

# Cultural Journey Along the Silk Road: Turkish Sufi Humanism from Ahmet Yesevi to Yunus Emre



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## ABSTRACT

Although the Silk Road is named after the product that generated its economic value, its greatest contribution to human history is how it enabled the mutual interaction of civilisations. Despite its economic importance being stuck at its lowest in history for a long time, its value is beginning to be re-evaluated, and it is necessary to reflect upon the impact of the Silk Road on cultural change. In this short study, we will consider the long journey of Yunus Emre on the Silk Road and his excellent humanism from the Fergana Valley to the Anatolian steppes in the “2021 Yunus Emre and Turkish language year”. First, we will outline the Silk Road’s place in Asia’s cultural world and its present influence. Finally, we will put Yunus Emre and his philosophy in this framework. In order to understand the inner and outer world of Yunus, a great son of the Silk Road, let us briefly review the reasons for the Silk Road’s existence and the historical interactions of cultures on the road. In this way, we will consider the conditions that made Yunus Emre through historical, economic, and cultural dimensions whilst uncovering the secrets of the land that created him and brought his work to the present day.

**Keywords:** music, philosophy, poetry, Sufi, Turk

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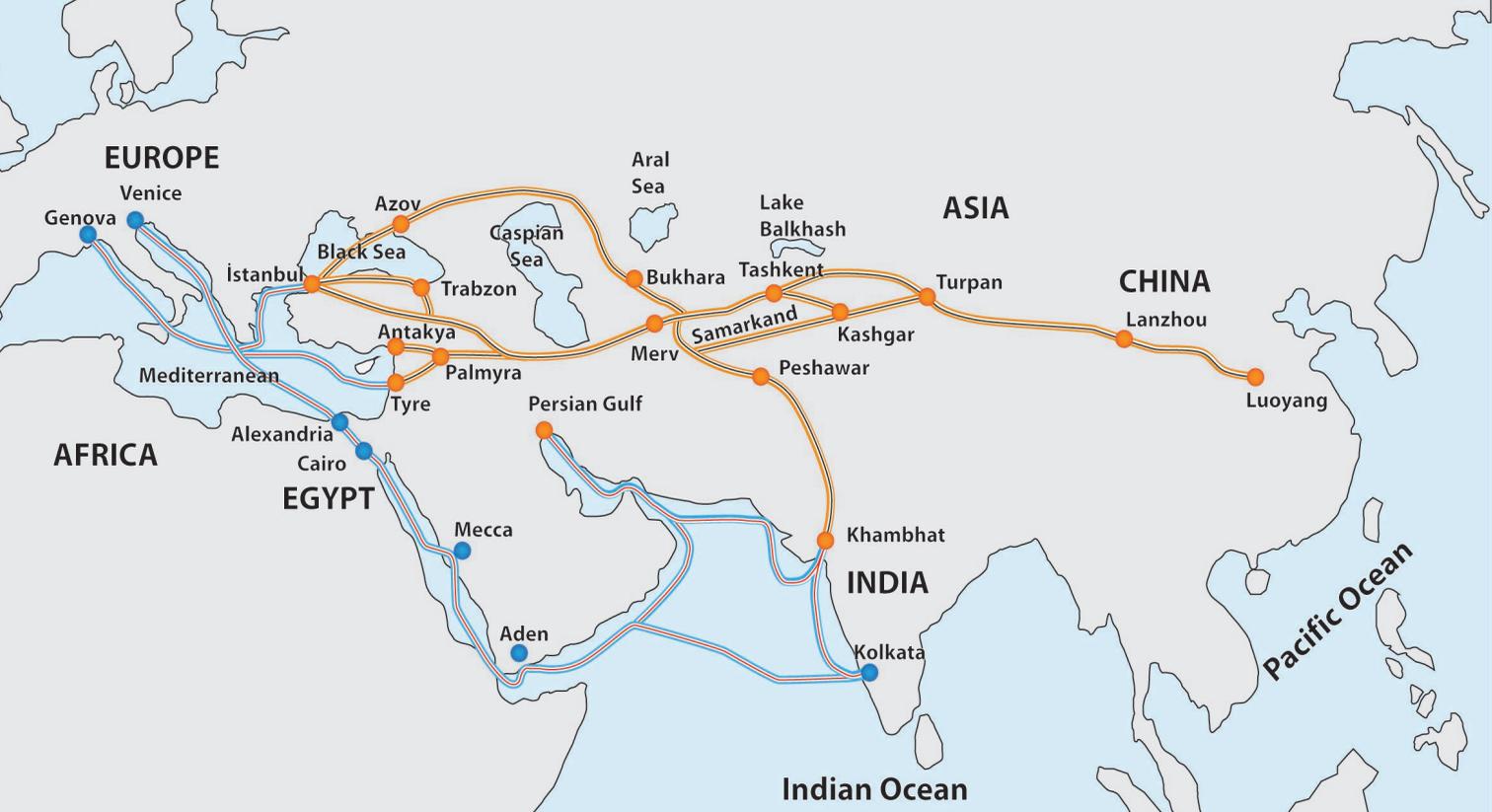
### Past and Future on the Silk Road

