

Some Uighur Sources on Modern Eastern Turkestan

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The political situation, social conditions and economic problems that broke out in Eastern Turkestan (Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region) during 1930 to 1949 have been discussed by several western scholars in their writings, and these works are very important to study the events in the history of this strategic region in Central Asia, but these reflect mainly the official views owing to their dependence upon Chinese, Russian or other western language sources. The writings of Eastern Turkestani people who revolted against Chinese rule, describing their real feelings and pains, have been neglected. Because their articles are in Turkic Chaghatay or Uighur, they are not used yet as a means to study the history of Eastern Turkestan. The non-utilization of local Uighur sources and dependence on official (i.e., Chinese and European) sources must be remedied before further research in the field can give a full and clear picture of the period.

These omissions also distorted the true picture of the events which the Turkestani people faced in their foreign policy. Nevertheless, research into the writings of Turkestani leaders and intellectuals that reflects their opinions and ideas on an equal basis with their foreign equivalents would lead to a clearer and more correct analysis of the circumstances.

In the following pages I list the writings of some patriots who participated in the national revolution during 1931 to 1934 and wrote accounts of their thoughts and activities in the local language and employed available local sources. Unfortunately due care and attention was not given by earlier researchers to these writings.

- **Muhammad Emin Bugra** (1901-1965) was one of the national leaders who participated in the revolution of Eastern Turkestan pioneered by Khoja Niyaz Haji in Qumul in 1931. Muhammad Emin Bugra then led the Khotanese rebels on February 26, 1933. When the rebellion failed, he sought asylum in Afghanistan. He eventually returned to Eastern Turkestan via China in 1947 and became Minister of Reconstruction.

Beside being one of the top leaders of the said revolution he was a prolific poet, dramatist, and historian.

In addition to his book, *History of Eastern Turkestan*, printed in Srinagar in 1940 and reprinted in Ankara in 1987, there is his 208-page *History of National Revolution of Eastern Turkestan*, written in the Chaghatay language with Arabic letters. It was published by Haji Muhammad Qasem Turkestani in Sringagar in 1971. This was later modified and reprinted (with the addition of a new chapter titled "The Last General Revolution in Eastern Turkestan") as the fourth chapter in the book *History of Eastern Turkestan* which was published in Ankara in 1987. That book and its modified and reprinted edition deal with events of the rebellion during 1931 to 1934 in the southern and west regions of Eastern Turkestan in which the author himself participated. The rebellion came to an end with the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan at Kashgar on December 12, 1933.

Muhammad Emin Bugra also mentioned these episodes in his book *Eastern Turkestan: History, Geography and the Present Situation*, which was published in the Turkish language in Istanbul in 1952. Though he recollected the struggle in his later book published after his death in Ankara in 1966, his first book contains rich information about the revolution of 1931 to 1934.

- **Amin Beg Wahidi** was one of Shih-Chang Mahmoud Muhity's men during the time of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan. After this republic failed, he took shelter with his leader in British India where he wrote his reminiscences, entitled *Memento*. It is a sixty-eight page book written in the Chaghatay language and published at Lahore in 1939. A long poem of Shih-Chang Mahmoud Muhity's secretary, Mr. Obaidulla N'aeemi, was printed, too. Mahmoud Muhity was the chief commander of Khoja Niyaz Haji's military and later became Divisional Commander of Kashgar in 1934. In 1937 he escaped to India and in 1938 to Japan. Although this book is not lengthy, it concentrates on the incidents of the revolution at Qumul that spread to the north and west of Eastern Turkestan and gives some reasons for its failure.

Amin Beg Wahidi wrote other articles about the National Revolution--some of them, such as "A Review of the Revolution of Eastern Turkestan," appeared in 1939 in *Yash Turkestan Journal*, which was published by Mr. Mustafa Chakay from France.

- At the time of the proclamation of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan at Kashgar, **Dr. Majjeduddin Ahmed** was studying medicine in Turkey. He returned to Eastern Turkestan with the intention of serving the national government, but he arrived after the fall of the Islamic Republic in 1934. He established contacts with some national leaders of the revolution and worked with Shih-Chang Mahmoud Muhity for the national interest. But when Sheng Shih-ts-ai, the Chinese governor general, started arresting and killing the leaders, he went to India and returned to Turkey via Bombay in 1938.

He wrote many valuable articles about the Muslim Revolution, such as "Around the Rebels of Eastern Turkestan" which appeared in *Yash Turkestan Journal* from Nos. 102 to 108 in 1938. He analyzed the cause of the fall of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan in his article "The National Disaster of Eastern Turkestan" in the same journal in the same year.

- **Polat Qadiry** wrote *The History of the Country*, which consists of two parts. The first part gives a short history of Eastern Turkestan, depending mainly on Muhammad Emin Bugra's book, *History of Eastern Turkestan* (which was printed in 1940). In the second part he narrates the events which began in 1931. His writings generally reflect the views of the Turkestani leaders who cooperated with the Chinese government of the Kuomintang. This book was published by Altay Publishing House at Urumchi in 1948.

