



Article

The Role of Tashkent's Local Intellectuals in Socio-Political Processes of the Second Half of the 19th Century

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Abstract: The intellectuals of Turkestan at the end of the 19th century played a pivotal role in shaping the region's social and cultural processes, offering valuable insights into Uzbekistan's historical development. This study focuses on the prominent intellectuals of this period, with a particular emphasis on their activities in Tashkent, the administrative center of the region. Addressing a knowledge gap in the historiography of Uzbekistan, the research aims to identify these intellectuals and analyze their scholarly contributions. Utilizing historical analysis of primary and secondary sources, the study highlights the intellectuals' impact on the region's socio-political and cultural transformations. The findings underscore the significance of their legacy in understanding the broader historical narrative of Turkestan and provide a foundation for further studies on intellectual movements in Central Asia.

Keywords: Historian, Mirzo (scribe), Mirzaboshi (chief scribe), Dodkhoh (judge), Shig'ovul (local leader), Tazkira (biographical compilation), Amirlashkar (military commander)

1. Introduction

Uzbekistan ranks among the leading countries in the world regarding the intellectual heritage left by its ancestors. Today, collections of works by scholars and intellectuals from our land are preserved in book repositories across our country and many others worldwide [1]. These works are valued for their contributions to enriching and expanding the moral and intellectual treasury of humanity. One of the local intellectuals, Muhammad Yunus Toib Muhammad Amin oglu, was born in 1830 in Tashkent, in the Kunjak neighborhood of the Sebzor district. He received his initial education in Tashkent and later studied in the madrasas of Kokand [2].

2. Materials and Methods

The research employed comparative, dynamic, and hermeneutic analysis methods. Each historical period has a unique classification linked directly to popular movements, the achievements of great scholars, and the activities of state and political figures. In this historical stage, many studies have focused on the attitudes of learned intellectuals in the Turkestan region towards social and political processes and their methods of resisting colonial oppression [3].

These studies can be divided into foreign and local research. Foreign research includes the works of scholars such as T.G. Montgomery, B. Taylor, and T. Beisembiev. As for local research, notable experts include H. Ziyoev, D. Ziyayeva, D. Alimova, and Sh.

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Vohidov. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the ongoing research related to the activities of each individual intellectual and their contributions [4].

3. Results

Muhammad Yunus ibn Muhammad Amin Toib, a brilliant scholar and wise statesman of the peoples of Turkestan, was born in 1830 in the Sebzor district of Tashkent, in the Kunjak neighborhood. He received his initial education in Tashkent and later completed his studies at a madrasa in Kokand. Mulla Muhammad Yunus Toib was one of the prominent figures who left a significant mark on the history and culture of the Kokand Khanate and Eastern Turkestan [5].

In 1860, he joined the service of the Kokand military leader, Amir Lashkar Mulla Aliquli ibn Hasanbi (1830–1865). Initially, Toib served as a clerk (mirzo), then rose to the position of chief clerk (mirzaboshi), and later to the ranks of dodxoh (finance officer) and shig'ovul (foreign minister). Toib justified Aliquli's trust and ascended to the highest ranks of government officials in the Kokand Khanate. For instance, when Aliquli appointed Toib to the position of mirzaboshi, he defined his duties as follows: "You are responsible for the collection of taxes (khiroji), zakat and other financial matters, as well as the management of military provisions, agricultural land, village leases, the investigation and accounting of estates, and the armament and weaponry register. Be well-informed and do not neglect these tasks." Furthermore, Aliquli placed the positions of mehtar (city mayor), sarkor (chief administrator), and sarraf (treasurer) under Toib's control as part of his duties as mirzaboshi [6].

From 1860 to 1865, Mulla Muhammad Yunus served as a personal advisor to Amir Lashkar Aliquli, actively participating in the internal and foreign affairs of the Kokand Khanate. With Yunus's advice, in the early 1860s, ambassadors were sent to China, Afghanistan, Turkey, England, and Russia. Toib highlighted in his writings that he had personally suggested the names of some of the candidates for these ambassadorial roles to both the khan and Amir Lashkar Aliquli [7].

He actively participated in the defense of Avliyoota and Turkestan, as well as in the defense of Chimkent and Tashkent. Muhammad Yunus Toib's active role in the defense of Tashkent is also mentioned by Muhammadsolihkhodja Toshkandiy, the author of "Tarixi jadidai Toshkand" [8].

The inclusion of information about Muhammad Yunus Toib in the works of Russian military officials indicates that the Russian imperial government did not remain indifferent to his activities. Specifically, A.N. Kuropatkin, while discussing Toib, provided valuable information, highlighting not only his social background but also his role as the governor of the city of Yorkent in the state established by Yaqubbek in Eastern Turkestan from 1865. Kuropatkin emphasized Toib's deep knowledge of state administration [9].

