Asia and is prepared to allocate financial resources to Afghanistan. However, Kazakh specialists have a pessimistic outlook on the feasibility of developing these connections, as they believe that forging new relationships with Afghanistan and South Asia might bring significant advantages as well as difficulties. Since the signing of a cultural cooperation agreement between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan, the year 1957 has held significant importance in the history of the cultural ties between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. This agreement facilitated the establishment of mutually advantageous connections between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. The provisions of this agreement enhanced the bilateral relations between these two countries within a predetermined framework that encompassed the following areas:

After 1957, a significant influx of Afghan students migrated to Uzbekistan with the aim of pursuing further studies in many fields of modern science. University professors from Afghanistan were included in this group of students. Several individuals, like Mohammad Taher Alami, a lecturer at Kabul University, and Abdul Hakim Sharei Jouzjani, Abdul-Jabbar Moomand, and Abdul-Sattar Khan, who were all lecturers at Nangarhar University, pursued degrees in literature and psychology. In a similar manner, Uzbek scholars pursued the study of Pashto at Kabul University in order to improve their expertise and effectively instruct their students in the language (Qarash, 2015). Notable individuals who embraced this technique include Mr. Oralov (1965), Mr. Sadr-al Dinov (1965–1966), Aref Othman (1958), and Abdul Rahim Mananov (1965). Several Afghan professors and lecturers took part in a faculty exchange program linking Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. After finishing their retraining, they engaged in studying in various academic settings, including academic centers and libraries, in order to refine their research abilities. Uzbek scholars made use of the libraries located in Afghan university facilities to advance their scientific and scholarly endeavors (Khan, 1874). These scholars have also occasionally acted as interpreters for Afghan development initiatives. Additionally, they gained advantages from the expertise and insights of Afghan researchers. At that time, a delegation of professors from Kabul University journeyed to Tashkent with the purpose of doing study and imparting knowledge on Afghan languages, literature, and culture inside the department of Afghan philology. Professor Mananov and Lecturer Qanirov have noted that distinguished Afghan experts have been invited to Tashkent since 1957 to share their expertise in Pashto and Dari. This exemplifies the remarkable synergy of intellectual collaboration. During the 1980s, Uzbek academics such as Tala'at and Laleh Karimuva relocated from Tashkent to Kabul University in order to instruct. The Uzbek language was incorporated into the curriculum of Afghanistan in 1978. Dr. Aref Othman and other distinguished Uzbek intellectuals were transported to Kabul with the purpose of providing direction and assistance to authors of Uzbek language textbooks. Dr. Aref Othman was invited to join the writing and translation team of the Afghan Ministry of Education. He then served as a consultant at the international Pashto research center of the Afghanistan Academy of Sciences for an extended period of time. This age was characterized by the transmission of knowledge through spoken word, the translation of important Afghan literary works, and the intellectual advancement led by Uzbek

