
THE TURFAN MINARET INSCRIPTION: A SYMBOL OF CULTURAL CONFLUENCE ON THE SILK ROAD

By MOHAMMADBAGHER VOSOOGHI* and HASSAN KARIMIAN**

The corridors to the north and south of the Taklāmākān (塔克拉玛干 Ta-ke-la-ma-gan) Desert are the most important regions for cultural confluence on the Silk Road, where caravans made it to the Chinese capital or the Korean Peninsula by the northern road, through the city of Turfan, or the southern path of Khutan. Being an important part of the Silk Road in the course of history, this region was heavily influenced by the cultures of various nations and ethnic communities whose merchants utilized the road to advance their business. The region's language, writing system and literary structure were also affected, so much so that in the course of its tumultuous history, many words, phrases and terms belonging to neighboring cultures found their way into the region, leaving their mark on its linguistic structure. Of the cultural exchanges that took place between the peoples of the region, conspicuous traces can be seen in the architecture, music, literature, texts, and inscriptions. Located in the Turfan region, the minaret of Su Gong (苏公 Su Gong) is host to an inscription which bears many signs of such exchanges. As so far no independent research has been conducted to identify the cultural, literary and structural features conveyed in this inscription, the present paper is an attempt to study the inscription in terms of the script, language and syntax in order to unravel

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the effects of cultures prevalent on the Silk Road on this particular inscription. This study mainly aims to investigate the linguistic structure of the inscription and the impact of the Persian language on Silk Road culture. In fact, we approach the inscription as a symbol of cultural exchange on the Silk Road and will focus on the tradition of Persian inscription-making which affected the Turfan inscription.

Keywords: Turfan Minaret inscription, Silk Road, Iran and China cultural confluence

INTRODUCTION

With a great number of articles and books written on the subject, the confluence of cultures on the Silk Road is not a matter of obscurity. Since the history of relations and exchange under question is so ancient and Western and Eastern cultures are so diverse, these studies are yet to reach definite answers, leaving many questions open for debate. What became known as “the Silk Road” in the 19th century is actually a large part of the ancient land-routes that connected Persia to China and the Far East¹. The northern offshoot of the road crossed the Khwārazm and Karākorum regions, while its middle path passed through Merv, Bokhārā and Samarkand. Connecting Balkh, Tāleghān and Badakhshān, the northern road ended in Kāshgar (喀什噶尔 ka-shi-ga-er). Kāshgar played an important role on the route, going as far as to be named “the first border-city of China”² and “the frontier of the Abode of Islam”³ in some historical texts. As the city was situated next to the great desert of Taklāmākān (塔克拉玛干 Ta-ke-la-ma-gan), caravans, upon reaching Kāshgar, had to take a detour in order to avoid the desert. Here the road forked into two routes, both having Chāngān (the contemporary Xian), the capital of ancient China, as their destination. While the northern path reached Chāngān through Turfan (吐鲁番 tu-lu-fan), the southern path crossed Khutan (formerly called 于阗 yu-tian and, now, he-tian 和田) to reach the capital. The T’ien-shan (天山 T’ien-shan) Pamir (帕米尔 pa-mi-er) and Kunlun (昆仑 kun-lun) mountains, located in the north, west, and south of this great desert, respectively,

¹ Iran during the Achaemenian (550–330 BCE), Parthian (247 BCE – 224 CE), Sasanian (224 to 651 CE) and the early Islamic periods had common borders with China.

² Al-Ṭabarī, Muḥammad ibn Jarīr (1967), *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* (History of the Prophets and Kings), Beirut, Dār al-Torāth, vol. 6, p. 500.

³ Al-Sama’ani, Abu Saeed Abdulkarim al-Tamimi (1962). *Al-Ansab*. Abdurrahmān bin yahyā Al-yamāni. eds. Beirut, Dār al-Torāth, vol. 11, p. 22.

all contributed to the formation of an east-west corridor inside the desert. Taking advantage of this corridor, caravans made it to the Chinese capital or the Korean Peninsula by the northern road, through the city of Turfan, or the southern path of Khutan.

