

***Historical perspective of rise and fall of Islamic Rule in Central  
Asia***

*Sajid Hussain\**

*Dr. Akbar Ali\*\**

***Abstract:***

*The Muslims advance in Central Asia after the death of the holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The Saracens Crossed the river Oxus, overrun the near east and Sassanian Empire, killing Yazdigard III in Marv in 651. Qutaiba was sent to Central Asia by Abdul Malik the son of the Caliph Walid. Samarkand, Tashkent, Bulkh, Farghana and Bukhara valley was under the sway of Islam by him. The princes of these valleys surrendered and agreed to pay honor to Caliph. Muslim rule spread in the region up to 1500 but Russian thrown out Islamic rule up to 1717. Objective of this research is to highlight rise and fall of Islamic rule in Central Asia. To achieve the objective analytical and descriptive methodology is used. This research concluded that Islam came to the region in 651 which is still alive in the region.*

**Key Words:** Central Asia, Islam, Dynasty, Turk

.....  
*PhD Scholar and visiting faculty in department of Political Science Hazara University  
Mansehra.*

<sup>1</sup> *Assistant Professor Department of English, Hazra University, Mansehr*

### **Introduction:**

Islam knocked Central Asia in two phases. First was 20 years after the holy prophet of Islam (PBUH). "The Arabs used to conquer first and then worried about conversion of people".<sup>1</sup> In order to convert the locals to Islam about fifty thousand families were sent to the area. Second period of Islamic invasion is the age of Ommayed dynasty, Caliph Walid sent Qutaiba to Central Asia. Bukhara, Bulkh, Tashkent and Farghana Valley came under the flag of Islam. Rulers of these valleys surrendered in the honor of Caliph.

In 710 he reached Khwarzimid, concluded peace treaty with Shah and In 714 he conquered Kashghar. Amir Taimur conquered the region in 1370 and extended its borders to China and Mediterranean Sea. One after other Muslim invaders came to Central Asia till the Russian emperor invaded the region in 1717. When they conquered the region they started Rusification of locals till its independence in 1990.

### **Advent of Islam:**

The Muslims advance in Central Asia consists of two phases. The First phase was within twenty years after the death of the holy prophet Mohammad (PBUH). The Saracens Crossed the river Oxus, overrun the near east and Sassanian Empire, killing Yazdigard III in Marv in 651. "The Arabs used to conquer first and then worried about conversion of people".<sup>2</sup> Fifty thousand Arab families were shifted to convert the local inhabitants into the fold of Islam by the Muslims. The armies of Islam stationed and waited for their commander Qutaiba on the line of river Oxus.

Ommayed period is the second phase of Muslim conquest. Qutaiba was sent to Central Asia by Abdul Malik the son of the Caliph Walid. Samarkand, Tashkent, Bulkh, Farghana and Bukhara valley was under the

sway of Islam by him. The princes of these valleys surrendered and agreed to pay honor to Caliph.

When Qutaiba crossed the river Oxus in 710 A.D and reached Khwarzim the Shah (King) made peace with the Muslims. As the news came that Smarkand had thrown off the yoke of Islam. He recaptured it again by leading a campaign against it. He further conquered Khojand and other cities of Fergana in the next two or three years up to the frontiers of China. In 714 he conquered Kashgir and invaded the Chinese Turkistan. Central Asia was ruled by the Arabs from the Kingdom of Khurasan comprising these days western Afghanistan, Turkmenistan and Northern Iran. Marv was its capital. Seljuk Turks later developed this as a major seat of Islamic teachings. Philosophy, mysticism and Islamic thought were developed by the Arabs in Central Asia. Bukhara is second in respect to that of Makka for the Muslims. "The decisive victory of Islam ensured that the Chinese would encroach no further into Central Asia than Xingjung".<sup>3</sup>

furthermore the rule of Baghdad did not last any longer, the Muslim's viceroy at Marv was competent to extract tribute, and had totally left the day to day administration in to the hands of ambitious governors, appointed from local aristocracies. The new arrangement was in favor of the governors who were governing over Samarkand, Fergana, Tashkent and Heart. These rulers declared them hereditary monarchs of their principalities.

