

People and Culture of Pakistan

Ethnic Groups

According to the latest census, the population comprises several main ethnic groups - Punjabis ((44.15% of the population), Pashtuns (15.42%), Sindhis (14.1%), Seraikis (10.53%), Muhajirs (7.57%), Balochis (3.57%), and others (4.66%). Smaller ethnic groups, such as Turwalis, Kafiristanis, Hindko, Brahui, Kashmiris, Khowar, and Shina, are mainly found in the northern parts of the country. Pakistan's census does not include the sizeable refugee population from neighbouring Afghanistan, who are found mainly in the NWFP and Baluchistan. From the 1980s, Pakistan accommodated over three million Afghan refugees - the largest refugee population in the world, including Pashtuns, Tajiks, Turkmen and Hazaras. If Afghan refugees were added to the official population, total figures would alter the percentages of Pashtuns and the category of others. Most of the Afghan refugees have permanently settled in Pakistan due to continuing violence in Afghanistan. A large number of Bengali, Arab, Burmese and African Muslim refugees are concentrated in Karachi whilst hundreds of thousands of Iranian migrants are scattered throughout the country. There are also communities of Chinese, Arab and Greek descent.

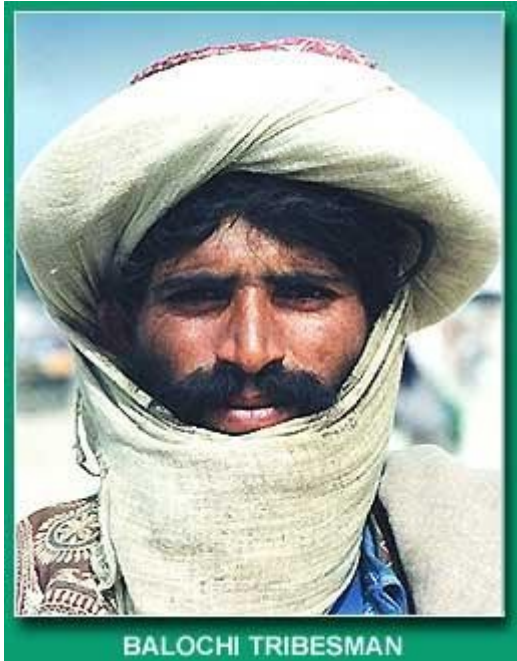
The Bloch

Despite contrasts and a variety of economic and cultural patterning – the Bloch social structure remains tribal. Tribal society is in all cases governed by a very definite constitution and system of laws regulating marriage, inheritance, religious observance, dispute resolution, decision-making, duties, rights and so forth. The Tribal society is the social system organized around extended family relations where rights and duties are conferred by tribal law, based on relationships of kinship. Bloch society has been formed through many influences; among the most important are tribalism and nomadic.



People of Sind

Sindhhi refers to an Indo-Aryan language speaking socio-ethnic group of people originating in Sindh which is part of present day Pakistan. Sindhhis that live in Pakistan are predominantly Muslim, while many Sindhhi Hindus immigrated to India when British India was divided in 1947. Some Sindhhi speaking people of formerly untouchable castes known as Haris and practising what is generally known as folk Hinduism are still found in rural Pakistan.



BALOCHI TRIBESMAN

PEOPLE OF PUNJAB

The rich and fertile land of the Punjab was the meeting ground of different people and races. Its population descends from various stocks and consists of heterogeneous racial elements. In ancient times it was mostly inhabited by a race that the Aryans later called Dasyus. They were pushed towards the south by the Indo-Aryans. But a small section of Dasyus remained in the Punjab. Later on, the Persians, the Greeks, the Parthians, the Scythians, the Kushans, the Huns, the Turks, the Mongols and the Afghans made successive inroads into Punjab and some of them settled there permanently and adjusted themselves to the new social system, adopting the customs and tradition of the conquered land. They soon merged into the indigenous population and in the process; some of their own cultural traits became part of the culture of the Punjab. The present inhabitants of the Punjab are the descendants of the various racial stocks which entered it during the different stages of its history.