Turfan is located at the crossroads of the east-west routes of the Silk Road and is consequently considered a major post where different cultures meet on the road. The mix of cultures can be clearly seen in all aspects of life in Turfan. Thus, the language, writing, religion, customs, and traditions of the people of Turfan can be used as the major source for studying the cultural history of the Silk Road. The remaining historical artifacts in Turfan can be seen as distinct and clear signs of cultural exchange in the area. One of these historical artifacts, which has not so far received much attention, is Turfan Minaret's inscription. This old inscription is part of a historical collection found at a religious school referred to as Su Gong (苏公 Su Gong) in Chinese texts. The inscription is of great importance regarding the linguistic structures and words used in it. So far, the linguistic features and the diverse cultures found in the inscription have not been independently studied. As a result, the present study was aimed at fully rereading the inscription and examining the intersection of Arabic, Persian, Chagatai, and Chinese cultures as a historical phenomenon.

TURFAN'S POSITION IN THE CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY OF THE SILK ROAD

Turfan has not only unique weather conditions but also eccentric economic and cultural geographies. In his work, Professor Rong, the famous contemporary Chinese historian, in his joint article "*A Concise History of the Turfan Oasis and its Exploration*", described the geographical and cultural location of Turfan as follows:

The Turfan Depression is situated in the eastern part of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region of China. Encircled by the Kum-tagh, Chol-tagh and other offshoots of the T'ien-shan Mountains, it covers an area 50,147 square kilometers. Some of the depression lies more than 100 meters below sea-level, the lowest point at 154. Thus, it is the second lowest depression in the world, after the Dead Sea. The climate is extremely dry, but its parching heat helps to yield fine crops. Fed by melting snow from the peaks of the T'ien-shan Mountains, the streams that run out of the valleys travel via an irrigation network to the oases. This irrigation system provides

the fertile soil of this area with plenty of water, a primary requisite for the cultures that have thrived there since ancient times.⁴ (See Figure 1)

In 1873, a British expeditionary group sent to the north-eastern part of China reported on the cultural and geographical situation of Turfan in the following words:

This is the easternmost division of the Kashghar along the foot of the hills, and borders on the desert of Gobi. It differs from the other division in having no river, except two or three insignificant streams which become short-lived torrents in seasons of flood. The water supply is derived from subterranean conduits brought down from underground springs at the foot of the hills, and where these flow on the surface are planted the farm settlement. These conduits are called Karez by the Musa[]mans, and Khhin by the Khitay, and Nunkhun-bikhá by the á. Its city, which is called Kuhna or “Old Turfán” in distinction to Úsh Turfán in the west, was a thriving commercial city on the great caravan route between China and West Asia, and the several lesser towns of the division were active seats of life and industry, but both their merchants and their wealth alike have disappeared in the recent troubles.⁵

Indeed, it is the geographical position of Turfan as a hub for commercial routes in the middle part of the Silk Road which gives the city such features.

An important oasis situated on the trade route along the northern edge of the Taklamakan Desert, Turfan was home to different people: the original inhabitants (whom the Chinese called Chü-shih, or Ku-shih), the Chinese settlers who came in large numbers during the fifth and later centuries, the Sogdian traders who left Iran in the seventh and eighth centuries, the Uighurs who built their capital there in the ninth century, and the Mongols who conquered the oasis in the fourteenth century. Only two Chinese dynasties achieved direct rule over Turfan: the T’ang from 640 to 803 and the Ch’ing from 1756 to 1911.⁶

⁴ Guangda, Zhang and Rong, Xinjiang (1998), “A Concise History of the Turfan Oasis and Its Exploration”, in *Asia Major*, Third series, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 13-14.

⁵ Report of a mission to Yarkand in 1873 under the command of Sir T.D. Forsyth, K.C.S.I., C.B., Bengal civil service, with historical and geographical information regarding the possessions of the Ameer of Yarkund, (1875), Calcutta, Printed by the Foreign Department Press, pp. 49-50.

⁶ Guangda, Zhang and Rong, Xinjiang (1998), “A Concise History of the Turfan Oasis and Its Exploration”, in *Asia Major*, Third series, Vol. 11, No. 2, p. 13.

