

On the Study of The Life and Activity of Ashurali Zohiriy

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Abstract: The article analyzes the life, socio-political activities, and scholarly and creative legacy of Ashurali Zohiri, one of the prominent representatives of the Jadid intelligentsia in Turkestan at the beginning of the 20th century. Based on archival materials and scholarly publications, the study highlights his contributions to the development of the public education system, national journalism, linguistics, and the enlightenment movement in Turkestan. Special attention is given to Ashurali Zohiri's role in the national liberation movement, his pedagogical and publishing activities, as well as his tragic fate during the Stalinist repressions.

Keywords: Jadidism, Turkestan, national intelligentsia, enlightenment, journalism, linguistics, repressions.

Introduction: The role and significance of a group of progressive intellectuals in the course of historical processes in Turkestan at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries are undoubtedly of paramount importance. Therefore, in conducting research on this complex period, particular attention should be paid to the study of the lives and activities of individual figures, as well as to a careful examination of the specific features of the socio-political, economic, and ideological environment in which they lived. Such an approach contributes to resolving many historical problems. From this perspective, the study of the life path of one of the prominent representatives of the Kokand Jadids, Ashurali Zohiriy (1885–1937), remains one of the important tasks of contemporary scholarship.

Jadidism was a movement and ideology of national awakening in the history of Turkestan, aimed at responding to the demands of a new era, educating the nation through new methods, and ultimately achieving independence. Within the framework of this idea and movement, the life and activity of Ashurali Zohiriy, like those of other progressive Jadid reformers of Turkestan, attracted the close attention of both his contemporaries and later scholars.

In general, studies related to the life and activity of Ashurali Zohiriy can be classified into three main periods:

- Soviet-era studies;
- post-independence studies;
- foreign scholarship.

Scholarly opinions on the life and activity of Ashurali Zohiriy began to emerge during his own lifetime. In particular, a number of contemporary intellectuals—such as Abdulla Qodiriy, Elbek, Sanjar Siddiq, Hazratiy, Ne'mat Hakim, O'ktam, and Lutfulla Olimiy—expressed their views on his activities as well as on his articles published in the periodical press.

For example, in the article entitled “The Congress on Language and Orthography,” published in the Qizil Bayroq newspaper on 7 January 1921, Sanjar Siddiq presented his reflections on the report delivered by Ashurali Zohiriy at the congress, alongside those of Vadud Mahmud, Zehniy, and Hamid Sulaymon.

In addition, Ne'mat Hakim, in his article titled “The Continued Orthography Debate,” published in the Turkiston newspaper on 29 September 1923, analyzed Ashurali Zohiriy's article “A Glance at the Past,” which

appeared in issue 100 of the Farg'ona newspaper, and critically assessed his views on orthography.

Another contemporary intellectual, Elbek, also responded to Ashurali Zohiriy's article, which had been criticized by Ne'mat Hakim, through his own article titled "Approaching Times," published in the Turkiston newspaper on 22 September 1923, effectively replying to Zohiriy's aforementioned piece.

At the same time, other contemporaries such as O'ktam and Hazratiy also expressed their views on Ashurali Zohiriy's scholarly activities in the pages of the periodical press. For instance, the author O'ktam, in his article titled "Regarding the Orthography Conference of the Uzbeks of Central Asia," published in the Turkiston newspaper on 24 October 1923, listed the names of many participating Uzbek intellectuals and specifically acknowledged Ashurali Zohiriy's active participation.

Among the articles offering scholarly reflections on Ashurali Zohiriy's activities, the article by Hazratiy titled "Comprehensive Russian-Uzbek Dictionary," published in the Qizil O'zbekiston newspaper on 14 November 1927, is particularly noteworthy. In this article, the author shared his views on the Comprehensive Russian-Uzbek Dictionary, prepared for publication by Ashurali Zohiriy. This important work of Zohiriy was published in 1927 in two volumes by the Uzbekistan State Publishing House and represented a major achievement in Uzbek lexicography in the early twentieth century. Hazratiy highly praised Zohiriy's research and recognized it as a significant service to the Uzbek people.

In addition, information about Ashurali Zohiriy's activities was also provided in the "Xabarlar" sections of the contemporary press. For example, in the "Qizil Bayroq" newspaper issue dated 7 April 1922, the news item titled "Regional Congress of Uzbek Cultural and Educational Figures" noted that, alongside Mirzohid Oqilov and Lutfulla Olimiy, Ashurali Zohiriy delivered a report on the press activities in Fergana.

Moreover, in the "Qizil O'zbekiston" newspaper issue dated 19 May 1929, in the article titled "Issues of the Uzbek Literary Language: Discussions on the Literary Language at the Uzbek Language-Orthography Conference," it was emphasized that, along with Anqaboy, Xo'janov, G'ozzi Olim, B. Rahmatov, Abdulla Avloniy, Botu (Mahmud Xodiyev), Qayum Ramazon, Hasan, and Elbek, Ashurali Zohiriy also took the floor at

the conference.