The Jats, who belong to the agriculturist's class, form the bulk of population of the present Punjabis. They are sturdy, self-willed and industrious and are

among the finest peasants of India. They are generally tall and muscular, with well-shaped limbs, an erect carriage and strongly marked and sharp handsome features



THE PEOPLE OF THE NORTH-WEST FRONTIER

The Pthans (also Pushtun, Pakhtun, ethnic Afghan, or Pashtun) are an ethno-linguistic group consisting mainly of eastern Iranian stock living primarily in eastern and southern Afghanistan, and the North West Frontier, Federally Administered Tribal Area and Baluchistan provinces of Pakistan. Large additional colonies can be found in the, Northern Area and Azad Kashmir and there are thought to be about 3 million in the city of Karachi, 1 million in Islamabad/ Rawalpindi and an additional million in Lahore, as well as being scattered throughout other parts of Afghanistan. There are smaller

communities in Iran and India, and a large migrant worker community in the countries of the Arabian Peninsula. The Pathans are typically characterized by their language, their pre-Islamic indigenous code of honor and culture Pashtunwali, and adherence to Islam.

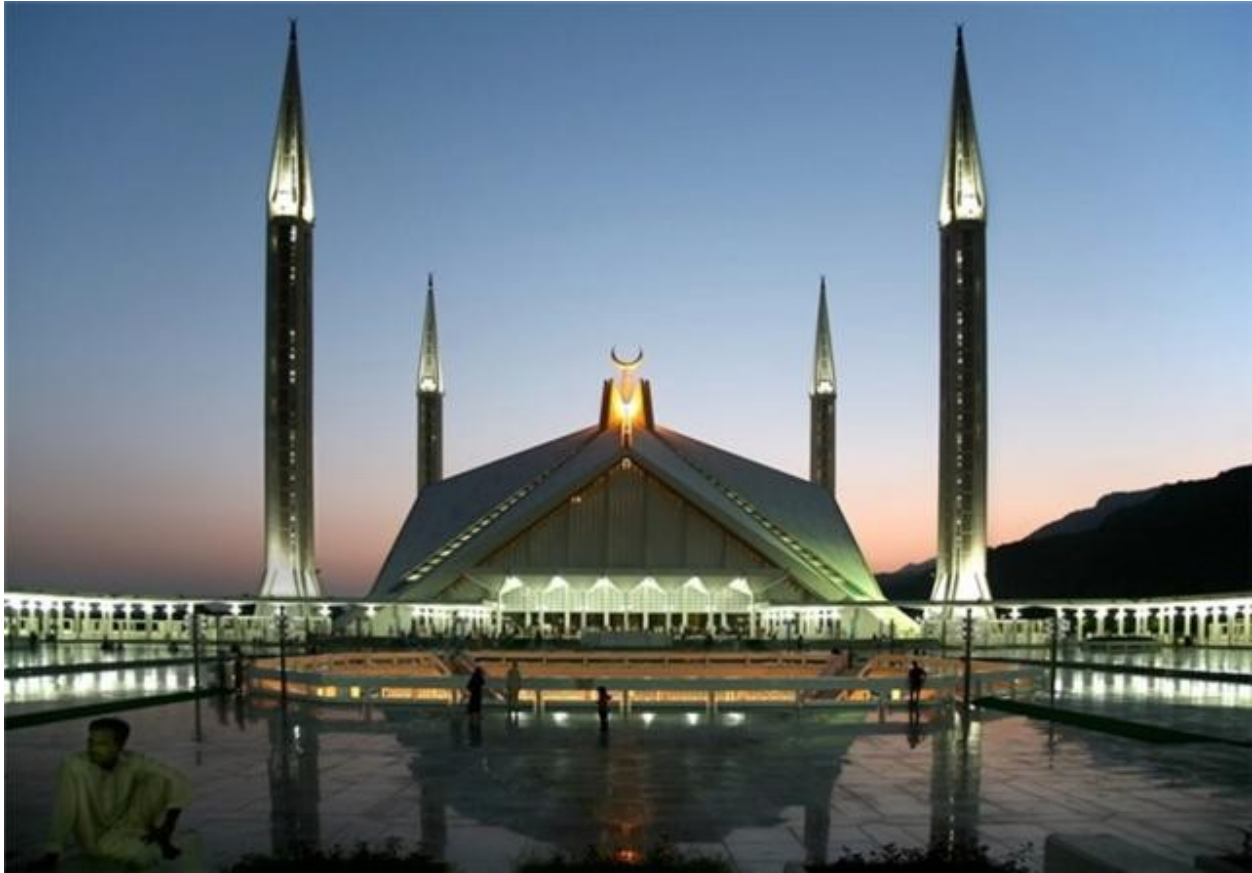


Religions in Pakistan

Census data indicates that over 98% of the population is Muslims. The Muslims are divided into different sects who are called schools of jurisprudence i.e. 'Maktab-e-Fikr' (School of Thought) in Urdu. Nearly 80% of Pakistani Muslims are Sunni Muslims and 20% are Shi'a Muslims. The nearly all Pakistani Sunni Muslims belong to Hanafi School with a small Hanbali school represented by Wahabis and Ahle Hadith. The Hanafi School is divided into Barelvis and Deobandis schools. While majority of Pakistani Shia Muslims belong to Ithna 'Ashariyah School with significant minority of Nizari Khoja Ismailis (Aga Khanis) and a small Mustaali Dawoodi Bohra schools. By one estimate, in Pakistan, Muslims are divided into following schools: the Barelvis 48%, Deobandis 25%, Ithna Ashari 19%, Ahle Hadith 4%, Ismailis 1%, Bohras 0.25%, and other smaller sects. The Ahle-e-Hadith are part of Hanbali school. Nearly 65% of the total seminaries (Madrassah) are run by Deobandis, 25 per cent by the Barelvis, six percent by the Ahle Hadith and three percent by various Shia organizations. Zikris are considered to be a heretical sect by mainstream Muslims.

The non-Muslim population mainly comprises of Christians (1% of the population) and Hindus (1%), with smaller numbers of Ahmadis, Buddhists, Jews, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, and Animists (mainly the Kalash in Chitral). Pakistan's religious demographics has been significantly influenced by the movement of populations in 1947 (millions of Muslims moved to Pakistan and millions of Hindus and Sikhs moved to India) and the wars in Afghanistan (millions of refugees who have become permanent residents).

Although there are very few Sikhs in Pakistan today, the country has a significant place in Sikhism. **Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikhism was born in present-day Pakistan**, and it is said he received his message near Lahore. Therefore, the religion actually originated in Pakistan. Most of Sikhism's holy sites are located in Pakistan. Many other great Sikh leaders, including Ranjit Singh and several gurus, were born in Pakistan. Ranjit Singh is buried in Lahore.