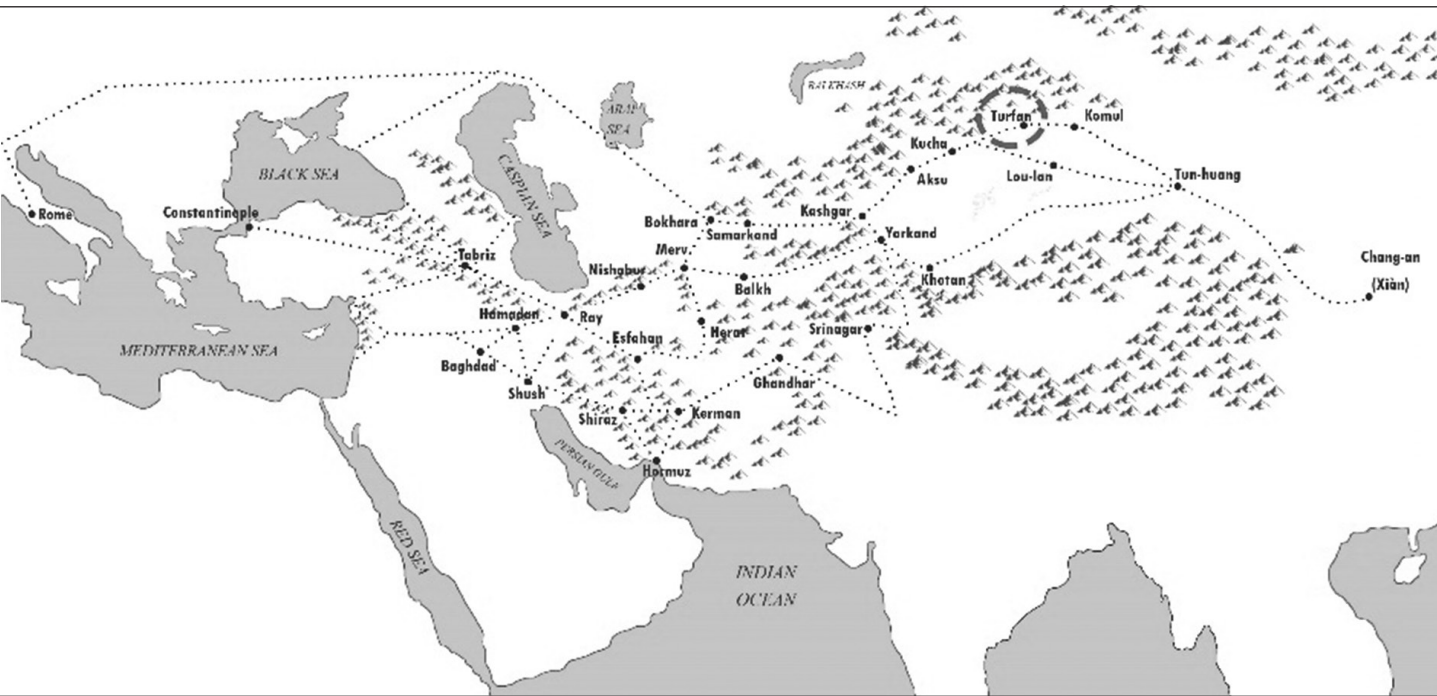


Figure 1. Location of Turfan on the Silk Road

In fact, Turfan must be recognized as an intersection where different cultures met. This region was influenced from the east by the Chinese, Koreans and Japanese, from the west by the Persians and Arabians, from the north by the Turkish/Mongol, and from the south, though to a lesser extent, by Indian culture. Reaching Turfan along with an assortment of goods, these cultures permeated the everyday life of the natives. Being neighbors in the pre-Islamic era, Persia and the Far East countries exchanged products through land and sea routes. This, in turn, paved the way for the Chinese population, in general, and the people living in Turfan, in particular, to become familiar with the Persian culture and civilization. The most significant aspect of the Persian civilization affecting this part of the Silk Road was the Persian language. The way the Persian language is used in the Turfan Minaret inscription is an indication of the historic relations between Persia and China, which necessitates a brief explanation before embarking on the introduction and examination of the inscription's features.