DOZENS OF NATIONS WITH LITTLE CULTURAL connections have lived on this historical road, from China to Venice and Istanbul to Samarkand. Of course, even if the Silk Road had not existed, these cultures had the possibility of being able to relate to each other in one way or another. However, like the carotid artery in the human body, the Silk Road, which came curling up from the depths of China and reached European territory through the canals of Venice, has extraordinarily accelerated this process of interaction and change. Perhaps the most interesting indicator of this may be spaghetti, which began somewhere in China, found its way into Venice’s gourmet restaurants, and has been a symbol of Italian cuisine for millennia. We can leave aside culinary culture, which is one of the most important issues of culture, with its record for now to consider the adventure of the music-dance-poetry-religion compositions of culture, which are the main subject of our article on the Silk Road.

It would be right to think of the Silk Road as perhaps the largest festival site in human history to make an entrance into our topic. Reflect on how all kinds of products produced by countless countries and cultures have flowed between East and West for almost two thousand years on this carotid artery with the speed and patience of turtles. No war or epidemic could completely stop this flow, though the Silk Road was the main route that helped these to spread.

### Silk Road Gathering Places: Caravanserais

On the route of the Silk Road, for two thousand years, thousands of caravans have carried silk, gold, ceramic goods, and materials such as paper and leather with endless patience. Given that camel caravans can only travel up to 35 kilometers a day, approximately every 35 kilometers, there have been caravanserais and small oases created through these centuries. These islets were places for caravans to stop on trade routes between oases as a respite from the boiling sun or the freezing cold of the winter desert.



Map 1: Ancient Silk Road (BRIQ 🌸)

As soon as the caravan lowered its load to the caravanserai, the cultural ambassadorship of tired caravan travelers began.

In the cold of night, gathered around a fireplace in the middle, these people, who were not even physically alike, would play the role of honorary ambassadors of cultural exchange through heated discussions until they fell asleep or heard the warning of the guard. A Buddhist priest from China would fervently discuss the topic of “nafs” or “reincarnation” with a Sufi dervish from Fergana. A playful musical discussion would emerge between a Kashgari dutar musician and an Udi who had just arrived from Baghdad. There would be cross-cultural impromptu “duets” and evening concerts to comfort the exhausted travelers.

### Differentiation of City and Village Cultures

On the other hand, when caravans on the Silk Road reached city centres on roads such as Kashgar, Urumqi, Hotan, Samarkand, or Bukhara, they could also be invited to “garden concerts” in the homes of rich nobles. These would be more developed, with large orchestras, dance groups, or dancers that

reflected the culture of the city. The organizations, presentations, and cultural aspects of these concerts served as schools for foreign guests. Foreign traders were likely to enter into heated discussions with local music and dance groups that would influence traditions in the home countries when they returned. For this reason, cultural presentations in “the garden enclosures” of the local noble palaces were very famous in the wealthy merchant houses of Mumbai, Chennai, the Bosphorus-facing gardens of Istanbul, the palaces of cities such as Granada and Cordoba of Andalusia, and in the Abbasid palaces of Baghdad. Despite the thousands of miles between them, similar cultural presentations spread continuously.

This can be observed in Pondicheri, India, in the garden of the Tomb for the famous poet Hafez in Shiraz, Iran, and in Tarsus, Turkey. Similarly, the famous “sira geceleri” nights of Urfa and the “oturak” nights in the historical Meram vineyards of Konya continue to exist today as an extension of the musical culture of Has Bahce in Anatolia (Kennedy, 2005: 187).

The cities of the Silk Road had a more organized and developed culture of music and dance, of course.