Pakistan is also the birthplace of Mahayana Buddhism, the form of Buddhism that is practiced by most Buddhists today, includes those in India, Japan, China, Korea, and Vietnam. The religion enjoyed prominence in the northwestern section of the country up until the arrival of Islam.

Islam was brought to the South Asian subcontinent in the eighth century by wandering Sufi mystics known as pir. As in other areas where it was introduced by Sufis, Islam to some extent concretized with pre-Islamic influences, resulting in a religion traditionally more flexible than in the Arab world. Two Sufis whose shrines receive much national attention are Data Ganj Baksh in Lahore (ca. eleventh century) and Shahbaz Qalander in Sehwan, Sindh (ca. twelfth century).



Languages in Pakistan

Urdu and English are both recognized as the official languages of Pakistan. English is used by the government, corporate businesses, and the educated urban elite. Most universities use English as the medium of instruction for degree courses. Urdu is the lingua franca of the people, being widely spoken as a second language, although it is the mother tongue of only 7.57% of the population, mainly Muhajirs (Muslim refugees from India after 1947), while an unknown percentage of Punjabis of urban

areas appear to be switching to the usage of Urdu as well.

Additionally, nearly all Pakistanis speak mutually-intelligible regional Indo-Iranian languages of the Indo-European family. The most widely spoken is Punjabi, followed by Pashto, Sindhhi, and Balochi. Other Indo-European languages spoken in Pakistan include Siraiki, Dari, Hindko, Pothohari, Gujarati, Shina, Wakhi, Kashmiri, Marwari, Khowar, Memoni, and many others. In addition, small groups of non-Indo-European languages are also spoken, including Brahui, a Dravidian language, and Burushaski, a language isolate.

Festivals in Pakistan

Pakistan's calendar features a great many festivals, both purely cultural and also religious. Others are in memory of National Heroes or commemorate political events in the nation's recent history. Muslim festivals are celebrated according to Muslim (Lunar) Calendar and may occur some 10 days earlier each successive Christian Year.

There are several folk and festivals held regularly in every part of the country. Exact dates of such festivals are fixed annually by the District Administration of the respective area, at least 01 month in advance, according to the tradition.

Eid-ul-Fitr

A religious festival at the end of fasting month celebrated on 1st of Shawwal, the 10th month of Islamic Calendar. Special prayer offered after

sun-rise, exchange of sweet dishes, and visits to relatives, friends are swap



over.

Eid-ul-Azha

A religious festival honors the great sacrifice, in memory of Prophet Abraham, celebrated on 10 Zilhaj, 12th month of Islamic Calendar. Collective prayers after sun rise, sacrifice of goats, sheep, cows or camels

and distribution of meat among relatives, friends and poor.