Numerous studies have been carried out on the cultural and economic exchanges between Persia and the Far East along the land route which has become famous by its 19th century title, the Silk Road. Such research directly relates to the history of the Per-

sian provinces of Transoxiana and Sogd, which functioned as intermediaries between the two civilizations. In other words, the role of the Silk Road in the spread of the Persian language in China has been the subject of historical research and studies conducted on post-Islamic Persian dynasties, resulting in a great deal of authorship on the subject. In their research, Iranian scholars or Iranologists, whether independently or with regard to Iranian/Chinese cultural and economic relations, have attended to the geographical and cultural situation of Transoxiana and Sogd as zones of the ancient Persian civilization, producing a considerable bulk of research on the subject. The use of the Sogdian language⁷, which was an Iranian dialect prevalent in the middle parts of the Silk Road, goes back to the 7th and 8th centuries CE. It was Paul Pelliot who, for the first time, wrote an essay on the importance of the Sogdian language in this part of the Silk Road and based on Chinese evidence, proved that in this period, Sogdian was used as a lingua franca⁸. The Sogdian script is a derivative of the Chancery script of the Achaemenes Empire. Historical evidence also suggests the considerable impact of the Sogdian language on Chinese proper names and culture in the course of history⁹. Sogdians expanded Iranian culture and civilization in the middle parts of the Silk Road to such an extent that from the 7th century CE onward, the Uyghurs of the northern part of the Taklamakan Desert and Turfan converted to Manichaeism, using it as their main religion and Manichaean script as their main system of writing. In the early 1900s, German archaeologists¹⁰ for the first time discovered a great deal

⁷ Sogdian is one of the Middle Eastern Iranian languages once spoken in Sogdiana (northern Uzbekistan and Tajikistan) before the Islamization of the area in the 10th century. For more details, see Yoshida, Yutaka (2016), "Sogdian language. Description," in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles>.

⁸ Pelliot, Paul, (1916), "Le Cha-tcheou-tou-fou-t'ou-king' et la colonie sogdienne de la religion du Lob Nor," in *Journal Asiatic*, p.104-105. Skaff, Jonathan Karam (2003), "The Sogdian Trade Diaspora in East Turkestan during the Seventh and Eighth Centuries", in *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, Vol. 46, No. 4, pp. 475-524.

⁹ Yoshida, Yutaka (2006), "Personal names, Sogdian in Chinese sources", in *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, available at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles>.

¹⁰ Between 1902 and 1907, Berlin's Museum für Völkerkunde sent three successive archaeological expeditions to eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang), where they investigated the ruins and ancient grottoes of Turfan. Around Turfan, they discovered numerous ancient manuscripts and other relics. In 1909, the Science Academy of Russia also sent an archaeological expedition to Xinjiang that was mainly dedicated to the investigation of the Turfan grottoes. Between 1905 and 1913, the German expeditions published expedition reports and pictures proposing that among the ruins of the ancient cities of Hara-hoja and Gaochang, there was a Manichaean temple as well as another temple which originally may have been Manichaean. Huashan, Chao, (1996), New evidence of Manichaeism in Asia: A description

of evidence of the Manichaean presence in the Turfan region and published a portion of their findings¹¹.

The influence of Manichaeism in this part of the Silk Road actually represents the dominance of Iranian language, culture and script. That being said, this dominance reached its peak only in the 12th century when Mongols ruled China and Persia. Liu Yingsheng, a Chinese researcher, writes:

Chingiz Khan and his descendants' conquests gave a unique chance to the Muslim world. The Mongols conquered Central Asia earlier than the Chinese Song (960-1279) Empire, and consequently large numbers of Muslim soldiers, officials, merchants, scholars and slaves accompanied the Mongolian troops when they entered China and most of them settled finally in China. Generally speaking the Persian language played four roles in China at that time¹².

Following the great wave of Iranians immigration to China and their entry into the bureaucratic body of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368 CE), Persian became one of the official languages used in the Chinese bureaucratic structure. After that, the Persian language became one of the languages used in the middle parts of the Silk Road. Already familiar with Iranian culture and language through Manichaeism, Uyghur culture and script were also affected by the Persian language, borrowing many religious and bureaucratic terms from Persian. The texts and documents of the era are sufficient evidence proving the Persian/Uyghur fusion of languages. The Turfan Minaret inscription is a symbol of multi-cultural confluence. Though apparently being written only in Chagatai and Chinese, closer examination reveals that the inscription is written in the four languages of Persian, Arabic, Chagatai and Chinese, which is an obvious example of cultural confluence.

of some recently discovered Manichaean temples in Turfan, in *Monumenta Serica*, Vol. 44 (1996), p. 26. Rong, Xinjiang (1998), A Persian Nestorian family in Tang China, in "*Collection papers of the 21th Iranology conference*", Yi Yiliang, ed. Beijing University, pp.238-257.


