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Sufism, handicrafts, and trade in Kashmir during fourteenth and fifteenth centuries

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Abstract

The Concern of writing the present paper is to trace the developments in the field of trade and handicrafts in Kashmir during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. This article will highlight how Sufism shaped the handicraft technology and facilitated Kashmir's trade relations with Central Asia. The fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were the period when Muslims from central Asia inflexed Kashmir as rulers, military adventures, traders, and mystics (Sufis). The Sufis of Central Asia were themselves skilled in various handicrafts. They came to Kashmir with central Asian culture and taught it to the local people of Kashmir which the later incorporated in their life style.

Keywords: Sultans of Kashmir, Sufism, handicrafts, central Asian trade

Introduction

Foundation of Sultanate in Kashmir opened doors for Sufis influx to Kashmir

The rise of Islam in Arabia and its spread to Europe is itself a testament to the strong military strategy of Muslims. Later large parts of Central Asia, including Persia up to the boarders of China, became part of Arab rule. Kashmir had close cultural contact with Central Asia and thus Islamic influence was seen in Kashmir as well. The Hindu rulers of Kashmir were very impressed with the administrative work of the Muslims, and because of this they were recruiting people from Swat (located in Kashmir's neighboring northwest) for their military services. In 1323 Kashmir witnessed the invasion of Zulju^[1] (Turkish invasion), ^[2] the ruler of Kashmir, Suh Dev, ^[3] fled to the mountains ^[4] of Ladakh and left the people at the mercy of the invaders. Again in 1326, Kashmir was distressed by a Turkish invasion of Accala, and Udayana Dev, the ruler of Kashmir, fled in fear to Tibet ^[5]. In such turmoil, Shah Mir, ^[6] a Muslim from swat ^[7] valley employed in Hindu military strategy and the support of the common people eventually helped him become the Muslim ruler of Kashmir and in 1339 laid the foundation of Sultanate in Kashmir.

An important factor in the establishment of Muslim rule in Kashmir was greater movement and activity on trade route to Western and Central Asia. Contact with the Persian civilization in particular became quite close, and linguist barriers were crossed on a broad front. The Sultan's made Kashmir their home and never returned to their native land. They enriched Kashmir culturally and their generosity to common masses prompted them to send the people of Kashmir to Samarkand and Bukhara on the state expanse for getting mastery over arts and crafts of Central Asia. In those days, the glory of Samarkand and Bukhara, which were centers of Art and crafts sung all over the Islamic world and the arts and crafts of those places penetrated every nook and corner of central Asia. The liberal patronage of the Sultans of Kashmir attracted large number of learned men and artisans from Central Asia to Kashmir ^[9]. Among them were a good number of Sufis who were men of art and craft.

The mystic tendencies in Kashmir

The first literal evidence of Sufis in Kashmir is related to Mohi-ud-Din Bulbul Qalandar^[10] who came to Kashmir a few years before Shah Mir in 1339 laid the foundation of Sultanate in Kashmir. Rinchana^[11] a Buddhist ruler of Kashmir under the influence of Mohi-ud-Din Bulbul Qalandar, was the first to convert to Islam at his hands^[12].

The next important famous Sufi Sayyid Ali Hamadani came to Kashmir during the reign of Sultan Qutb-du Din (1373-1389)^[13]. The famous Shawl industry of Kashmir was founded by Syed Ali Hamadani in 1383.

He brought shawl weaving techniques from Turkistan to Kashmir and shawl wool (limpid fleece of kid goat) from Greater Tibet (Ladakh) ^[14]. Shawl-wool or pashmina sheets (locally known as *Pattu*), he presented to Sultan Qutb-ud-Din (1373-1389). The Sultan was surprised to feel its warmth and softness and immediately ordered shawl wool from merchants of Greater Tibet, from which bundles of sheets (*Pattu*) were spun every year to make cloth. After that, officials and rich people started wearing clothes made of Pashmina sheets (*Pattu*) ^[15]. The Shawl was a popular garment for Sufis and *Dervishes* (a member of a Muslim religious group) ^[16]. Kings, nobles, Sufis took pride in using Pashmina cloth and respected it very much ^[17].