Spring festival of Colors and Kite-flying

The festival is held on the second weekend of February. The skies over Lahore explode in a kaleidoscope of color. As the first kite rises over the horizon, a joust for supremacy begins that brings millions of kites of all

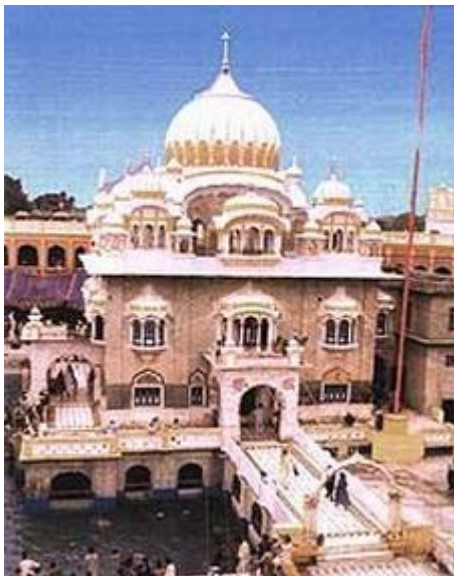
shapes and sizes, soaring to challenge it. This is a time for festivities that reflect the true Lahori spirit of good-natured competition and appetite for celebration. For a visitor, Basant is the ideal time to appreciate the mood and magic of Lahore. From the floodlit skies, the manic beat of the 'dhol' and cries of 'Bo kata!' each time the opposition loses a kite, to a constant feast that lasts an entire week. Lahore displays a charm and hospitality unmatched and unrivalled by any other city in the world.



Besakhi festival

Besakhi festival originally started at the time of Aryans arrival in subcontinent but later on it became very popular in Punjab. The first harvesting of wheat in Punjab is sign of happiness and prosperity among the Punjabi farmers and Besakhi is celebrated as an expression of their joy.

The main event of the Besakhi mela will be held on 13 April, the second day of the festival. Gurdwara, which means a door to Guru, is related to Baba Guru Nanak, the founder of Sikh religion. According to the Sikh religion, the Besakhi festival is celebrated only at the holy city of Hassanabdal, where lies the Gurdwara Punja Sahib. In 1921, it was decided by the Gurus (elders) of the Sikh religion to celebrate the event on the first day of Sunsikrat month of Besakh in memory of the day of the first Besakh in the year 1699 when the 10th Guru of the Sikh religion awarded Punj Kaaf slot and symbol to Guru Goband at the city of Anandpur Sahib (India).



Shandur Polo Festival

The favorite sport in Northern Areas is polo, which originated here. It is a more rugged, free-style version than the sedate variety known in the plains.

Passion for Polo is the highest on the world's highest polo ground. Shandur invites visitors to experience a traditional Polo tournament between the teams of Chitral and Gilgit during the second week of July. The tournament is held on Shandur Pass, the highest Polo ground in the world at 3700 meters. The festival also includes folk music, dancing and a camping village is set up.



Lok Mela

Folk Festival held at Islamabad, folk Music, folk dances, artisans at work, exhibition and sale of handicrafts. The festival presents a unique opportunity to watch the culture and craft of the whole country at one place.



SUFI FESTIVALS

The fairs held at the shrines of Sufi saints are called *Urs*. They generally mark the death anniversary of the saint. On these occasions devotees assemble in large numbers and pay homage to the memory of the saint. Soul inspiring music is played and devotees dance in ecstasy. The music on these occasions is essentially folk and appealing. It forms a part of the folk music through mystic messages. The most important Urs are: Urs of Data Ganj Bukhsh at Lahore, Urs of Hazrat Mian Mir at Lahore, Urs of Baba Farid Ganj Shakar at Pakpattan, Urs of Hazrat Bahaudin Zakria at Multan, Urs of Sakhi Sarwar Sultan at Dera Ghazi Khan, Urs of Shah Hussain at Lahore, Urs of Hazrat Bullehe Shah at Kasur and Urs of Hazrat Imam Bari (Bari Shah Latif) at Rawalpindi-Islamabad.

A big fair is organized at Jandiala Sher Khan in district Sheikhupura on the Mausoleum of Syed Waris Shah who is the most loved Sufi poet of Punjab

due to his work known as Heer Ranjha.