Moreover, the works of this figure also document his activities. Among his writings are "Tarixi Aliquli amirlashkar", "Xadiqat al-anvor" (The Garden of Lights), and "Tuhfai Toib". These works recount his role as a personal advisor to Amir Lashkar Aliquli from 1860 to 1865, during which he was actively involved in the internal and external affairs of the Kokand Khanate. His advice led to the dispatch of ambassadors to China, Afghanistan, Turkey, England, and Russia in the early 1860s, and he personally suggested the names of some of these candidates to both the khan and Amir Lashkar Aliquli [10].

Additionally, Toib's works note that he rose through the ranks, from a clerk (mirzo) to chief clerk (mirzaboshi), then to dodxoh (finance officer), and later to shig'ovul (foreign minister) [11]. Eventually, he was entrusted with overseeing other important officials. Toib also took part in the defense of Avliyoota and Turkestan, including the defenses of Chimkent and Tashkent [12]. After the Russian conquest of Tashkent, in late 1865, he left for Eastern Turkestan. Muhammad Yunus Toib served as the governor of Yorkent in the state founded by Yaqubbek Badavlat in Eastern Turkestan [13].

The Western countries had a great interest in the state of Yaqubbek Badavlat. As a result, embassies and travelers frequently visited the region. Almost all of these visitors were well acquainted with Muhammad Yunus Toib, and in their memoirs, they evaluated his activities in Yorkent, in the state of Yaqubbek [14].

In particular, foreign authors such as B. Taylor have mentioned Muhammad Yunus Toib in their works. His conversation with Toib is recorded, where it is noted that he demonstrated his strong diplomatic skills during their discussion [15]. Specifically, the author mentions that, during the 1857 uprising in Eastern Turkestan led by Valikhon, Toib apologized for the death of a German scholar named Adolf Shlaginveyt, who had been killed by the rebels. This book also includes a portrait of Muhammad Yunus Toib.

In an article published in London by British military officer T.G. Montgomery, valuable information about Muhammad Yunus Toib is provided [16]. The article, titled "Mirza," describes the journey of an English spy from Kabul to Kashgar in 1869 and details the spy's activities in Yorkent. The author notes that the governor of the city, Muhammad Yunus Toib, held liberal views, and that all members of the Eastern Turkestan government (including Yaqubbek) cooperated with him. The article also mentions social infrastructure projects such as mosques and madrasas built with Muhammad Yunus Toib's funds.

It is recorded in the literature that after the death of Yaqubbek in 1877, with the escalation of internal conflicts in the country and Eastern Turkestan falling under Chinese control, Muhammad Yunus Toib left Yorkent and returned to the city of Kokand. He continued his work in Kokand. According to some sources, in 1897 he was appointed as the qazi (judge) of the Qatag'on district of Kokand. Mulla Muhammadyunus is believed to have passed away around 1905 at the age of 75 [17].

Three of Toib's works have survived to the present day. Some biographical details found in these works help researchers shed light on Toib's life and worldview, as well as highlight his role in the history and culture of the Kokand Khanate and the Turkestan region.

One of Muhammad Yunus Toib's works, *Tarixi Aliquli amirlashkar*, was published in English under the title *The Life of Alimqul* in 2003 in England [6]. His other work, *Tuhfai Toyyib*, was published in English in Japan in 2002. By the years of independence, interest in studying Muhammad Yunus Toib's intellectual legacy increased. Among the scholars who contributed to this field, the services of (the late) T. Beysembiev [6] and PhD, Professor Sh. Vohidov [5] should be particularly recognized.

Another prominent figure among the intellectuals of Turkestan was Mirzo Olim Maxdum Khoja, who had served as an editor for many years at the *Turkiston Viloyati Gazeti* (Turkestan Province Newspaper). However, detailed information about his biography is not widely available in the academic field. Specifically, the first part of his work *Tarixi Turkiston* was published between 1908 and 1915 in the newspaper he edited, and in 1915, on the 50th anniversary of the Russian Empire's conquest of Tashkent, it was published as a complete book by the military printing house of the Turkestan General-Governor's military district [18].

The work is dedicated to the history of the rulers of Turkestan and analyzes the changes that occurred in the region over the next 50 years. In 1915, the author mentions that he began the second volume of the work by stating: "... In the year of the Muslim era, after fifty years, I completed the first volume by reflecting on the differences and changes."

The difference between this work and the historical works of the historians of Kokand is that the author briefly covers the history of the Bukhara Emirate and the Khiva State after the history of the Kokand Khanate.