Another Sufi Mir Sayyid Muhammad Hamadni son of Sayyid Ali Hamadani came to Kashmir during the Sultan Sikendar (1389-1413)^[18] with three thousand disciples. A large number of them were skilled in various handicrafts. Wherever they went to preach Islam in Kashmir, they also taught handicraft techniques to the local people [19]. Among other Sufi personalities, Amir Sayyid Ahmad Madani, Shavkh Jalal Bukhari from Bukhara, Baba Haji Adam from Balakh, Baba Hasan Mantaqi blessed this land with cultural and spiritual teachings ^[20]. Sultan Sikendar granted villages, hamlets, habitations, and houses to the every Ulma, the learned, the ascetic, the pious, the noble, the Sayyid and it was he who created the post of Shaykhu'l- Islam in this land ^[21]. The Sultan created a sophisticated environment to assimilate new cultural innovations in Kashmir. During the reign of Zain-ul-Abdins (1420-1470) also a large number of Sufi saints flourished such as Shayakh Bahaud-Din Kashmiri, Shavakh Sultan Kubra, Shavkh Nur-ud-din Rishi Mir Majzoob, Shaykh Zain-ud-Din Rishi, Maulana Nur-ud-Din, Mir Savid Mednai and Savvid Hasan and Savvid Hasan Bilad Rum^[22]. These Sufis promoted Central Asian culture in Kashmir. They succeed in enlightening the hearts of the people not only by adorning the world with the faith of Islam through preaching and advice, but also through artistic activates. It was during Zain-ul-Abdins reign that major handicraft industries including Silk-weaving ^[23] were introduced (with the introduction of such craftsmen), so Kashmiris could skillfully operate the shuttles and the looms and thus weave a valuable and attractive silk fabrics ^[24]. Other handicraft techniques introduced by Zain-ul-Abdins include silk Printing, (printing with accurate images of bracelets and other ornament designs), the Art of embroidery ^[25] and further improved the techniques of making Pashmina shawl by introducing the Kani shawl [26]. The Kani shawl technique was new to Kashmir and was woven in colored threads with the help of small wooden sticks (Tujje). Embroidery work and shawl weaving was done simultaneously on the same loom ^[27] according to the script (Talim) written by scriptwriter (talimgur). Carpet weaving, Paper Mache, jewelry, silver work, copper work, wood work, boat making, and leather industries were also introduced in Kashmir during his reign. Whenever a traveler (mostly a mystic) came to Kashmir, questions were asked whether he was skilled in any art and crafts. If he knew a craft, intelligent people were asked to learn it from him ^[28]. During these days no one in this land knows the art of paper- making and book-Binding. Zain-ul-Abdin sent intelligent and sharp-witted persons to Samarqand at state expense ^[29]. They stayed in the city for some time and learned the art of paper making and book-binding ^[30]. After mastering these crafts, they returned to Kashmir and taught

these crafts to the local people ^[31]. Mirza Haider Dughlat writes about patronage of art and crafts by sulatan Zain-ul-Abdin of Kashmir in these words "*In Kashmir one meets with all those arts and crafts which are, in most cities, such as stone polishing, stone cutting (Tabdan-Turash), goldbeating etc. In the whole of Mavara-un-Nahr, except in Samarkand and Bokhara, these are nowhere to be met with, while in Kashmir they are even abundant. This all is due to sultan Zain-ul-Abdin ^[32]."*

Thus, many professional and skillful artists and craftsmen from Central Asia settled in Kashmir ^[33] such as Kaghazgir (paper maker or dealer) and developed Kaghaz-Khana (paper mill) in Kashmir, Sahhaf (Book Binder), Qalain-Baf (maker of carpets), Qalicha (a small carpets called Khilat), Zin-Saz(saddle maker) ^[34], Jild-gar (Book Binder), Qalam-Dan-Saz (Pen-case maker), ^[35] Muhraha Saz (Seal maker), Atish Baz ^[36] (Fire worker) invented the gun in this country and these artists were paid monthly salary to teach the crafts to interested people ^[37]. In modern times, we have many occupational castes living in Kashmir like Kaghazgir, Sahhaf, Qalain-Baf, Zin-Saz, Jild-gar, Qalam-Dan-Saz, ^[38] Muhraha Saz, Atish Baz whose ancestors migrated to Kashmir from Central Asia in medieval times.

Opening of new commercial routes

This regular influx from Central Asia opened new trade routes that not only stimulated Kashmir's economy and connect it to central Asia through Ladakh junction, ^[39] but also had a profound cultural impact on the common life of Kashmir. Traders travelled from Khulm to Balkh, from Balkh to Bokhara, from Bokhara to Samarkand, Samarkand to Kokan, Kokan to Kashghar, Kashghar to Yarkand, Yarkand to Tibet, Tibet to Kashmir. There was also a highway leading from Kashmir to Khorasan, which was so difficult that it was impossible for beasts of burden to be driven along it, so the natives, who were accustomed too much work, carry the loads on their shoulders for several days, until they reached a place where it was possible to load a horse ^[40]. Kashmiri traders took a keen interest in lucrative trade activates and developed their markets in various parts of Central Asia, where they adopted their food habit, dress, taste in music and brought it to Kashmir. Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin constructed many open houses at padmpura (pampore), open house at vijayeswara (Bijebehara) where free cooked food was served to travelers, traders both Hindus and Muslims^[41] so the people coming from central Asia were given all facilities.