Many small and large kingdoms emerged in Central Asia in 1900 AD. Summand's dynasty was the most important who ruled from 874 to 999 with its capital as Bukhara. The Sammanids were great patrons of science and Islamic art and culture.<sup>4</sup> They were the descendants of Saman a Zorasrian lived in Bulkh in Afghanistan whose son Ismail ruled over the

whole of Khurassan and Persia. The Samanids had trade with Europe and China and they have a regular Army and bureaucracy.

In Central Asia Samanid left permanent imprints in Persian language and in court business and until the communists took over it could not be eroded. The political control shifted from the Persians to the Turks in 992. The Samanid were dislodged from Bukhara by the Karakhanid Turks. They had a positive mind; they adopted Islam and took it over to Kashgar and Tian-shan. While on the other hand seventeen raids were made on India by Mahmud of Ghazni and Islam was spread in the north of India and much areas of Central Asia was conquered.<sup>5</sup>

With the idea to conquer the world another Turkic dynasty the Saljuk dynasty (1037-1109) was established. Ghaznavids were defeated by them and the state of Kharakanids was reduced in the state of vassal. In Baghdad the Abbasids were removed from power and the Byzantine emperor Romans IV were imprisoned for two hundred years. The areas from Pamir to Iraq (united Central Asia) were ruled by the Seljuk's with Turkic hegemony.<sup>6</sup> The center of the Islamic world from Baghdad to Marv was shifted by the great Seljuk viceroy sultan Sanjar. Trade was highly developed through silk route between China, Syria and Central Asia in this period. Seljuk's were challenged by the Mongols and there dominion in Central Asia was attacked. "The Seljuk's high handedness is thus blamed for the Mongol onslaught over Asia and Europe mat was to follow".<sup>7</sup>

### ***Mangol Dynasty:***

The Bukhara was captured in 1220 by the Mongols and 30,000 people were killed and the city was burned. The whole Central Asia in a few months came under the sway of Mongo. Changiz Khan

captured India, Southern Russia, Beijing and the near east with the help of Tartar tribes in age of twelve years. The Mongols used horses and hunting tactics in war and they possess unique body features.<sup>8</sup>

The Turkish and Islamic Traditions were alive in Transoxiana by the Khorzimshahis dynasty. In 1220 Bukhara was captured by the Mongol Tartars. For good governance they involved the Subjugated Muslims in the affairs of the Empire because they lacked administrative genius. The Tartars descendants accept Islam by this mutual closeness. One lac Tartars accepted Islam in 1268 at the hands of Baraka Khan Sheikh Mohammad Ibrahim Hamavi. The whole of Mongols and Tartars slowly and gradually came under the fold of Islam and started reconstruction of the sacked civilization. The progress in knowledge and prosperity in all spheres of life started soon in this region. Astrakhan, Samarkand, Crimea, Chive and Bukhara were became the Centers of civilization and culture. "Central Asia was ruled after Chingiz Khan by his son Chagatai. He divided it in to two parts, Turkistan on the East and the Khanates of Transoxiana on the west."<sup>9</sup>

### **Taimuri Dynasty:**

Amir Taimur born in Shehr-e-Sabz (Kesh) in Modern, Uzbekistan in 1336, known in English literature as Timurelane or Timur the lame, due to an arrow wound at his right thigh. His career was started as a highwayman but in his late twenties he developed the idea to become the second Changiz Khan and conquer over the world. He conquered Turkistan with its capital in 1370 and built up a strong empire in sixteen century.<sup>10</sup> Its frontiers touched China on one side and Mediterranean coast on the other. He was a great Muslim conqueror but he was wrongly depicted as great demolisher and killer by many historians Timur built mosques and mausoleums near the graves of great Sufis, i.e. Hazrat Bahauddin Naqash band, and ShamsuddinKulya in ShehriSabz he

was a great lover of saints and Sufis. He built the largest stone rahel at Samarkand on which the Holy Quran used to be placed, he was buried at the feet of his teacher Mir Sayed Barakat at the end of it according to his will.<sup>11</sup>