4. Discussion

The author analyzes the Russian Empire's invasion of the city of Turkestan and its annexation as follows: "After Mirzo Davlat, a Tajik, was appointed ruler of Turkestan, he, with arrogance and pride, did not take heed of the mighty Russian Empire, which had been watching and waiting at the border. He ignored the poor and helpless Kazakhs around him, as well as their loyalty to the state, and arrogantly ruled for five days. He gathered several bandits to Turkestan, started pillaging and terrorizing the people. Because of Mirzo Davlat's evil actions and tyranny, the local people and their leaders became desperate, and out of helplessness, they chose to break from his rule and submit to the Russian government. In the end, the people of the surrounding areas, including the Uzbeks and Kazakhs, went to the Russians and reported that, in truth, the entire city of Turkestan and all its surroundings had already fallen under the control of Russia. The rulers of Mawarannahr, such as the Khanates of Bukhara and Kokand, were also in conflict, and the Emir of Bukhara aimed to bring the Fergana region under his control.

If Bukhara and Fergana were unified into one state, the situation would be serious. Bukhara could surround the two capitals and recruit an army all the way from Tibet to the mountains of Kandahar. However, as there was constant conflict and discord between them, it was likely that the situation would be resolved swiftly and easily, especially once the areas of the Syr Darya, where ships would pass, fell into Russian hands. The two countries, Bukhara and Kokand, and the region of Tashkent would be blocked, and the Mawarannahr region would be easily brought under control." [19]

Mirzo Olim also believes that the capture of Tashkent was due to the conflicts and internal disputes between the two countries in Turkestan: "When Russia was besieging Tashkent, the two neighboring Muslim kingdoms' rulers, who were engaged in war at a close distance where the sound of Russian cannons could be heard, ignored the situation and continued fighting each other. They ruined the region by attacking each other, while Russia had already surrounded the defenseless city of Tashkent. Finally, on the morning of June 15, 1865, the Russians entered the city through the Kamolon gate and conquered it."

In our opinion, Mirzo Olim, as an intellectual, seeks to analyze colonial policies and their consequences. On one hand, while the author of *Tarixi Turkiston* (History of Turkestan) supports the position of the Russian administration regarding the Russian invasion, on the other hand, he criticizes the injustices of the time and the conduct of the officials throughout various parts of the book. He laments the decline of his people under Russian rule, expressing sorrow for the lack of unity and alliance among his countrymen, and worries about the moral crisis, ignorance, and backwardness: "During the time of the Turkestan khans, the Muslims were completely unaware of the state of the world. Little remained of the ancient, righteous scholars, and there was no longer sincere piety, but only hypocrisy and sycophants increasing in number.

There were no longer any people who would speak the truth to the tyrannical rulers; instead, sycophants would praise the rulers from morning until evening, saying whatever they wanted to hear. The khans and beks, who were raised in ignorance, were the ones who took power. In the field of knowledge and education, the scholars and philosophers of the past, like Ibn Sina, Farabi, Ulugh Beg, and Ali Qushchi, were replaced by those who had turned into people of pride and deceit, and who had become consumed with rage and arrogance."

Mirzo Olim, understanding that the rise or decline of any nation is rooted in its ethics, writes: "If the Almighty wishes to change and transform a people, He first changes their morals and behavior. Although these words may seem harsh and bitter, if viewed with fairness, they are correct and true." Mirza Olim Maxdum Khodja, as an advocate of knowledge and enlightenment, calls upon all his fellow countrymen to pursue various forms of knowledge and professions, urging them to strive for development just as other advanced nations have done. He concludes that, "Just as there is no way to the hereafter

without knowledge of religion, there is also no way to success in this world without education and perfection.”

Although national progressives, despite Turkestan being part of the Russian Empire, called on the local population to fight against colonialism, they chose education as their weapon. In their works, they emphasized that the primary goal was to raise the literacy of the population of Turkestan in a short period of time and in an effective manner, dedicating all their efforts toward this cause [20].

5. Conclusion

This study sheds light on the intellectual contributions of figures like Muhammad Yunus Toib and Mirzo Olim Maxdum Khodja in 19th-century Turkestan, emphasizing their roles in shaping the socio-political and cultural transformations of the region. The findings underscore the significance of their administrative, literary, and diplomatic endeavors, revealing how their intellectual legacies contributed to the historical narrative of the Kokand Khanate and Eastern Turkestan. These intellectuals not only resisted colonial oppression but also advocated for knowledge and enlightenment as tools for societal progress. Their works provide a critical perspective on the socio-political dynamics of the time, serving as invaluable resources for understanding Turkestan’s intellectual history. Further research could explore comparative analyses of their contributions with other intellectual movements in Central Asia to deepen our understanding of the region’s response to colonial and internal challenges during this period.

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