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# MEMOIRS AS A SOURCE ON THE HISTORY OF UZBEKISTAN IN THE SECOND HALF OF THE 19<sup>th</sup> – EARLY 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURIES

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#### ABSTRACT

The colonial period in the history of Central Asia is reflected in many written sources, including memoirs. Memoir works are diverse in their genre and content. These are travel records of Russian and foreign ambassadors and travelers who visited Central Asia, and memoirs by local authors. The article examines the memoir works of Central Asian authors of the late 19th - early 20th centuries. They are divided into groups such as autobiographies, travel records, memoirs, and oral history. On the example of specific works of specific authors, the significance of each of the above groups of memoir literature is analyzed, their significant sides and their inherent shortcomings are revealed. It is concluded that methods such as critical approach and comparative analysis allow researchers to effectively use the memoirs of local authors to study the history of the colonial period.

**KEYWORDS:** Memoirs, autobiographies, travel records, recollections, oral history, critical approach, comparative analysis, reliability.

#### **1. INTRODUCTION**

In the 60-70s of the 19th century, Central Asia was finally conquered by the Russian Empire. The Kokand Khanate was liquidated. The Bukhara Emirate and the Khiva Khanate were forced to conclude unequal treaties with Russia, to cede a significant part of their territories to it and go under its protectorate. A colonial period began in the history of Central Asia, which lasted until 1917.

The history of this period is reflected in a variety of written sources. These are legislative acts, clerical documentation, statistical sources, film and photo documents, periodicals, journalism, etc. Among these sources, memoirs also occupy an important place.

#### 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

Memoirs of the colonial period can be conditionally divided into two groups: 1) travel records and memoirs of Russian, European and Eastern ambassadors and travelers; 2) memoirs of local authors. Since in our previous publications we had to talk about the source study value of the memoirs of Russian and foreign ambassadors and travelers [3, 4, 5], this time we would like to dwell on the memoir literature belonging to the pen of Central Asian authors.

Memoir works of local authors can be divided into the following subgroups: a) autobiographical works; c) travel records; c) the actual memoirs, or memories; e) oral history.

#### **3. RESULTS**

The first autobiographical works related to this period appeared in the 90s of the XIX century. As a rule, they belonged to the pen of representatives of the Uzbek intelligentsia – poets and journalists, united around the newspaper "Turkiston Viloyatining Gazeti" ("Newspapers of the Turkestan Valley"), on the pages of which their works were published. So, in 1890 the newspaper published a series of autobiographical articles by Sattarkhan



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Abdulgaffarov, in 1891 - by the poet Zakirdzhan Furkat (№№ 2-23), in 1893 the youngest son of Khudavar Khan – Ibn Yaminbek (№№ 22-28, 32). etc. These works are interesting not only in terms of acquaintance with the main milestones in the biographies of their authors, but also in that along the way they provide a lot of information related to the socio-political and cultural life of the Turkestan region.

Take, for example, "Autobiography" ("Ahvolot") by the famous poet- enlightener Zakirdzhan Halmuhammad oglu Furkat (1859-1909), which describes the author's life from childhood to 1891, when he went on a trip abroad and left his homeland forever [12]. Furkat talks about his studies in the old Muslim school (maktab), then in madrasah, political unrest in Fergana in the last years of the existence of the Kokand Khanate. From the poet's autobiography, we learn that he was engaged in commercial affairs in New and Old Margilan. The author pays great attention to the description of the cultural and literary environment of Margilan, Kokand and Tashkent, gives interesting materials about his contemporaries - the poets Mukhyi, Mukimi, Zavki, Roji, Umidi-Khavoi, Asiri, Ibrat, etc. A new historical situation is revealed in "Akhvolot" developed in Turkestan after the conquest of the region by tsarist Russia, when elements of European culture began to penetrate into the life of the region's population.

Of no small scientific and ethnographic significance are such works of Furkat as "On the wedding" ("Tuy khususida"), "On mourning" ("Aza khususida") and "On gape" ("Gap khususida") Uzbek translated ["Gap" (in from means "conversation") – this is a regularly held joint meal, during which conversations are held on various topics. The Uzbeks and Tajiks still have gap. - RA]. It is impossible to call these articles memoirs in the strict sense of the word, although in them the author talks about the phenomena that he saw and observed personally. Furkat's articles mentioned above contain valuable information about the wedding ceremonies of Uzbeks, their customs associated with the burial of the deceased and the following mourning, as well as the procedure for holding joint meals and conversations between the participants of the "gap". In his works the author has included samples from traditional wedding songs ("yor-yor") and memorial poems ("marsia"). The mentioned historical and ethnographic articles of Furkat are small in volume, but it is noteworthy that they have come down to us in lists written by the author himself.