The palaces of the rich merchant class or local rulers also served as cultural centres. In these local palaces, musicians, singers, poets, storytellers, and dancers were also present as part of the cultural competition between rulers. At large-scale celebrations, both regional and religious commemorations, these artists were assigned and performed important tasks as a way to ensure the adoration of the people to local government. Since these artists entirely focused on their own disciplines, they could go very deep into the theoretical and practical dimensions of their form. As a result, mutual artistic communication on the Silk Road had very profound effects on the local dimension. For example, in the field of music, the “raga” music system of India, the “dasgah” music theory of Iran, and the “maqam” structures of Turks and Arabs developed clearly recognizable similarities over the years.

### **The physical Turkish presence in the region, from the Mediterranean coast to India and the Great Wall of China, would also play an adhesive role.**

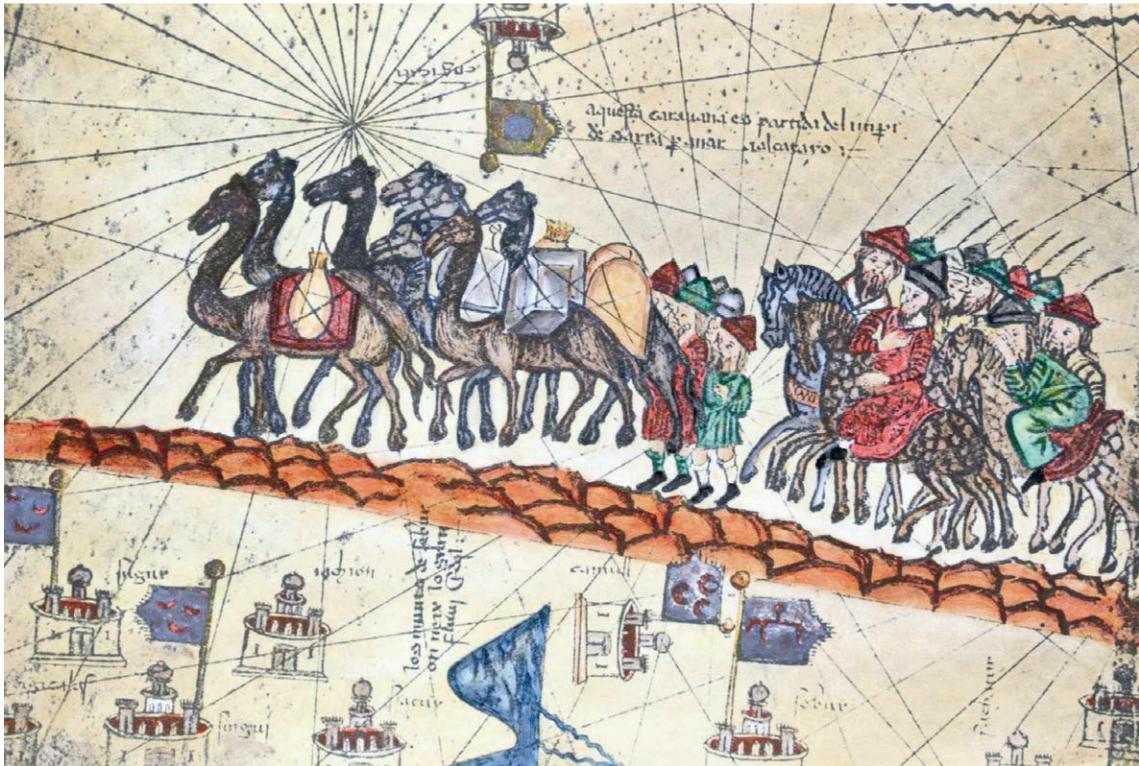
Of course, it would not just be travelers on the Silk Road. The physical Turkish presence in the region, from the Mediterranean coast to India and the Great Wall of China, would also play an adhesive role. All cultures in this region would create their own unique identities in mutual interaction, and music would play an integral part in these interactions. Just as musical instruments spread from country to country in this process, the musical theories and traditions of these cultures were influenced by each other and contributed to the formation of their respective musical theories. For example, Raga Kerwani in India and Nihavend Maqam in Turkey would have almost the same musical character.

These and similar interactions went further than artists from different cultures becoming aware of

each other's existence, of course. Let's think back to that night, where the Baghdadi musician at the caravanserai meeting we mentioned above could add a melody he heard and loved very much from the Kashgar singer to his repertoire, he would then add Arabic words to it and turn it into a Baghdadi song that would enter his nation's musical culture. That is exactly what happened historically. In our musical conversations with our Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Greek musician friends, we have witnessed numerous melodies exchanged and sung in various languages with local interpretations over the years.