At Bukhara, Chive, Samarkand, ShehriSabz and Timriz he also founded many mosques and madras's. To spread Islam it is for the first time that the preachers came to India. Timurlane built innumerable palaces in Samarkand but preferred to relax with his followers in silk tent on the banks of Zarafshan. The Spanish envoy RuyGonzelaz de Clavijo watched corrupt officials being hung up by their feet to die at a feast in 1403.<sup>12</sup> The threat was still used by the Russian mothers that the Tartars are coming to frighten the children on bed, or to do their homework.<sup>13</sup>

Baysunghar Mirza the grandson of Tamiur was not only the supporter of arts but was also a great calligraphist. Baysunghar Mirza copied the Holy Quran in a large size with nearly six feet high pages and placed it on rahel in mosque of Smarkand. The next field of advancement by the Taimurids was mathematics, astronomy and science. Shah Rukh the Governor of Samarkand and the son of Ulugh Beg is known as the Muslim world first scholar monarch. Who used to have intellectuals around him in his court this scientific and cultural progress of the region is beyond comparison in history. The great influences were not only left in Central Asia but also in the Turkey, Iran, India and Pakistan. In the history of Central Asia this period is known as the golden period.

### **Khanat Dynasty:**

A new tribal grouping the Shaybani Uzbeks replaced the Timurids dynasty. The Uzbek Khans were the mixture of Turkish and Mongol blood and part of the golden horde of Changiz Khan, but they remained nomad and remained untouched by the civilizing influences

of the urban life. The Uzbeks united under Mohammad Shaybani Khan and defeated the Timur's near Samarkand in the battle of Serpal. heir Babar in the battle of Serpal near Samarkand. The course of Indian history was changed by this battle. Babar founded the splendid Mughal dynasty in Delhi after he turned to Afghanistan and India. Abdullah Khan was one of the rulers of Shaibanid dynasty. Islam reached to its climax after the Smanids era he ruled for forty years. Abdullah Khan constructed some of the finest city's mosques and Madras's in his reign and extended the Khanate east to Kashgarand north to Tashkent.<sup>14</sup>

***Fall of Muslim rule:***

After a splendid rule of eleven hundred years the decline of the Muslims started in 15<sup>th</sup> century. They gradually lost their political power to the Slav; originally Scandinavians whose descendants are called the Russians and the country Russia are named after it.<sup>15</sup> Ivan was the fourth ruler of Moscow. He was continuously engaged in wars against Muslim Turks and Tartars and for the first time he adopted the title Czar. He established himself in the north in Astrakhan, Ural, Siberia, and in Volga regions in 1552 after he captured Kazan. The Russian forces subdue the local tribes and reached the Pacific Ocean. The Muslim tribes in Central Asia were rolling back by the Slav Crusades in the next two centuries. The first Czar to toy with Central Asia was Peter the great, determined to modernize Russia but lacking the funds to do it. He was moved by reports of gold in Central Asia and immeasurable wealth beyond the Pamirs in India. To help the Khan of Khiva he dispatched a task force to subdue raiders in the Khorez main Oasis. They reached Khiva in the summer of 1717 only to be butchered once inside the city walls.<sup>16</sup> When Peter the great conquered Caucasian region and successfully crushed the Muslim uprising led by Imam Shanyl

turned towards Central Asia to reach the warm waters, exploit the enormous wealth of India secure raw materials especially the cotton for their industries in Russia and new markets for their finished products in Asia.<sup>17,18</sup>

The Russians marched on the eastern side of Syrdarya and subdued the local tribes, while in the western side their forces reached Siberia. This strategy converged on Chimkent, which was captured in 1864. Kazalorda the main seat of Kazakh resistance had fallen in 1853 and (Vireny) now Alma Ata was founded a year later. The land between the two rivers was encircled from three sides and the Russians moved to conquer the rich agricultural heart land of Central Asia comprising modern Uzbekistan. In 1865 Tashkent and in 1868 Samarkand were captured by the Military campaigns. Russia made Bukhara as Russian protectorate and campaign against the Turkamenia in the South resulted in the capture of Khiva in 1873. Kokand finally fell in 1876 in the east.<sup>19</sup>