The Caravan traders and travellers brought goods into Kashmir or took them out of Kashmir for trade were given security and robbers and highway men were quelled by the sultan so tactfully that the travellers could stay in far flung forests even with the ease and comfort of their own homes [42].

Export trade

Kashmir exports Khurasan, Samarkand, Bukhara and other Central Asian states Shawls^[43], Kani pashmina, Bed Shirts, wooden boxes, varieties of leather, raw silk, medicine, *Surahi* (a long-necked flask), *Jorab* (Stocking) i.e. shoe made of grass locally called *Polhur*, pen boxes, skin of wild animals, varieties of *Pattu* (warm woolen cloth), wooden shoe locally called *Khraw*, Intoxicants drug, Bhang powder (Cannabis), *Suhaga* (Borax)^[44], *Siyah Zira* (Black cumin seed)^[45], *Post Khashkhash* (poppy seeds)^[46], *Aftimun* medicine (Dodder of thyme), Saffron, and *Pattu Chagaa* (woolen garment)^[47].

Import Trade

Whereas the trading articles that were imported from Khurasan, Samarkhand, Tibet, Khotan, Turkistan, and other central Asian states include Kam-khwab or Zar-baft (Brocade or embroidered cloth with gold), yarn, jewels, tea, misri^[48] or Siyah-Qand (egyptian sugar), china ware, china cups, Pa-posh (shoes), Multani Qalin (costly carpets). Chav-Dan^[49] (tea pot) - locally it is called Samavor, Rangin resham (colored silk), sheep wool (Awan), Afvun (opium), Irani pen, Namdah^[50] (a garment of coarse cloth), For silk worm the eggs were brought from Gilgit and little Tibet^[51]. There could not develop the good breeding of horses in Kashmir and the people rode on gunts (ponies) ^[52]. The gunts were having thick shoulders and had his weathers near ground, owing to it could not run faster [53]. However long and agile Iraqi and Turki horses were brought by way of rare gifts for their rulers ^[54].

Changing Morphology of cities and development of new urban towns of art and crafts:

With the arrival of Muslims in Kashmir, the morphology of the cities changed and new urban centers developed as administrative units, center of art and crafts. These new urban centers accommodated intellectuals, scholars, theologians, artisans, and travelers from Central Asian to Kashmir. They were generously bestowed with Jagir's (land grants), and the Sultans of Kashmir included them in their administrative units, to develop Kashmir into prospers center politically, culturally and socially. As in ancient times, Srinagar became royal residence for Sultans of Kashmir and extensive urbanization took place around it. Sultan Alaud-Din (1343-1354) founded the famous urban town of Alaud-Din Pora [55] and built fruit gardens within the town, ^[56] and rebuilt the towns devastated by the Zulja invasion^[57]. Sultan Shabud-Din (1354-1373) built the town of Shihabud-Din Pora [58] in consultation with his queen Lakshmi, ^[59] and made it his Daru-l-Hukumat (royal residence) [60] consisting of one thousand military camps [61] and sixty thousand houses [62]. A magnificent Mosque [63] and many Madrasa's and market were built within the town, making it a town of Islamic culture, with many Sufis later settling in the place. Qutb-ud Din Pora [64] was the famous town built by sultan Qutub-ud Din [65]. During his reign, the famous Sufi Sayyid Ali Hamadani came to Kashmir in 1381, along with a large ^[66] number of Sufis from Persia, Iran and Khurasan all settled in newly built town Qutb-ud pora, ^[67] and developed it culturally a center of learning and literature. The sultan also built Khangah-i-Maullah and attached a free kitchen to it and it was thronged with people of all castes and classes [68]. Sultan Skindar, built the town of Navata ^[69] (present-day Nowhetta) ^[70] for his residence. There he build a magnificent palace, the like of which did not exist before. A lofty Jami Mosque was also build inside this town and the architect of this mosque was Sadrud-Din Khurasani who came to this land from Khurasan^[71] and the architect Sayyid Mohammad Luristani^[72].