In addition to these books and articles, other materials left by some writers of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan speak of their ideas and thoughts:

- **Sheikh Thabet Ben Abdul-Baqi**, the prime minister, wrote several Islamic books and poems in the Chaghatay and Arabic languages. He traveled extensively to Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and India, where he met some of the Muslim intelligentsia before returning home. His book, *Principle, Dogma and Explanation of Sunnah*, which was published for the first time from New Delhi and Makkah in 1982, contains his basic views.

- **Sheikh Muhammad Zarif Qari**, the Minister of Justice, wrote an elaborate interpretation of the *Quran* in the Chaghatay language, the first part of which was printed at Bombay in 1934.

The study of the above writings as well as those of other officials of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan gives an opportunity to understand these persons and their contributions to Uighur history. Though these materials were collected, collated and published after the fall of their government, there are some materials which were published during the revolution, such as:

- The journal *Isteqlal*. Sufi Zade, the President of the National Council of Eastern Turkestan, was its chief editor. It was published by the Society of Independent Eastern Turkestan at Kashgar in 1933. Two issues were printed and published from the Swedish Mission Press in Kashgar. The first one has 74 pages and the second has 146 pages.

- The newspaper, *The Life of Eastern Turkestan*, was published by the government of the Islamic Republic of Eastern Turkestan at Kashgar in 1933. It changed its name to *Erkin Turkestan* --Free Turkestan--after the twelfth issue, but still continued printing from the Swedish Mission Press at Kashgar.

- The weekly newspaper *The Freedom of New Life*, which was published first by the Kashgar Society for Knowledge from 1934 until 1937, changed its name and publisher later on. From issue number 4, its name became *The New Life*. The Kashgar Branch office of the Urumchi Center of the Uighur Education Organization became its publisher from number 32, and it became an organ of the government of the Province of Kashgar, which belonged to Sinkiang.

After the take-over of Eastern Turkestan by the Communist regime in 1949, some Turkestani refugees who took shelter in Turkey and Saudi Arabia wrote and published some materials. These are as follows:

- **Hameedullah Tarim.** This Turpani man came to Saudi Arabia in 1951 and then went to Turkey in 1970, where he died in Istanbul in 1991. He wrote his 376-page book, *The History of the Country*, in the Chaghatay language and published it in Istanbul in 1982. In this book he describes episodes of the conflict in Eastern Turkestan during 1931-1937.

- **Muhammed Mosa Turkestani.** This Uzbek was the President of the Red Society during the government of the Islamic Republic

of Eastern Turkestan at Kashgar. After the fall of that government, he came to Saudi Arabia in 1937 and died in Taif in 1984.

He wrote several Islamic books, but his book *The Disaster of Great Turkestan* deals only with the historical events. The first volume of 423 pages, which was printed at Medina in Saudi Arabia in 1979, deals with the history of Western Turkestan. The second volume of 256 pages narrates the episodes of the revolution in Kashgar, Yarkend and Khotan in the south and west of Eastern Turkestan. It was written in the Chaghatay language and also printed at Medina in 1981.

- **Muhammed Amin Islami Turkestani** (1912-1988) was from Yarkend and worked as Secretary to Abduh Niyaz, who was one of the last leaders of the Islamic Revolution in 1937. After the death of the martyr, Abduh Niyaz, Turkestani took refuge in British India where he met Shih-Chang Mahmoud Muhity and went with him to Japan. But he left Japan to visit some Muslim countries. He lived in Egypt in 1951, where he published a journal called *The Free Turkestan* and some books in the Chaghatay language. In 1956 he came to Saudi Arabia, where he died in 1988. He wrote many papers about the leaders of the Islamic revolution such as Tabet Ben Abdul, Baqi, Abdul Qader Ben Abdul Wareth, Khoja Niyaz Haji and Muhammed Emin Bugra. His memoirs of the Islamic Revolution and its short-lived government appeared in the journal *The Voice of Eastern Turkestan*, published in Istanbul in 1987.

Turkestani intellectuals have written and published many papers and articles about their National Revolution. Some of these remain in manuscript form, but still should be studied (and published) in order to clarify some aspects of the history of Eastern Turkestan. Even now, people from time to time recall many local songs and poems of Eastern Turkestan that were composed to commemorate leaders and events. It is true that many books and articles were published in both parts of Turkestan, but they could not be freed from the strict control of the anti-national Communist regime. The study of Uighur works published abroad will, however, open the way to conducting in-depth research on different aspects of the history of Eastern Turkestan. It will also put those ideas already formed on the basis of only Chinese and Russian sources in proper perspective. Uighur studies will, no doubt, help researchers and interested scholars to understand and to study the history of this non-Chinese people of Eastern Turkestan.