¹¹ Sundermann, W. (1981), *Mitteliranische manichäische Texte kirchengeschichtlichen Inhalts*, Berlin, Akademie-Verlag.

¹² Liu, Yingsheng (2010), "A lingua Franca along the Silk Road: Persian language in China between 14th and the 16th centuries, in *Aspects of the Maritime Silk Road: From the Persian Gulf to the East China Sea*, Ralph Kauz, ed. Harrassowitz Verlag, Wiesbaden, p. 87.

THE INSCRIPTION OF THE *MADRASA* OF THE TURFAN MINARET

In the first half of the 18th century, in what is now known as the Xinjiang Region, a Qing dynasty (1644-1912 CE) sovereign, Kangxi (康熙 kang-xi), was facing the invasion of a Mongol tribe named Zunghar. In 1720, following massive destruction which was a direct result of Zunghar attacks, a local warlord by the name of Emin Khwaja joined the Chinese imperial army along with his Uyghur fighters. In 1729, the Qing army launched its offensive against the Zunghar Mongols. Providing the imperial army with food and supplies, Emin Khwaja and the Uyghurs fought side by side with the imperial army. The emperor bestowed on Emin Khwaja many gifts and honorary names in recognition of his feats of bravery during wartime and in 1758, appointed him the king's advisor for the affairs of the Chinese Muslim populace.

Afterward, from 1755 to 1759, he participated in the Qing war against the Zunghar Mongols and resistant Muslim clerics. In subsequent years, Emin worked as the superintendent of the Qing administration in the conquered Muslim oases almost until his death in 1777.¹³

In his final years, Emin Khwaja, with the help of the Chinese emperor, began constructing a *madrassa* in the vicinity of Turfan. Not completed in his lifetime, it was up to Emin's son, Suleiman, to finish the *madrassa* and its magnificent minaret. At the end of the project, Suleiman installed an inscription in both Chagatai and Chinese to glorify the school and his father. The first authors visited part of the Silk Road¹⁴ which passes through the Xinjiang Region, from Ürümqi and Kucha to Qara Kucha and Turfan, where they also visited the Emin Khwaja *Madrassa* and read its inscription (See Figure 4). Contrary to what has been claimed by some scholars who refer to the building as a "mosque", it is by no means a mosque. The building's design, with its numerous chambers (cells), and also the text of the inscription calling the establishment a *mādrisā* , all contribute to the fact that this is a building where Islamic teachings and doctrines were to be taught, hence the name *madrassa*. While its plan and design are modeled on Iranian versions of *madrassa*, its brickwork is also influenced by its counterparts in Iran (See Figure 2).

¹³ Kim, Kwangmin, (2012), Profit and Protection: Emin Khwaja and the Qing Conquest of Central Asia, 1759-1777, in *The Journal of Asian Studies*, Vol. 71, No. 3 (August 2012), p. 604.

¹⁴ As a speaker invited by Xinjiang Normal University to give a lecture on "Kāshgar in Persian Texts".