It should be noted that some autobiographical works that illuminated the pre-revolutionary period of the activity of their creators were written after the October Revolution of 1917, in the Soviet era. This, naturally, left its mark both on the content and on

their ideological orientation. Let us cite as an example the "Autobiography" ("Ahvolot") of a prominent figure of Jadidism in Turkestan Abdulla Avlani [1]. It is known that the ideological paradigm of the Jadids had nothing to do with communism and atheism. But Avlani, who wrote his autobiography in Soviet times in order to somehow "justify" Jadidism, argues that the Jadids, like the Bolsheviks, were almost consistent fighters against the capitalists (bays) and religious leaders (mullahs), as evidenced by the following fragment: "We [the Jadids] began a decisive struggle against the mullahs, bays and the old way of life. An organization directed against the bays arose in our midst. Thus, we continued the class struggle until 1905. The bays and mullahs fought against the Jadids, and the Jadids fought against bai and mullahs, and even against the old order and prejudices. The Russo-Japanese war that began in 1904 opened the eyes of both the Russian workers and us [the Jadids]. The waves of the 1905 revolution had a great influence on us. Having clearly realized the political goals, our organization began, first of all, to enlighten the downtrodden people in order to open their eyes "[6, 15]. Such a statement, apparently, was dictated by the desire to somehow protect the Jadids from possible repression by the Soviet regime. However, as subsequent events showed, these attempts were in vain: later the Bolsheviks, who always looked at the Jadids as their political opponents, physically dealt with them, including Avlani.

Another type of memoir literature, created during the period under review by local authors, is travel records ("sayohatnoma"). At this time, some poets in verse form expressed their impressions of their travels around the country. As a historical source, these poetic works are interesting in that they contain a description of the characteristic features of those settlements visited by the authors, and the distinctive features of the way of life of the population living here. As an example, let us dwell on the travel records of the poets Jani and Mukimi.

In the 70s of the XIX century. Janmukhammad Jani (1839-1881), based on the materials of his journey along the Bukhara-Nurata "Travel Records" wrote his essay route. ("Sayohatnoma") in the Tajik language. In it, the author provides valuable information about the nature, landscape and inhabitants of more than 50 villages located on the territory of modern Bukhara, Navoi, Samarkand, Syrdarya and South Kazakhstan regions.

The "Records of Travels" ("Sayohatnoma") of the famous Uzbek poet Muhammad Aminhodja Mukimi (1850-1903) is also widely known. "Records" consist of descriptions of villages and towns where the author was able to visit during his travels in the Fergana Valley. The poet clearly notices the natural conditions and the characteristic



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features of the life of the inhabitants of such settlements as Ultarma, Durmancha, Bourbalik, Akyer, Roshidon, Zohidon, Alty-Aryk, Chimyon, Vuadil, Kudash, Yaipan, Nursukh, Rapkon, Besharik, Kanibadam, etc. [10].

In terms of information, the aforementioned poetic "travel records" may not be very valuable, but nevertheless, in our opinion, the historian should not discount them.

The memoirs written in prose, or actually memoirs, which contain quite a wealth of information about the political, socio-economic and cultural life of Central Asia at the end of the 19th – beginning of the 20th centuries, are fundamentally different from poetic "travel records". However, there are not very many "pure" memoirs on this period, like "Memoirs" of the famous writer Sadriddin Ayni. But there are many historical works containing memoir plots. These include the work of Muhammad Aziz Margilani "Azizov's history" ("Tarikh-i Aziz-i") [8], Muhammad Ali Baljuvani "Useful history" ("Tarikh-i nofe'i") [9] and others.

It is one of such works – this is the work of Mirza Salimbek "Salim's history" ("Tarikh-i Salimi"), written in 1917-1920 [7]. It is dedicated to the history of Central Asia, in particular the Bukhara Emirate. When writing it, the author used the sources available to him, including the works of previous historians. But the events of the second half of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries were covered exclusively on the basis of memoirs.