### **Travels of Religious Cultures on the Silk Road**

Religions, as social organizations that occupy the most important place in civilizations and cultures, have also played a very important role in the history of the Silk Road. It can even be said that since the famous expedition of Alexander the Great in 300 BC, many religions have caused the creation and destruction of new states in this geographical region. For example, Buddhism extended into China via the Silk Road; Nestorian Christianity was to be able to reach into China and Central Asia through the Silk Road; and the Turks and Islam also travelled on the Silk Road to influence the history of Europe. In this way, not only did the method and goal of worship change, but each religion would bring with it literature, language, poetry, music, and social organization to the new land. Thus, the hymns of Buddhist monks would pass through Central Asia as far as China. Statues of Buddha and temples found in caves on mountain slopes along the Silk Road clearly exemplify this fact. In this region, Catholic missionaries, like the previous Nestorians, followed the same path and entered the region in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, spreading to the farthest corners of China.



A medieval painting showing the 13<sup>th</sup> century caravan of Niccolo Polo (father of Marco Polo) and Maffeo Polo (uncle of Marco Polo) crossing Asia. (CGTN, 2017)

The mystical dances and ceremonial music of the Sufis in the Arabian deserts and mountains of Iran would also mix with the dance and music of the Turks in shaman ceremonies in the Central Asian steppes, leading to the creation of a mystical culture unique to the Turks.

We can decipher this from the presence of thousands of very important poets and bards, including giant mystical poets such as Yunus Emre, Mevlana, Niyazi Misri, starting with Ahmed Yesevi and continuing to this day. As the greatest witness to this change, we can find this influence in the presence of the “saz” instrument, which is the cornerstone of Turkish folk music. Before the Turks became acquainted with the Islamic religion, the ceremonial instrument of shamans in the steppe, the “saz”, was the most important musical instrument for shamans to communicate with the “great spirit”. However, in the

period that began with the acceptance of the Islamic religion, the Turkish shamans, who were no longer needed, with great creativity turned the “saz” into an instrument of the travelling Sufi “ashiks-bards” and made it the cornerstone of the new mystical culture of the Turks. We can easily see this by looking at the “ashiks” who have lived through the last thousand years and left us thousands of works in the form of sayings, lamentations, folk songs, and hymns.

### Silk Road Determines Religion: Example of Khazar Turkish State

One of the exemplary contributions of the Silk Road to the change and spread of cultures can be found in the story of the transition from shamanism to Judaism in the Khazar Turks living in the steppes, north of the Caspian Sea.

By the middle of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Khazar Turks,

who worshipped “Tengri”, had become the rulers of the branch of the Silk Road that passes through the north of the Black Sea. During the expansion of Islam that followed the death of Muhammad, the Khazar Turks, who showed the greatest resistance to the Arab armies, never accepted Islam. As a result of the spread of religious culture on the Silk Road, in 860, the Khan decided to accept either Islam, Christianity, or Judaism as the state religion, which he decried as suitable for his “Tengri” monotheistic religions. To decide, he started a contest between the representatives of these three religions.

### **The Silk Road concretely demonstrated the role of economic realities in the formation of religious culture in the Caspian Turks.**

A discussion ensued between Cyril of Constantinople and a Muslim cleric from Baghdad, as well as Jewish rabbis already in Attila, the capital. In the discussion, in which Khan was present, Christian and Muslim clergy fought each other, leading Khagan to accept Judaism as the official religion, which he found more suitable, causing it to spread throughout the Caspian region. Of course, Jewish merchants who dominated the mercantile system of the Silk Road played a big role in this conversion. In other words, the Silk Road concretely demonstrated the role of economic realities in the formation of religious culture in the Caspian Turks (Frankopan, 2015: 110-114).

In China, the largest state and oldest culture on the Silk Road, it is also possible to see early artistic influences from the west of the country. In Chinese palaces, especially from East Turkestan and Central Asia, musicians, dancers, and performers were very popular thousands of years ago. We can tell this from the depictions in the works of art that remain

to this day. There are many figures of musicians and dancers with Central Asian appearances in the pottery decorations and grave remains. Artists from Kashgar, Bukhara, and Samarkand enjoyed great popularity by performing their art in palaces and cultural centres in China. It is even possible to see that these artists were also well-known in Constantinople, the capital of the Byzantine Empire, from the impressions of historians of the time.