It is worth noting that the articles published by contemporary intellectuals in the above-mentioned periodicals are primarily related to Ashurali Zohiriy's work in the fields of language, orthography, and lexicography, and therefore cannot fully reveal the complete picture of his socio-political activities.

In addition, books authored by contemporary intellectuals also provide information about Ashurali Zohiriy, the subject of our research. For example, Mo'minjon Muhammadjonov, in his book compiling memoirs titled *Turmush urinishlari: Madrasa talabasining kundaligi* ("Life Endeavors: The Diary of a Madrasa Student"), published in 1925, reflects on the friends he made throughout his life and writes the following:

"In many cities of Turkistan, I became acquainted with numerous progressive (patriotic), thoughtful, and enlightened young people. In Namangan: Zayniddin Qori, Dadamirza Qori, Diydavoy Qori, G'afur Hoji, Abdullajon, Muhammad Ibrohim, Inomjon, Tojixo'ja Qori, Abdulmo'min Bazzoz, G'ulom Mahdum, To'shxo'ja, Lutfulloxon Olim, and several others; in Samarkand: Mahmudxo'ja Behbudiy, Muallim Hoji Muin, Muallim Abduqodir Shakuriy, Abdulloh Badriy, and a few others; in Bukhara: Fitrat, Po'latxo'ja; in Tashkent: Munavvarqori, Abdulla Avloniy, Eshonxo'ja, Hasanxo'ja Qori, Mulla Abdulla, Muhammadjon Qori, Muallim Rustambek, Umarqul, Shokirjon and Sobirjon Rahimiy, Abdulla Qodiriy (Julqunboy), G'ulom Zafariy, and others; in Kokand: Ashurali Zohiriy, Mirzohid, Mir Hamid, Mir Shohid, Yunusjon Hoji, Abdulvahob Muallim, Obidjon Mahmudov (Chatoq), Mulla Po'lat, and several others."

In the book *Materials on the History of Uzbek Periodical Press (1927)* by Ziyoy Said, a contemporary of Ashurali Zohiriy, information is also provided regarding Zohiriy's publishing and journalistic activities. The author notes that Ashurali Zohiriy was active in the newspapers *Xalq Gazetasi*, *Farg'ona*, and *Yangi Farg'ona*. Ziyoy Said further comments on *Xalq Gazetasi* as follows:

"Its first issue was published on December 4, 1918, under the editorial responsibility of the National Affairs Commissioner (Kokand Commissioner) Ahmad Devishev. This newspaper was the publication of the National Affairs Board under the Council of Muslim

Workers, Peasants, and Red Soldiers of Kokand. Its circulation ranged between 1,000 and 1,500 copies, some of which were sold while others were distributed free of charge. On August 27, 1919, the 39th issue was released, in which Ashurali Zohiriy opened a major discussion regarding the new orthography, and his proposed spelling reforms were subjected to strong criticism."

Another important work providing information about Ashurali Zohiriy is Miyonbuzruk Solihov's *Manifestations of Nationalism in Uzbek Literature: A Brief History*, published in 1933. Solihov's book was written under the strict directive of the Soviet authorities, and anyone familiar with its content can clearly discern—from the title itself—that it reflects Bolshevik-style analyses.

In later years, Soviet-era researchers such as A. Boboxonov, R. Tojiboyev, A. Madaminov, O. Usmonov, S. Akobirov, K. Yusupov, A. Aliyev, and M. Hakimov also conducted scholarly studies on the life and academic activities of Ashurali Zohiriy.

Among these, A. Madaminov's articles published in the periodical press, titled *The Lamp of Enlightenment* and *A Versatile Creator*, are considered particularly significant in illuminating Ashurali Zohiriy's life and work. In these articles, the scholar presented his academic reflections and data regarding Zohiriy's biography, his years of education, and his pedagogical expertise.

In particular, R. Tojiboyev's article *The Enlightened Teacher*, published in issue 5 of the Soviet School journal in 1988, is considered an important study on Ashurali Zohiriy. Writing about Zohiriy, R. Tojiboyev noted:

"Ashurali Zohiriy is one of the cherished figures who left a brilliant mark in the history of our culture and education. He earned respect among the people as an enlightened teacher, skilled journalist, translator, historian, and calligrapher. During his studies at the Muhammad Alikhon Madrasa in Kokand (1898–1907), Ashurali observed the highs and lows of life, sincerely lamented the condition of the people trapped in ignorance due to colonial oppression, and saw the path to a prosperous life for the nation through knowledge and education..."

In this way, Tojiboyev gave a high appraisal of Zohiriy's

role in the early twentieth-century progressive movement in Kokand.

A thorough study and research of Ashurali Zohiriy's life and activities became possible only after Uzbekistan gained independence. During this period, researchers such as X. Uzoqov, A. Jalolov, A. Nurmonov, N. Mahmudov, T. Pidayev, N. Abduazizova, T. Tog'ayev, T. Qozoqov, S. Ahmedov, B. Hasanov, Z. Eshonxodjayeva, Q. Rajabov, N. Zoitova, R. Rahimov, B. Irzayev, D. Jamolova, G. Soatova, and M. Alijonov conducted studies on Ashurali Zohiriy's life and work, his linguistic views, as well as his social, political, and economic reflections.