There is a threat of one third Muslims population in Russia for the rulers as government adopted cruel policies to either eliminate or at least weaken the strength of Muslims in Central Asia. Besides, proselytizing, massive deportation was carried out to ensure stability in Central Asia. The Central Asian Muslims were deported to Siberia, and the Russians were settled in Central Asia. It was almost a successful policy on the part of Russia for this area. Two million Russian farmers' artisans and tradesmen immigrated to Central Asia between the middle of 19th century. Local people were forced to obey Russian Government and Russian has dominated the trade while richer sort families as the Russian called Uzbeks engaged Russian tutors.<sup>20</sup>

In February 1917 the Russian Parliament, Doma requested Mauseokranski to take the reign of power. He immediately formed an interim Government and put the Czar and his family under the bars.

When the Bolshevik revolution took place in 1917, there was a considerable hope in Central Asia that Lenin's promise of self-determination would mean that Russia would either grant full independence to Central Asia or at least much greater autonomy. In Lenin's first appeal to the Muslims of Russia, he linked the Bolshevik program of self-determination to be a revolt in Central Asia against Czarism.<sup>21</sup>

The Central Asian Muslims extended full co-operation to the Bolshevik revolutionaries but tacitly hoped to receive independence for themselves which was not granted to them. Instead, the Russian workers and soldiers dismissed the provincial Government and established the first Soviet in Central Asia in October 1917. As a reaction the Muslims held a separate Muslim congress and demanded autonomy for Central Asia, which was ignored by the Tashkent Soviet, The Muslim leaders then held another congress in Kokand in December, 1917 and announced the formation of a separate provincial Government which would seek independence from Russia. Thus there existed two parallel Governments, the Russian at Tashkent, supported by the communists, and the Muslim provisional Government based on Turkic nationalism. In February 1918 the Tashkent government attacked the city inhabitants at Kokand and killed them, resulted in the creation of Basmachi rebel movement. It was a semi organized movement by Ergash, a police officer in the Kokand Government. The Basmachis were local guerilla groups led by mulluhs, tribal chiefs and land lords, who resisted Bolsheviks rule in Central Asia and continued their un-abated struggle till 1930.<sup>22</sup>

The movement soon spread with a slogan that Turkistan is for Turks and is to be made free from the bondage of Russia. Enver Pasha was great nationalist Patriot gave an ultimatum to the Bolshevik on 19<sup>th</sup>

May, 1922 to grant self-determination or face the Muslim. He fought many wars against the Bolsheviks sometimes with temporary victories, but lost his life at the cost of freedom for Central Asia. It is still a sensitive issue to handle the nomadic and tribal people.

The Russians planned Central Asia in to separate republics on ethno-linguistic lines, abolishing religion as identity factor and created new administrative and territorial units based on the nationality criteria. The Marxists revolutionaries tried their best to exterminate the age long cultural unity of the area and to create a soviet man in Central Asia. It is a fact that East is not west and Muslims are not Russians. The same process of Soveitization and Russification had already been failed to bring the desired results in the period of Czars. The revolutionaries wanted to create cohesion with in Russian state for this purposed in 1921 Central Asia was reorganized politically and economically in to one unit to become an integral part of the grand Soviet Union.

The other important target of the communists was to replace the old cultural institutions with new one and fit it in the Soviet pattern. The first tasks was in the field of education under which all traditional schools were closed, religious education was forbidden, and various attempts were made to indoctrinate new education form childhood to the adult with the primary purpose of influencing new lessons of communism.<sup>23</sup>