Art & Crafts

Pakistan has every reason to be proud of the thousands of year's old and rich tradition of its arts and crafts. In the post-independence period, the successive governments have been providing substantial state help and initiative for the uplift of arts and crafts in the country. A wider recognition of the accomplishments of crafts-people has been facilitated by the activities

of the National Crafts Council and promotional plans of organizations such as the Export Promotion Bureau and Small Industries Corporations. Pakistani craftsmen are well reputed in producing quality products in clay, stone, fabrics, carpets, wood, metal, jewelry and leather.

Pakistan has been the cradle of a civilization that dates back to 7000 B.C. Over the centuries, through successive waves of migrations from the north-west, as well as by internal migrations across the subcontinent, Aryans, Persians, Greeks, Arabs, and Mughals came and settled in this region. However, it was Islam and Islamic traditions that finally took roots and formed the mainspring of Pakistan's cultural heritage.

Muslims from the earliest days, built cities, forts, palaces, mosques, madrassas ((religious schools), tombs and mausoleums which are marked by simplicity and grandeur, with open spaces and abundance of light in accordance with the Islamic concept of man's direct and open relationship with the Creator. Pakistan inherits immense treasure of culture, and the government is trying its best to preserve and promote this cultural treasure. There are several government agencies such as Pakistan National Council of Arts, Lok Virsa (Folk Heritage), National Film Development Corporation, Authority for Preservation of Moenjodaro and National Archives of Pakistan, each to perform a given set of functions in this area.

Art & Craft from Pakistan

- Woodwork
- Pottery, Lacquer Work
- Marble And Onyx Carvings Embroidery
- Mirror work
- Naqashi Traditional Mughal Painting of Furniture
- Objects
- Walls And Ceilings
- Stone Carving in The Ghandhara Tradition
- Beadwork
- Patchwork- Rillies of Sindh
- Block Printing – Ajrak of Sindh And Multani Work
- Leather
- Basketry

- Tile work
- Painting



suhail akhtar
Photography





Music of Pakistan

The music of Pakistan can be categorized into six general groups: classical, semi-classical/ghazal, folk, qawwali/devotional, filmi, pop/rock. These categories overlap considerably, and many artists are able to perform in more than one of the listed genres. It has much in common with Indian music, although it has a regional flavor of its own.



Classical

In Pakistan the main form of classical music is fast disappearing, however it still forms the basis of most other musical genres. Ghazal and qawwali music make use of many musical instruments such as the (sitar, tabla,

harmonium, santoor etc). Pakistani folk, filmi and even some pop/rock also hold some classical elements.

Many Pakistani musicians of other genre (particularly ghazal, qawwali and folk musicians) therefore are nonetheless trained in Subcontinent classical, and often belong to a gharana.

One of the most prominent gharanas in Pakistan is the Patiala gharana, to which the great Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan, and the brothers Ustad Amanat Ali Khan and Ustad Bade Fateh Ali Khan belong.

Pakistani Food

Pakistani Cuisine is, to some extent, identical to North Indian cuisine, especially in the regions of Punjab and Sindh. However, due to its location in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent, there is significant regional variation; for example, the western portions of Pakistan have cuisine that is more similar with that of Afghanistan and Iran. Much of the food is referred to as Mughlai cuisine, especially in the east, and varies from its neighbors in that it is spicier than the cuisine in other parts of the Middle East and less spicy than that of India. One could term it a unique blend of Indo-Iranian, but, more realistically, it is perhaps best described as a nation with many different types of foods, the east and, to some extent, the North West Frontier Province being almost identical to North Indian (Punjabi) cuisine and the west being more similar to the cuisine of Iran. Often, both interlap, especially in Mughlai cuisine. The most prominent Pakistani cuisine, though, is the Mughlai cuisine which is also prominent throughout northern India.

Food Street in Gawalmandi, Lahore is a centre of traditional Pakistani food. The site is surrounded by centuries old buildings and places like Landa Bazaar, Mayo Hospital and Baansan-wala Bazaar. The food street is open to traffic in the morning but as the sun sets, the street is blocked off. Hungry visitors arrive and stay till very late at night, enjoying some of the best local food available in Lahore.

The traditional Kashmiri-Persian architecture can still be seen, used extensively in buildings surrounding that place, as seen in the pictures below. The pictures were taken without a flash, in order to capture the ambiance of Food Street.

One simply cannot miss going here once in Lahore. It is the ultimate place to check out if you want to know the true Lahori culture. Apart from the food, it is the people, the shops, the live 'chefs', the well-preserved almost historic buildings that are the real crowd pullers!