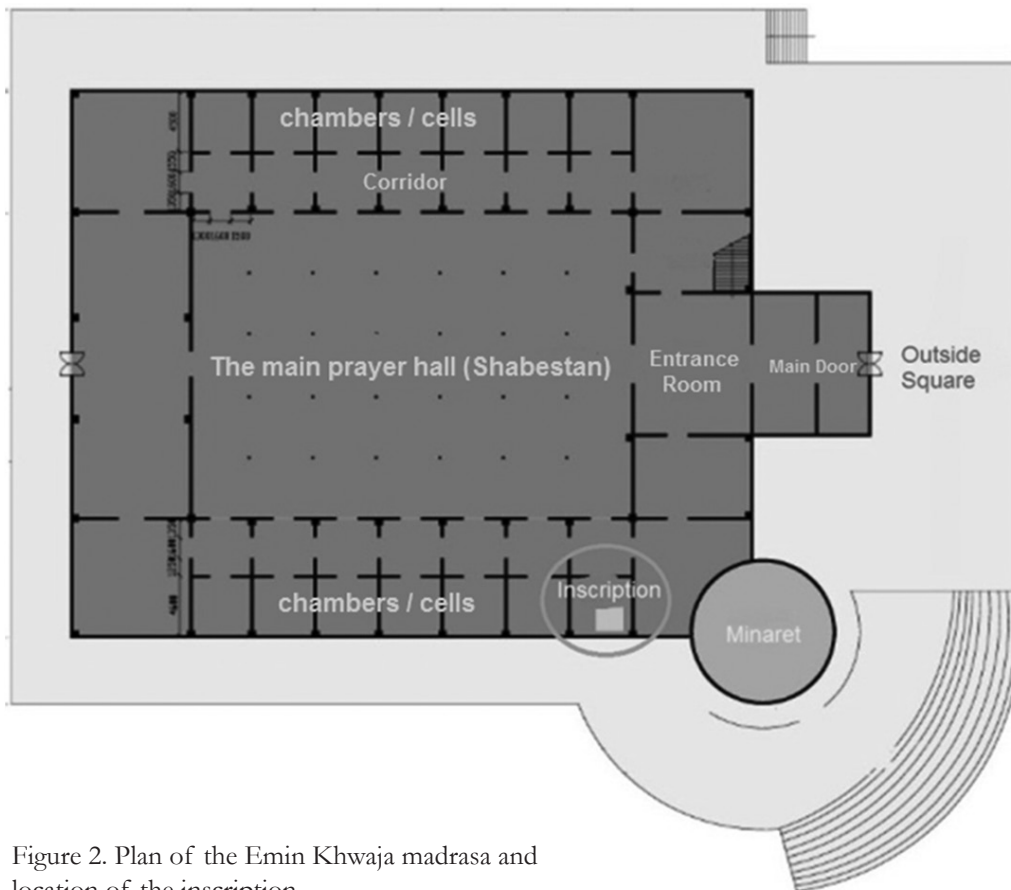


Figure 2. Plan of the Emin Khwaja madrasa and location of the inscription


The use of words such as *hangah*  or its Persian equivalent *Khangha*, in the inscription indicates that the school's builder, possessing mystical inclinations, had designated the building to serve as a *Khangha* for *sufis*. *Khangha*, or *khanga*, is a Persian word meaning a place where *dervishes* and *sufis* pray. This shows that the building and its architecture were influenced by *sufi* sects which, through Khurasan (an Eastern province of Iran) and Transoxiana, had found their way well into the middle part of the Silk Road. In order to better introduce readers to the inscription and the etymology of the words used within the text, first, the text in Chagatai and then the phonetic text are presented, and finally, the origin of the words is offered in a table (See Figure 3).



Figure 3.
Turfan Minaret Inscription.

The inscription text reads as follows:

[1] هو الله الملك المستعان [2] سلاطين زمان و خواقين [3] دوران صاحب العدل [4] والاحسان باعث الامن و [5] الامان مروج شريعت غراي [6] نبوي و مزين طريقت ثنية [7] مصطفى اى اعنى سليمان ثاني ملك [8] جهان ز نورديده ايمين خوجه وانك [9] صاحب قران بو مدرسه ميمونه منوره [10] بو مناره منقش معمور منى اول [11] شهنشاه عالي مقدار و عزيز القدر [12] برخوردار يعنى پدر بزرگوار لاري [13] لطف عنايت الهى بر له صحت و عافيت [14] سال مباركلارى سگسن اوج باشقه بنگان [15] محله شکرگزار ليق شرابطون بجا [16] کلتوروب اول عالي درجات بيمينک [17] بوليدا اتاب يخشى نيت و عالي همت برله [18] صدقه جاريه قليب تاريخ قه مينک [19] يوز سگسن بردا ولايت حسابيدا [20] موش بيلى تعمير قيلغان خانه گا [21] اوز دستى دين بته مينک سر کموش خرج لاگان.