Much of the urbanization took place during the reign of Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin. As the city Srinagar was situated on the bank of river Jhelum and was devastated most of the time by the over flow water from the Vitasta (river Jhelum). The city was the center of art and crafts and shawl industry,

the silk industry were all settled in same city. Apart from travelers, intellectuals, scholars from central Asia were given residence in the same city. Considering the disastrous consequences of the flood, Sultan Zain-ul-Abdin built new settlements on the higher reaches of the river and thus settlements of Zaina Tilaka verily an embellishing ornament of the country came into existence ^[73]. Other towns built by Sultan include Zaina Nagar which is identified with Naushehra ^[74] founded in 1439.AD, known as the new Darul-Khilafat (royal residence), surprised the (former) seat of the kings, ^[75] and within this new town, a magnificent twelve-storied royal palace Zandab^[76] (popularly known as Razdan)^[77] was constructed with fifty rooms in each story ^[78]. Each of its room was large enough to accommodate five hundred people^[79]. Military generals and commanders were given houses for residence in that area ^[80]. Apart from these, other scholars and high ranking Sayyids like sayyid Muhammad Madani, Mulla parsa, Maulana Kabir who later become sheikh-ul-Islam, and intellectual Brahmans^[81] were also given dwelling place in that locality ^[82]. Sultan also built a Madrasah in the same capital ^[83]. Under the influence of Sufis, the Sultans built mosques, madrasa's, and Khanqas and therefore adorned the new towns with new architecture styles. Other towns of Sultan were Zainpora, Zainkot, Zainabad, Zaingir, ^[84] Jainalanka, ^[85] Zain Kadal, Zain Bazar (from Zain kadal to Nahid kadal he built the markets where urban handicrafts and daily use items were brought from different places and sold here) [86].

Conclusion

The foundation of the Sultanate in Kashmir in 1339 opened doors of Kashmir to Central Asian traders, travelers, administrative officials, and Sufis. Sufis were skilled in various art and crafts. Those migrated to Kashmir were given land grants and settled permanently in Kashmir. They were well versed in different art and crafts which they taught to the local people of Kashmir. Along with this, local people were also encouraged and stipends were provided to study such crafts abroad. Their families were taken care by the government and sent to Samarkand and Bukhara to learn handicrafts. Accordingly, new arts and crafts were introduced in Kashmir from central Asia. The people of Kashmir also warmly welcomed the Central Asian culture and made it a part of their life. The common culture shared by Kashmir and Central Asia made both of them satisfied and it is the reason that Kashmir remained part of central Asia culture for a long epoch. This contact helped the people of Kashmir to explore new economic avenues and conversely many Kashmiris also settled in different parts of Central Asia and worked as traders, and artisans.

References

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- Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, A Chronicle of Mediaeval Kashmir, Eng.tr, K.N.Pandit, Gulshan Books, Residency Road Srinagar-190001 Kashmir India, 2013, pp. 13-16; Pir Hassan Shah Khuihami, Tarikh-i-Hassan, Urdu trn by Sharieef Hussain

Qasmi,Vol, ii. Ali Mohamd and sons, Srinagar Kashmir, 2012, p. 164, Mir Zulja or Zul Qadir Khan was grandchild of Halagu from his daughters line, his incursion on Kashmir took during the reign of Suha Dev, which causes disastrous and catastrophic and whole sale massacre of Kashmiri's. Men were killed, women and children were made prisoner and sold to the merchants and traders of Cathy who had accompanied his troops. But on the account of cold Zulja along with his troops and prisoners, decided to proceed towards Hindustan. While reaching to out skirt mountain of Kashmir heavy rain and snow perished all the Turkish soldiers along with prisoners and nobody survived.