### **Change and Spread of Musical Instruments in the Silk Road**

The influence of the Silk Road on musical cultures is also very clear and dominant in musical instruments. For example, the “violin”, thought to originate from southern India, has travelled the Silk Road for centuries and has become the most popular instrument, going as far as Europe in Irish dance music, entertainment songs of Romanian gypsies, and Vienna’s concert halls. Likewise, the “qanun” became an indispensable instrument of Middle Eastern music and its similar sister instruments are called the “koto” in Japan, “qin” in China, “kayagum” in Korea, “yathka” in Mongolia, “chatkhan” in southern Siberia, “santur” in Iran, “santuri” in Greece, and “dulcimer” in the United States, with some differences. The “shakuhachi” in Japan, “bansuri” in India, “nay” in Iran, and “ney and kaval” in Turkey have also shown continuity and interaction.

As an expression of a similar reality, the “dutar” of Kashgar spread throughout Central Asia over the centuries, spreading as far as India through the Mughals. Even today, when you board any train leaving Calcutta, you can come across Indian “baul (bards)” who accompany you on your journey with poems and songs with instruments called “dutar” that have made a living for centuries through donations from listeners.



All cultures in this region would create their own unique identities in mutual interaction, and music would play an integral part in these interactions. (CGTN, 2020)

This, in turn, takes its place in history as one of the products and results of the Silk Road. We saw this in person during our train journey from Calcutta to Shantiniketan, and we had some very interesting conversations with these Bauls during the three-hour journey.

The Central Asian instrument, “dutar”, mentioned above, becomes “saz” in the hands of the nomadic Oghuz Turks in the steppes and again follows the lines of the Silk Road, spreading from the Mediterranean to Siberia. The Turkish “saz” becomes “balalaika” in the hands of the Russians, “bouzuq” in the hands of the Lebanese and Syrians, “bouzuki” in the hands of the Greeks, “tambura” in Bulgarian and other Balkan cultures, and “sarod” in India through these centuries-old Silk Road cultural exchange process (Levin, 2002).

As for the “zurna”, the indispensable instrument of weddings, military send-offs, and Ottoman mehter bands in Turkish towns, it appears as “suona” in China, “shehnai” in India, “surnai” in Central Asian cultures, “kernai” in Iran, and later as the “oboe” in Europe. These, with some technical changes, are called indispensable instruments (Levin, 1996).

Long before the Crusades of the Middle Ages, thanks to those who travelled the Silk Road, musical cultures from Japan to England were spread bilaterally. For example, in addition to string instruments, wind instruments, and percussion instruments, drums were a common presence on the Silk Road line, seen from Chinese to Spanish palaces. Furthermore, the short-stemmed “barbat” of Central Asia is cited by historians as the source of the “lute” in the Middle East, the “lute” in Europe, the “biwa” in Japan, and the “pipa” in China (Levin, 2002).

The instrument played by the nomadic Turkish and Mongol tribes in Central Asia, the “iklig”, is made of a horse skull wrapped around with horsehair and rubbed with a “bow” also made from horsehair. It was used as a means of communication between the “Supreme Spirit” and the shaman in the Shamanic ceremonies of the Turks for centuries. This instrument would be called “kemenche and gijak” in the Middle and Near East, “rebab” in Indonesia, “sarangi, sarinda” in the Indian subcontinent, and would be adapted to local cultures after travelling on the Silk Road over the years.

## Musical Synthesis on the Silk Road

Music on the Silk Road has never been monopolized by a single clan of religions or beliefs. It is created through a new synthesis of influences from either the previous or enduring cultures on the Silk Road. It is possible to see this most clearly in the musical styles and contents of Indian travelling bards, the “Baul”, songs. The Baul has existed for centuries as a musical genre that is the product of the creative fusion of Hindu and mystical Islam, that is, Sufism. When we look at these Baul songs, we can clearly observe this versatility both in the lyrical content and in the instruments used. The Sufi traditions that have already undoubtedly influenced them are also decorated with elements inspired by the ceremonies and philosophy of “shamanism” from centuries ago.

The Silk Road, of course, did not carry a uniform population and cultural structure. On the one hand, while the nomadic tribes migrated from the mountains to the plains, there were also rich cultures in the large cities established on the mainline.