Among the research conducted during the independence period, the scholarly work of Haydarali Uzoqov holds particular significance. H. Uzoqov initially published his article "The Pride of Uzbek Lexicography" in issue of the Uzbekiston Ovozi newspaper dated 28 January 1992, thereby reigniting scientific research on Ashurali Zohiriy in the post-independence era.

In this article, H. Uzoqov noted that Ashurali Zohiriy published numerous scholarly, methodological, and journalistic articles in newspapers such as *Farg'ona*, *Sadoyi Farg'ona*, *Sadoyi Turkiston*, as well as in periodicals of the 1920s, including *Maorif va o'qitg'uvchi* and *Alanga*. In total, before the revolution, he had 52 articles published, many of which were incisive analyses on Uzbek linguistics, lexicography, orthography, correct writing practices, language relations, issues of Arabic and Latin scripts, and matters related to the Russian language.

Furthermore, the article emphasizes that after the revolution, Ashurali Zohiriy produced over 40 additional scholarly articles, reports, and journalistic pieces. These works are of great significance for studying the subtle aspects of the first quarter of the 20th century, including hardships of daily life, the horrors of famine, the oppressive systems that caused them, and the injustices and violence of the time.

The article also examines Ashurali Zohiriy's lexicographical work, highlighting his Russian–Uzbek dictionary, some parts of which are presented as appendices for the reader's attention.

In her 2000 study "History of the Press in Turkistan (1870–1917)", N. Abduazizova also provides information on Ashurali Zohiriy's publishing and

journalistic activities. For instance, the book notes that although the language of the newspaper “Sadoyi Farg’ona”, where Ashurali Zohiriy worked as a proofreader, was considered Uzbek, it frequently contained Arabic and Persian sentences.

Additionally, Abduazizova’s research presents information about “El Bayrog’i”, a newspaper for which Ashurali Zohiriy served as editor. This newspaper began publication in September 1917, with slogans such as “Long Live Turkistan Autonomy” and “Long Live the United People’s Republic.”

The study also discusses “Yurt” magazine, which Ashurali Zohiriy personally founded and edited, providing insights into his editorial and organizational work there.

It should be particularly noted that N. Abduazizova’s book *History of the Press in Turkistan (1870–1917)* remains to this day one of the most substantial studies on the national and periodical press of Turkistan during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The study “Ashurali Zohiriy and His Linguistic Legacy” by T. Tog’ayev, conducted during the years of Uzbekistan’s independence, is a scholarly work on the life and activities of the scholar, as well as his contributions to linguistics. In this dissertation, the author seeks to illuminate Ashurali Zohiriy’s role during the national awakening period and his contributions to the history of Uzbek linguistics in the 1920s.

In his monograph “The Jadid Movement in the Fergana Valley”, T. Qozoqov provides some information on the life and activities of Ashurali Zohiriy among the Fergana Jadids. According to the author, starting from 1910, Zohiriy began contributing to newspapers with his works and articles reflecting the spirit of the time. These articles and works addressed issues of the Uzbek language, school life, and educational activities, and were fundamentally written with the aim of promoting enlightenment among the people.

Information about Ashurali Zohiriy is also included in the monographs published by B. Hasanov and Z. Ishanxodjayeva. In Hasanov’s monograph, Zohiriy’s role in the formation of Uzbek national intellectuals at the beginning of the 20th century is examined, while in Ishanxodjayeva’s study, like many other Uzbek intellectuals, the history of Ashurali Zohiriy’s repression is partially documented.

Among the studies conducted during the years of independence, B. Irzayev’s book “Scenes from the History of Kokand” stands out. In this work, the author examines the lives of Kokand Jadids who lived and were active at the beginning of the 20th century and were repressed in their struggle for the freedom of Turkestan. The first chapter of Irzayev’s book is devoted to Ashurali Zohiriy. Unlike other researchers, the author for the first time sheds light on the history of Zohiriy’s repression based on confidential documents.

Among the foreign scholars who have conducted research on Ashurali Zohiriy and the historical processes in Turkistan at the beginning of the 20th century, the following can be highlighted: Mustafa Choqay, Ahmad Zaki Validiy, Abdulvahob O’qtoy, Tohir Chig’atoy, Boymirza Hayit, Edward A. Allworth, Adib Khalid, Shahobiddin Yassaviy, and Mustafa Said Arslon.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study of Ashurali Zohiriy’s life and activities began already during his contemporaries’ lifetime, with most analyses focusing on his linguistic and lexicographic views. However, the majority of these assessments were critical in nature, particularly criticizing his tendency to preserve excessively traditional orthography.

Although Soviet-era studies recognized Ashurali Zohiriy as a distinguished linguist, they did not cover the history of his repression. This omission can be explained by the limitations imposed by contemporary political constraints.

Research conducted during the years of Uzbekistan’s independence has primarily analyzed Ashurali Zohiriy’s work as a linguist, while his role in the Jadidist movement in early 20th-century Turkistan and his socio-political activities have not been explored as independent historical research topics. The same observation applies to foreign studies.

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