Old Madrassas were changed with new schools and old ideas with new thoughts. Old centers of learning in Bukhara, Tashkent, Merv, Khozend, and Kokand were closed and new Universities were opened, with new big cities like Tashkent, Alma Ata, Beshkik, Ashiqabad and Dushambe were built. Besides, new research centers for higher studies aiming socio-economic developments were also established. All these were revolutionary steps to bring changes in the

minds of Muslims and even their names were Russified strictly. By 1985, the communists closed down all Madrassas except one in Bukhara, and decided to send a few people to Mecca to perform Haj. Eid festivals were also banned, and animal sacrifice or slaughter was forbidden. The fasting in Ramzan was strongly discouraged on the ground that it reduces productivity and is a pre Arab pagan custom.<sup>24</sup>

The women were forbidden to wear veils and an environment created for young boys and girls to go for date together which never happened as a usual practice. The Mosques were either razed or converted into social centers. Eventually in 1934 the Government ordered complete ban on the performance of Haj and printing of the copies of holy Quran.<sup>25</sup> The power of Islam to unite different tribal and ethnic groups or as an ideology to mobilize the people was weakened and allowed the Bolsheviks easily to crush Islam after they had attained complete power in Central Asia.<sup>26</sup> All this was done to crackdown the idea of pan Islamism or Pan Turkism in Central Asia.

To introduce new culture, the soviet union adopted new standards of living, table manners, new food, habits new theatres, films, operas, music and dance, but they have failed to efface the local traditional practices and manners. They have only added to the traditional heritage. Whereas, in every Muslim locality, the social etiquettes of old, the social habits, love for traditional culture, values arts and crafts, the traditional desterkhwan, the dress, food music and dance still continue and inspire the people. This love for the traditional culture got impetus, when Gorbachev relaxed the strict measures to certain extent and even in hard days the Central Asian Muslim had tried to adhere to the Islamic way of life. The Soviet Union introduced enormous changes in the Central Asia's economy. New urban and rural planning was made in consonance with communism which meant equal economic development of the

whole country. As the region was mainly agricultural, so cooperative forming, with improved system of irrigation and the use of machinery was introduced there. All these measures were controlled by the communist party of Soviet Union.

***Conclusion:***

Islam came into Central Asia, spread and go deep routed stability in the region. Different dynasties emerged and diminished. One after other Muslim rulers replaced each other. A time comes when Central Asia touched the glory of human knowledge and civilization but they failed to keep their glory for long time because of their mutual differences.

Muslim scholars and scientists contributed enormously. Muslim when remain committed and devoted to the cause changed Life style of the people and developed the region but when tag of war started among them they lost their previous glory and a time come when they lost their power and government as well. 16<sup>th</sup> century saw downfall of Muslims in Central Asia. Czar of Russia established their rule and even they alter the entire life pattern.

To prevent any future insurgency in CARs Russian emperors dislocate the native population. Muslims of these republics were distributed to other parts of Russia which give them relief regarding any uprising from Muslim side. They took all steps to prevent Muslim's insurgency. Russian government Russified the culture and education of the region.

***References***

---

<sup>1</sup> Zhuangzhi. Sun"the relationship between china and Central Asia, P, 42 Net. Accessed 28.6.2012

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> P.K. Hitti History of the Arabs Macmillan London 1946. P.54

<sup>4</sup> Ibid

<sup>5</sup> P.K. Hitti History of the Arabs Op. cit. p.13

<sup>6</sup> Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Gilles whittle op. cit.P.51.

<sup>9</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>10</sup> Op.cit.

<sup>11</sup> Ahmad Rashid op.cit.p-8.2A.H.DaniOp. cit. P.39.

<sup>12</sup> A.H. DaniOp.cit. P.39.

<sup>13</sup> A.H. DaniOp.cit. P.39.

<sup>14</sup> Gilles whittle Op. cit. P.52.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Digest monthly current Affairs Book-5, January 1995, P. 45

<sup>18</sup> Ahmad Rashid Op. cit. p.18

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Gilles whittle, A practical hand book on central Asia Op. cit. P.54.

<sup>21</sup> Ahmad Rashid Op. cit. P. 21

<sup>22</sup> Ibid

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Alexander Beningson and Mari Broxup the Islamic threat to the USSR Cromhelm Ltd. London 1984.

Pp. 45-64.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid

<sup>26</sup> A.H.DaniNew lights in Central AsiaOp,cit PP. 26-78.