[1] Hovallah äl-mälek äl-mostáan [2] sälatin-i zäman va khävaghin-i [3] dowran šahib äl-ädl-i [4] väI ehsan bāith äl-amni va [5] al-āman morāvviġi šareāt-i ġarra-yi [6] nābāve vā mozāyin-i t'äreġāt-I thāney-I [7] moštāfāve āana sulāman-I thane mälik [8] jāhan zi noor-I Emin Khojih wang [9] šahibqran bu mādrisā'i māymunāi' munāvvārā [10] bu munarāi' monāqāš-i mā'murāyi ävväl 'ali miqdar vā 'azīz äl-qādr [11] bārħudar yā'ni pidār buzrugvarlari [12] luṭf ényät-i ilahi bir lāh šihat vā 'afiyät [13] sal mubarāklāri sāksän üç yaşqa yätkän [15] māħäldä šükürkāzarliq šarayätin bāja

[16] kältürüp äväl ‘ali dārājat bi-menik [17] yolida atab yaḥši niyät vä ‘ali ḥimmät birlä [18] şädäq-ye’ jariyä qilip tariḥ qa ming [19] yüz säksän birdä vilayät hisabida [20] muş yele tä’mir ğileğanḥangah [21] öz дәsti din yättä ming sār kümüş ḥärjlagan¹⁵.

Translation: Indeed God is a help-giver; the king of the time, *khagan* of the age, possessor of justice and beneficence, guarantor of security and developer of Mustafa’s Faith, Suleiman II, king of the world, the light of Emin Khwaja’s eyes (that is, Emin Khwaja’s son), the *şahibqran* king (that is, a king whose reign exceeds 30 years); this luminous blessed *madrassa* and its sound and exotic *minaret* were initially made by the excellent and exalted king, that is, the incumbent king’s father, may he be blessed by divine Grace. He built the *madrassa* and *khangha* in 1180 AH (1766), in the Year of the Rat, with seven thousand silver coins deducted from the region’s taxation and income. He was eighty three then.



Figure 4. The Turfan Minaret Inscription. Right to left: Prof. Wang I Dan and Prof. Vosooghi

¹⁵ In writing the phonetics of the inscription, we have made use of the writing system currently in use in the Xinjiang Region.

The Chinese script

[1] (大清乾隆) da qing qian long [2] (皇帝旧仆吐鲁番郡王额敏和卓率领扎萨克口苏来满等念额敏和) huang di jiu pu tu lu fan jun wang e min he zhuo shuai ling zha sa ke □ su lai man deng nian e min he [3] (卓自受命以来寿享八旬 三岁口口) zhuo zi shou ming yi lai shou xiang ba xun san sui □□ [4] (上天福庇并无纤息灾难保佑群生因此答报) shang tian fu bi bing wu xian xi zai nan bao you qun sheng yin ci da bao [5] (天恩度修塔一座费银七千两整爰立碑记以垂永远可为名教恭) tian en qian xiu ta yi zuo fei yin qi qian liang zheng yuan li bei ji yi chui yong yuan ke wei ming jiao gong bao [6] (天恩于万一矣) Tian en yu wan yi yi [7] (乾隆四十三年端月吉日立。) (Qian long si shi san nian duan yue ji shi li).

[1] Under the Qing dynasty and Qian Long's reign

[2] Khawja Emin, the ruler of Turfan, an old servant of the king of China

[3] Khawja Emin has lived for eighty three years.


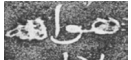

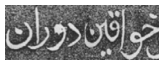
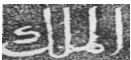

























[4] The Lord giveth happiness to Man and the Lord preventeth misfortunes. Then we must thank the Lord and the king.

[5] To thank the king and God, he, with a purified heart, erected a minaret and spent seven thousand silver coins for the building, and made this inscription as a memorial to remain for eternity so that he could take pride in his faith.



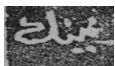









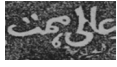

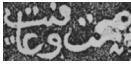





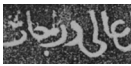

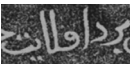
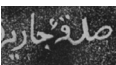
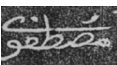
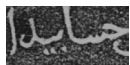




[6] On the day of happiness of the first month of the agricultural calendar of the 43rd year of Qian Long's reign