In fact, the political and cultural history of the Silk Road has also manifested itself as a struggle between these two main forces. While the nomads were naturally less involved in cultural interactions on the Silk Road, the population in cities was more easily able to keep up with this change and create new syntheses. The main music representatives of nomads were “shaman-ashik-bard”. Alone, they travelled from the mountains to the plains with their instruments and sang songs with epics, lamentations, or praise. Musicians in the city, on the other hand, played pieces that were previously composed and created for performance, mostly in orchestras. For this reason, these musicians had to undergo a very strict education to become competent. Musicians and composers, who usually received financial support from Sultans in palaces or rich nobles, could

also be seen as the first representatives of professional musicianship on the Silk Road. Therefore, their music would have been more advanced and arranged. Thus, musical theories and musical instruments of different cultures on the Silk Road developed with certain differences.

Through such a heritage, Anatolia looks like an open-air museum where past traditions of the Silk Road are alive.

As a land that still sustains this nomadic culture of Central Asia in the mountains and plateaus of Anatolia, Turkey will make a significant contribution to this restructuring. Our Karacaoğlan is an exact reflection of the Central Asian Kam-bard shamans of a thousand years ago on the Taurus Mountains. The “abdals” of our Silifke and Kırşehir, the villagers of Tarsus playing “mengi”, and the masters who carved the mulberry tree to make Saz as our ancestors did a thousand years ago embody this influence. The village women had woven “rugs-yolluk” in the Highlands. Through such a heritage, Anatolia looks like an open-air museum where past traditions of the Silk Road are alive. Turkey has the potential to play an important role in the creation of the New Silk Road by recognizing this and revealing and protecting this culture to the most detail.

## Interaction of Languages on the Silk Road: An Example of the Urdu Language in India

The Silk Road, which runs from China to Venice in an east-west direction, has also dotted the south-north Line with numerous intermediate roads. In addition to the musical instruments and their economic effects mentioned above, they have had important effects on the formation and development of regional languages.



The Silk Road has also had visible effects on architectural traditions. (CGTN, 2021)



Of course, the linguistic effects of multicultural Central Asia and the Russian steppes are very clear. Here, though, we will draw attention to the relationship of the formation of the Urdu language, which has become one of the most important official languages in India, with the Silk Road.

Arab merchants carried Islam to the Indian subcontinent via Iran and the Arabian Gulf as far back as the 8th century. Through their interactions with the local populations, a new language called Urdu was created by borrowing from these more established old languages. In India and Pakistan today, hundreds of millions of people use this Urdu language. The word “Ordu” (Orda) in Turkish, has a direct relationship with the formation of this language.

The Urdu language can be considered as a language created to manage the multi-national and multi-lingual military structure in the armies of the Turkish States of Central Asia, which established power in India in 1000. The state of the Mughal Chagatai

Turks, starting from Mahmud of Ghaznavid, continuing with the Delhi Sultanate and eventually being called the Mughal Empire, continued its existence until the rebellions of 1857. Amir Khusrev (1253-1325) is considered the greatest Bard of this new language. Under such a multicultural environment, important steps were taken in the field of unification of local Indian and Muslim cultures, especially during the time of the greatest Sultan, Akbar. Therefore, it should not be surprising that a Turkish traveler visiting India or Pakistan constantly hears Turkish words.

### **Architecture’s Adventure on the Silk Road**

The Silk Road has also had visible effects on architectural traditions. In fact, this architectural influence continues to have an impact on the creation of new cities and the planning of existing cities. The palaces, mosques, and gardens in Samarkand and Bukhara have great similarities to those in Isfahan and Agra.

For example, on returning from his expedition to the Middle East, which affected the Ottoman state at a level that almost eliminated it, Timurlenk took hundreds of artists and artisans from Anatolia and Iran with him back to Samarkand.

For this reason, the effects of the Middle East and Iran are clearly visible in the structures of Samarkand, which we admire today. The hands that make these memorable buildings and the brains that design them are physically the same in some examples.

**For approximately 2,500 years, the caravans, armies, and migrants of the Silk Road have spread their genetic variations through the lands.**

In addition, Shah Jahan, who built the unforgettable Taj Mahal, entrusted the realisation of this monumental work to the architects and craftsmen he brought from Iran. Even according to a legend, Shah Jahan cut off the hands of his architect so that he would not make a similar Taj Mahal to other sultans. In cultures on the Silk Road, this legend is a very interesting historical note that captures the depth of the cultural competition.