professors. In 1957, the Uzbek State Publication Company translated Pashto Tales into Uzbek language with the aim of acquainting Uzbek readers with Afghan literature. Hossein Aliov and Abdul-Hafiz Qanirov were the translators of the work. In 1958, Abdul-Hafiz Qanirov released a translation of two works of poetry and fiction originating from Afghanistan. Furthermore, scholarly research and literature produced by Uzbek scholars were translated from Russian and Uzbek languages into Pashto and Dari languages prior to their publication (Qarash, 2015). The Afghans persisted in this practice for an extended duration. In the 1980s, the authors' unions of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan formed strong bonds of collaboration and alliance. This relationship enhanced the opportunity for individuals in Afghanistan to acquaint them with Uzbek literature. Zhvandung, the authorized publication of the Afghan Writers Association, has published exclusive editions featuring Uzbek literature translated into Pashto and Dari. Furthermore, Uzbekistan has sent invitations to delegations of Afghan poets and writers. Uzbekistan's authors' groups have traditionally extended a warm reception to Afghan scholars, poets, and writers as guests. Presently, the literary works of Uzbek intellectuals can be found in Pashto and Russian languages in both temporary and permanent publishing houses in Kabul (Qarash, 2015). The professors have published their research on linguistic and literary matters related to the Afghan people in both their native Pashto language and Russian. During the 1980s, the Tashkent branch of the Raduga Publication Company disseminated Russian literary and cultural works created by Soviet authors throughout Afghanistan. Prior to the establishment of the official cultural accord in the first half of the 20th century, representatives from both sides often attended each other's conferences and seminars. In 1946, a delegation of Afghan intellectuals, led by Sarvar Guya and Professor Habibi Dr. Mohammad Anas, participated in the 25th anniversary commemoration of Tashkent University. Abdul Hai Habibi may have finished his book "The Art of Timurid Era" following his participation in the 1969 symposium on the subject in Samarqand. Afghan intellectuals played a significant role in several global gatherings during the latter part of the 20th century, including the Congress of Orientalists, conferences for Afro-Asian writers, and seminars focused on renowned authors like Ali Shir Navai. As a reciprocal arrangement, researchers from Uzbekistan participated in seminars provided in Afghanistan (Khan, 2005). These events occurred in Uzbekistan. G'afur G'ulom, a well-known Uzbek poet, attended a seminar held to celebrate Jami's 550th birthday. At the seminar, he participated in intellectual discussions with Afghan intellectuals and presented a lecture titled "Abdul Rahman bin Ahmad Jami: The Esteemed Intellectual and Poet of the Eastern World." Subsequently, this work was included in the conference's compilation of papers. The Ministry of Information and Culture organized a manuscript seminar in Kabul from July 31 to August 4, 1967. Esteemed Uzbek academics such as Qayyumudin Monirov, Ezzat Soltanov, and Abdullah Karimov, along with orientalist and manuscript experts from various countries, participated in this symposium and delivered presentations in multiple sessions. Dr. Arif Osamanov, a renowned Afghanistan specialist, participated in discussions regarding the biographies and achievements of Ali Shir Navai, Zahir ud-din Babur, and Khushal Khan Khattak. (Osmanov, 1958) Additionally, he participated in a seminar pertaining to manuscripts. Dr. Abdul-Rahim Mannanov took part in the Main Faqir Allah Jalal-Abadi seminar in 1990, while Omer Zaq Zahidov was present in the Ferdowsi millennial conference.

### Radio Programs

In the early years of the 1990s, Radio Tashkent started broadcasting radio programs for Afghanistan in Afghan languages. This was another crucial step in the expansion of

cultural relationship between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan. Mrs. Rozeh Majiduna, head of Pashto and Dari Center of Radio Tashkent, through a letter and Mr. Abul Jabbar Moomand, the Afghan employee of this radio program, via a written interview, informed me that: "the first Pashto radio program was broadcasted on January 1st, 1991, on Radio Tashkent. Even after the collapse of Soviet Union and independence of Uzbekistan on September 1st, 1991, Dari and Pashto programs were still broadcasting. Afghan, Uzbek and Russian employees participated in producing this radio show. This radio show didn't last long."

### Conclusion

The present study examines the cultural interactions between Afghanistan and Uzbekistan, highlighting the substantial changes in these two countries' cultural linkages between previous and twentieth century. The program was launched using contemporary systems and evolved into two primary stages. At various points in the process, we encounter behaviors that have a big impact on its growth and facilitate the advancement of partnerships, which drives it forward. These crucial periods could be considered sub phases. The paper states that a new stage in the development of cultural relations between these two countries was initiated in the 20th century with the start of academic studies on Afghan culture in Tashkent. Language instruction at Tashkent University's Oriental Studies Faculty has created a strong and enduring bond between Dari and Pashto. Additionally, it has greatly benefited the training of Afghanologists and the advancement of Afghan philology research. The signing of the Cultural Agreement between the Soviet Union and Afghanistan further fueled the expansion of connections between Uzbekistan and Afghanistan, strengthening their cultural relations. Furthermore, the provision of media services had a pivotal role in fortifying the cultural bonds between the two groups, culminating in noteworthy accomplishments as they entered the twenty-first century. Even in the face of violence and unrest, the Uzbeks in Afghanistan harbor a deep feeling of nostalgia for the affluent Timurid, Shaybanid, and Baburid eras. They view the literary works of Chagatai as trustworthy sources as a result. Contemporary Afghan-Uzbek and Chagatai literature are inextricably linked. Different groups have developed within the Uzbek minority in Afghanistan as a result of political, cultural, and geographical factors, especially when it comes to language and literature. As we've already covered, these areas are more distinctive because to the limitations on communication, mobility, and technology.

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