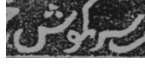

[7] To thank the Lord and the king

Evidently, Persian, Arabic and Chagatai words are mixed in the inscription, displaying the confluence of Chinese, Persian, Arabic and Chagatai cultures. The prosaic style of the inscription is also influenced by the Persian *divāni* (chancery) style practiced in the Middle Ages. Epithets such as *sālatin-i ẓāman* (kings of the time), *kbāvaḡhin-I dowran* (*kbagans* of the age), *ṣaḥīb āl-ādīl-ivāl eḥsan* (possessor of justice and beneficence), *baith āl-amni va al-āman* (guarantor of justice and security), *morāvviḡi šareāt-i ḡarra-yi nābāve* (developer of the exalted faith of the Prophet), *sulāman-I thane* (Suleiman II) and *ṣaḥībqran* are all familiar phrases in the tradition of Persian inscription-making and are extensively employed in the *divāni* texts of post-Islamic Persia. In fact, the artistic and writing traditions of varying cultures of Chinese, Persian, Arabic and Uyghur origin are all mixed in this inscription. The Turfan Minaret inscription is representative of cultural confluence in this important part of the Silk Road. In the table below, the Persian, Arabic and Chagatai words used in the inscription are etymologically shown in order to illustrate the linguistic diversity of the text.

<i>Linguistic Explanation only Persian</i>	<i>Persian word or phrase</i> ¹⁶	<i>Arabic word or phrase</i>	<i>Jaghtai word or phrase</i>
<i>Ezafe phrase</i>	 Sälätin-e zäman	 Hovä ällah	 Bu
<i>Ezafe phrase</i>	 hävāqin-e dowran	 Älmäleک	 buzrukvarlari
<i>Ezafe phrase</i>	 Morävej-e šän'ate näbävi	 almostä'an	 Bir
<i>Ezafe phrase</i>	 Mozäyen-e řänqat-e säniyye	 řahib ä'l'adl	 Jämal (?) mubaräkläri
<i>Ezafe phrase</i>	 Suläiman-e sani	 älehsan	 säksän üç
<i>Word</i>	 Jähan	 Baeth älämn	 yařqa yätkän
<i>Prepositional phrase + Ezafe</i>	 ze nure	 Äläman	 mähäldä
<i>Prepositional phrase + Ezafe</i>	 ze dideye	 ä'ana	 řükürkäzarlıq
<i>Word</i>	 řahibqran	 Bemäleک	 řarayäřin bāja
<i>Prepositional phrase + Ezafe</i>	 mädrisä'l mäymunä' munävvärä	 Ävväl	 Kältürüp

¹⁶ In this column, some words are Arabic in origin. The meaning of these Arabic words is different when using it in a Persian phrase.

<i>Ezāfe phrase</i>	 munaṣṣir nāqṣ mā'm ā'murāi	 'aziz ālghādr	 Ning
<i>Ezāfe phrase</i>	 šahinšah 'ali miqdar	 šarayātin	 Yolida
<i>Word</i>	 bārḥordar	 Ävväl	 tab yaḥši
<i>Word + Ezāfe phrase</i>	 yä'ni pädär buzrukvar	 Niyyät	 Birlä
<i>Ezāfe phrase</i>	 luṭf inayät elahi	 'ali himmät	 Qilip
<i>Conjunctive phrase</i>	 šehät vä 'afiyät	 tariḥ	 Ming
<i>Word</i>	 šükürkazarlıq	 tä'mir	 yüz säksän
<i>Word</i>	 'ali dārājat	 ḥārj	 birdä vilayät
<i>Ezāfe phrase</i>	 šāliqä' jariyä	 moštāfävi	 Hisabida
<i>Word</i>	 ḥangah		 muš yili
			 Qilğan
			 öz dästidin

			 yättä ming
			 sär kümüş
			 Lagan

CONCLUSION

As one of the most important sites facilitating the exchange of culture and traditions of Eastern and Western societies, the Silk Road provides a rich field for historical and social studies. Located in the heart of the ancient cultures of China, India and Persia, the middle part of the road, now in the Xinjiang Region, is especially important. Buildings, inscriptions, texts and paintings in this area are all representatives of cultural confluence on the Silk Road, a manifest example of which is the Turfan Minaret inscription. Built in the second half of the 18th century as a memorial for the *madrasa* and its tremendously beautiful Islamic minaret, the inscription holds a mixture of Persian, Arabic and Chagatai words. The intersection of these words and phrases in the inscription shows that these works are of utmost importance as symbols of cultural confluence on the Silk Road. Having introduced some linguistic and textual features of the inscription, this paper has presented the inscription as a symbol of cultural confluence. This inscription in terms of both artistic and decorative structures can potentially serve as the subject matter of further examinations which the authors hope will be undertaken by scholars active in the field within the domain of the Silk Road.

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