Such architectural syntheses have taken their place in the history of architecture as masterpieces, where Turkish, Iranian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Armenian masters, who differ greatly with each other, have combined their knowledge and experience in some of the finest works of human creation.

### **The Journey of Genes on the Silk Road**

For approximately 2,500 years, the caravans, armies, and migrants of the Silk Road have spread their genetic variations through the lands. By this,

we are talking about the changing effects of human genes from the Silk Road. It is possible to understand this in its most obvious form by looking at the facial contours of the people living today on the Silk Road from China to Venice.

Even the physical appearances of the Uighurs and the Turks in Izmir, which are in the Turkish territory starting from the west of China, show certain differences. Related Turkish communities living today in the Gobi Desert and Tianshan mountains, which are also considered the homeland of the Oghuz Turks, are separated from the modern Turkish people living in Izmir or Canakkale, at least by their eyes and body structures. Starting from the 10<sup>th</sup> century, we can find traces of their migration to the west and their arrival in Anatolia by following the Silk Road.

From the land of Iran, where it has been a homeland for about 200 years, it is impossible to think that our genetics have moved to Anatolia without changing.

Looking at the population in India, we can see the role of the Turkish sultanates and the Chagatai Turkish Mughal Empire, which have ruled for almost 1,000 years, especially in the northern regions of the Indian subcontinent.

In parallel with the creation of the Urdu language mentioned in the above section, North India demonstrates the extent of the change in human genes. In consequence, we can easily see that the most influential actors in Bollywood, the famous cinema centre of India, have lighter skin and a Turkish-Iranian appearance. Famous actors such as Shah Rukh Khan, Aamir Khan, Salman Khan, Prianka Chopra, Hrithik Roshan, Deepika Padukone, and others have lighter skin compared to those in the south of India. In our opinion, this is a direct result of the migrations and interactions between genes caused by the Silk Road.



## Two Bright Stars at Both Ends of the Silk Road: Ahmed Yesevi and Yunus Emre

When we consider the importance of the Silk Road, it is necessary to remember the struggles and cultural assets of the Turkish nation on this unforgettable route. Through this vast culture formed on the Silk Road, one can trace the lively Turkishness in the cultures starting from the Balkans and going as far as Xinjiang, China.

**From east to west, from south to north, almost all of Asia was a product of the Silk Road route.**

The two most important elements of this cultural presence are the strong prevalence of the Turkish language and the unforgettable stamp that Yunus Emre, the most important master of it, has left on the Turkish language and Turkish folk culture. The most important branch of the Turkish nation was formed through the Oguz's journey to Anatolia over the Silk Road and lasted two hundred years. The poet Yunus Emre became the most beautifully synthesized result of this in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In Yunus, we find the crystallized expression of an ocean growing from a Thousand Springs during migrations from Kashgar and Urumqi to Bukhara, and from Isfahan to Konya. His poems perfectly reflect Turkishness, humanism, folklore, history, politics, and nature. It is possible that we can learn everything about the 13<sup>th</sup> century from his words, even 700 years after his time.

### Yunus's Silk Road Links

Our great bard, Yunus Emre, is, of course, a son of the Silk Road. He came out of the bosom of Anatolia, lived there, and still lies there. However, his Silk Road connection cannot be explained and un-

derstood with this level of superficiality. In the time of Yunus, hundreds of thousands of people lived in Anatolia, of all races and colors, but there were some features that made the Yunus different, making them stand out like a shining star, illuminated even today.

As can be seen from the long explanations above, 13-14<sup>th</sup> century Anatolia, which was the time when Yunus lived, had a very lively and fertile cultural life much earlier than these centuries. From east to west, from south to north, almost all of Asia was a product of the Silk Road route. Between the forests of India and the Russian steppes and between the rivers of China and the plains of Anatolia, a continuous cultural life has prevailed on the Silk Road. For this reason, we will have to take into account this mobility and multiculturalism when looking for sources for Yunus's philosophy and poetry.

### Saintly Teacher of the Fergana Valley: Ahmed Yesevi

In the history of the development of Yunus Emre's philosophy and humanism, one must first look at another humanist Sufi poet who grew up on the Silk Road in the 12<sup>th</sup> century - Ahmed Yesevi.