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- 5. Ain-i-Akbari, Vol II, p. 21.
- 6. Ain-i-Akbari. Vol II, pp. 12-13. Known as Shamsu'd-Din Shah Mir, a descendant of the Swadgir, came to the kingdom of Kashmir during the reign of Suhdev. An important feature of Suha Deva's reign was that during his reign many people from central Asia came into Kashmir and played significant role in its promonent affairs. Suha Dev was munificent in providing means of subsistence to the outsiders who entered the valley in search of employment. Shah Mir, Luhar Chak from Dardu and Rinchana from Tibet were the three influential outsiders who came to Kashmir in in search of employment during Suha Devas reign. They later took over the government of Kashmir and became the rulers of Kashmir.
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- 8. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.22. Shah Mir made truce with the Turks to quite the land. During this disturbance created by Accalaa the people of Kashmir found a protector in shah Mir, and most of the area of Kashmir came under his control.
- 9. Srivara's, Rajatarangini Z. Eng.tr. J.C. Dutt, peoples publishing house, New Delhi; c1994. p. 236.
- 10. Waqiat-i Kashmir, Vol. I, pp. 53-54
- 11. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, II, p.169.
- 12. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p. 17-19. Rinchana a Ladkhi Buddhist ruled Kashmir when Suhadeva fled fearing of a invasion by Zulchus. He was the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir. It is said that he was in search of a peaceful religion and once he saw Bulbul shah in the morning who was offering prayers. Rinchana approached bulbul shah and bulbul shah told him about the virtues Islam and he embraced Islam. As there was not any force involved in his embracing to Islam, same was followed by his servants and other officers and they too embraced Islam.
- 13. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.28; Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. ii, p. 382.
- 14. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol. I, pp. 426, 428.
- 15. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol. I, pp. 426, 428.
- 16. Fazl A, Ain-i-Akbari, 3 volumes, Vol. I, English translation by H. Blochman, Asiatic Society of Bengal, Calcutta, 1873, vol. I, p. 96; Abdul Qadir Badauni, Muntakhabu't Tawarikh, ed. Ali Ahmad and W. N. Lees, Bib. Ind., 3 volumes, Calcutta, 1864-69, Eng. tr.

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- 18. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol. I, pp. 30-31.
- 19. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol. I, p.36.
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- 21. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.38.
- 22. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.59.
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- 24. Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, p.237.
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- 28. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.50.
- 29. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p. 50. Their families and children were provided with means of subsistence from the state exchequer, and they themselves during their travel to Samarqand.
- Malik Haidar Chodora, MS, Research and publication division Srinagar, Kashmir, Acc.No.39. F.41a; Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p.50.
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- 32. Dughlat MH, Tarikh-i-Rashidi, English Translation, by Denison Ross with notes by Nevy Elias. Patna: Academic Asiatica, 1973, P. 434 Jahangir, The Jahangirnama: Memoirs of Jahangir, Emperor of India, Eng. trnsl, Wheeler. M. Thackston, Oxford University Press, 1999, p. 334; The Jehangir Nama, p. 334; Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, p.40.
- 33. Tarikh-i-Hassan,Vol, ii, p. 196. Excellent crafts men were attracted towards the courts of the Sultans of Kashmir and the later provided them Jagirs (Land grants). It is the time when men of art thronged Kashmir from Transoxina, Khurasan, Samarkand, Bukhara, and with their talent adorned Kashmir with different arts and crafts.
- 34. Waqiat-i Kashmir, Vol.I, p.81.
- 35. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.196.
- 36. Tabaqat-i-AKBARI, voll.iii, p.657; Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.196.
- 37. Waqiat-i Kashmir, p.82; Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.196.
- 38. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.196.
- Ladakh consolidated its status as an entre-pot on the central Asian trade route between Kashmir and Turkistan.
- 40. Tarikh-i-Rashidi, P. 432.
- 41. Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, pp.189, 202.
- 42. Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, p.20.
- 43. Ain-i-Akbari, Vol. ii, p. 353.
- 44. Tarikh-i-Hassan,Vol, i, p.487. Sunga a white mineral, usually in powder form, used in making glass and as an Antiseptic.
- 45. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, I, p.487. Siyah Zira, black cumin seed, a dried seeds used in cocking as spices.
- 46. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, I, p.488. Poppy seeds used in

making bakery.

- 47. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, I, p.488.
- 48. Tarikh-i-Hassan,Vol, i, p.488. Misri (treacle) a thick black sweet sticky liquid produced when sugar is refined i.e. made pure. It is used in cocking.
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- 61. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shah, p.27.
- 62. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.178; Waqiat-i Kashmir, p.59.
- 63. Waqiat-i Kashmir p.61.
- 64. Baharistan-i Shahi, p.28.
- 65. Waqiat-i Kashmir, p.62. Diddamari has mentioned that Sayyid Ali Hamadni was accompanied by 700 companions.
- 66. Waqiat-i Kashmir, p. 62.
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- 72. Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, pp.115-118.
- 73. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, p.190-191.
- 74. Srivara's, Zaina Rajatarangini, p.183. Seat of government was shifted to this place. From outskirts of Hari -Parbat, this new capital extended Lal Bazar, Nowshera, Soura area of Srinagar.
- 75. Tarikh-i-Hassan, Vol, ii, pp. 190-191.
- 76. Tarikh-i-Rashidi, P. 429.
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- 83. Anonymous, Baharistan-i Shahi, p. 55.
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- 85. Waqiat-i Kashmir, p. 83.