How can this great Turkish personality, who lived between 1093 and 1166 in the Fergana Valley in the middle of present-day Kyrgyzstan-Tajikistan-Uzbekistan, be such a key influence for another Turkish holy man named Yunus Emre, who was born 100 years after him thousands of kilometers away in Anatolia?

Cultural heritage is usually connected by silsile (lineage) and is embodied in subsequent generations. Although it cannot be stated decisively, the silsile connection between Ahmed Yesevi and Yunus Emre happened also in the same fashion. In almost all research (Gölpınarlı, 1992; Toprak, 1982) on this subject, more or less, a valid silsile can be revealed as follows:

Ahmed Yesevi-Lokman Perende-Haji Bektas-Sari Saltuk-Barak Baba-Tapduk Emre-Yunus Emre.

In such a philosophical chain, we can find the traces of Shamanism, sky-god worshipping, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Hindu, and of course the recently accepted Islam. This, in turn, became Turkish Sufism in a very short period of time. It was a vast stream stretching from Yunus Emre to Mevlana, from Niyazi Misri to Ashik Veysel, that stretched over the past seven centuries. Turkish Sufism, thanks to the philosophical and ceremonial traditions it inherited from the Silk Road, will flow in a much different medium than both Arab-Persian and Indian mysticism in the coming centuries, by carrying impressions of them in it.

### Different Mystical Tendencies of Islam

In fact, Sufi philosophy and ideology, which we can call the interpretation of the mystical essence of Islam, have gained a wide range of shapes and views in the Islamic world over the centuries. This was determined mainly by the characteristics of the culture and lands from which the local Sufis came from. Thus, Tijanism in North Africa, Chistism in India, and Mevlevism and Bektashism in Turkey differ considerably in both their ceremonial practices and their ideologies. Perhaps that's why there is a rivalry between Sufi communities. Even some organizations have even accused others of being "un-Islamic"

The humanist tradition of original and true Turkish Sufism - starting with Ahmed Yesevi, continuing to Haji Bektash, and developing from there to Tapduk Emre and Yunus Emre - has also had characteristics that cannot be found anywhere else in the world because of this source. For example, the idea of Reincarnation, which was also directly reflected in Yunus's poems, easily found a place in Turkish Sufism, probably as a result of the Hindu influence on the Silk Road. Even such philosophical poems were called "devriyye-circle" and became quite common



Yunus Emre. Republic of Turkey Ministry of Culture and Tourism webiste)



Ahmed Yesevi. (Wikimedia)

in Anatolia over the centuries. In the same way, very obvious shamanistic elements are manifested in Yunus's poems. A very significant number of Yunus's poems, which we can call love or even worship of nature, have survived to this day. In our opinion, such philosophical trends were formed as a result of the philosophical traditions of the Turks from when Central Asian influences reached Anatolia through Ahmed Yesevi and the subsequent silsile.

As a result, the cultural treasure of the Silk Road, with the dough kneaded by Ahmed Yesevi from Central Asia, acquired a presence in the master hands of Yunus Emre in Anatolia to give us a humanist tradition of almost 1,000 years.

### Epilogue: From Far Asia to the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean

The Silk Road has taken its place on the historical stage as a perfect metaphor for the last three thousand years of human development and it still occupies a very important role. In particular, the People's Republic of China is trying to revive the Silk Road against American sovereignty in the Pacific and Indian Ocean and to minimize the damage that this could do to China's economic future.

We believe that it is necessary to study the political, economic, and cultural consequences of this and its consequences for Turkey to create a future in accordance with it. Especially in the field of culture and music, which is the subject of our article, we believe that it is necessary to examine its examples in history and bring them to the future.

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In the reintroduction of the historical Silk Road by the People's Republic of China under the name of the "Belt and Road Initiative" project, there are

many opportunities for Turkey to strengthen its hand. In this new road and Road-Belt project consisting of both land and railways, Turkey is in a very important geographic position. Keeping in mind that the Turkish nation came to Anatolia from the Central Asian steppes a thousand years ago and that there are also solid central Asian Turkic roots, we are right to think that Turkey can have a very important role in this new Silk Road. Turkish culture is already a historical part of the Chinese, Russian, Kazakh, Uzbek, Kyrgyz, Indian, and Iranian cultures. Even in any song from Kashgar, Isfahan, Samarkand, and Astana, it will be very easy to recognize this historical cultural connection and heritage. It is imperative to establish a solid role in such a solid foundation, through conscious and programmatic reflection on the past and consideration of the future.

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