Mirza Salimbek ibn Muhammad Rahim (1850-1930) was born in Bukhara to a wealthy and influential family. In one of his works, he writes that his "father and ancestors sincerely served the high court." Having received a good education, he began his career as a clerk of the ruler (khokim) of the Ziyauddin bekdom. With the establishment of a Russian protectorate over Bukhara, Mirza Salimbek was sent to Tashkent as a trade agent and carried out the emir's secret orders. Here he lived for 12 years. In 1885 he was appointed tax collector (amlakdar) of Tumen Somjin. In 1888-1893 served as chief of police (mirshab) in Bukhara. From 1893 to 1920 he was a ruler in Yakkabag, Nurata, Baysun, Sherabad and Shakhrisabz vilayets. During the March events of 1918, Mirza Salimbek commanded the emir's army opposing the detachments of Kolesov and the Young Bukharians. A little later, he visited the Trans-Caspian region to establish contacts with the British. In March 1920, he was appointed ruler of the Chardzhou vilayet. On August 29, 1920, on the first day of the Bukhara "people's revolution", Mirza Salimbek was arrested, but a year later he was released. In subsequent years, he worked in Soviet bodies and the Society of Historians (Anjumani Ta'rih) created in Bukhara.

Being a wealthy man, Mirza Salimbek was engaged in charitable activities: he built a madrasah, transferred part of his land and property to a vakuf, repaired mosques and tombs, and built canals. In addition to all this, he was actively engaged in literary activity: a number of historical, literary and theological works belong to him.

Mirza Salimbek was an eyewitness and participant in many events described in the last part of his work "Tarikh-i Salim-i". Since Mirza Salimbek belonged to the political elite of the emirate, he had enough complete information about the events that took place in the country, so his book is extremely informative in terms of information. Of course, Salimbek's assessment of the essence of certain events is largely subjective, but the facts in his memoirs are presented correctly, since, as already noted, many events took place before his eyes, and sometimes with his participation.

The "Salim History" describes in detail the time of the reign of the last three emirs of the Mangyt dynasty: Muzaffar, Abdulahad and Sayyid Alim Khan. An official devoted to the throne, Mirza Salimbek in relation to them uses such epithets as "the just and victorious sovereign", "the ruler of all believers", "refuge of mercy", "fighter for the faith", etc. The author served all three emirs and was with them in a fairly close relationship. "Tarikh-i Salim-i" contains a lot of information that is not found in the works of the author's contemporaries. These are not only data on the political and socio-economic history of the emirate, but also on historical geography, ethnography, cultural history, as well as on the history of individual beks of the Bukhara Emirate of the late 19th - early 20th centuries. Toponyms and hydronyms found in this source are also very valuable. It should be noted that the author is very lively, and sometimes artistically presents the material, as a result of which the book is read easily and with unremitting interest.

There are many handwritten lists of "Tarikh-i Salim-i". The original part of this work was translated into Russian and published by N.K. Norkulov in Tashkent in 2009.

A major memoir, giving versatile information on many aspects of the life of the Bukhara Emirate in the second half of the 19th – early 20th centuries, are the memoirs of an outstanding writer and scientist, public figure Sadriddin Saidmurod-zade Aini. The Russian translation of his memoirs was published under the title "Old Bukhara". [2]. Ayni's memoirs are in four parts, which were published as they were completed from 1948 to 1954. "Old Bukhara" was written in Tajik, and then translated and published in Uzbek, Russian, English, French, Polish, Czech and Uyghur.

Ayni spent her childhood in the villages of Soktare and Mahallai Bolo of the Shafrikan tumen,



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and her youth in the city of Bukhara. Therefore, the inquisitive and inquisitive Sadriddin from a young age was well acquainted with the life of the Bukhara village and the capital. In his memoirs, he described his childhood and youth against a wide background of political, socio-economic and cultural processes taking place in the Bukhara Emirate. Therefore, it can be said without exaggeration that "Old Bukhara" is a unique source, with which no other work of this type can be compared. Ayni's memories help to deeper imagine many facets of the life of the Bukhara Emirate, which was in vassal dependence on the Russian Empire. Many of the stories described by the author take place before his eyes, with his direct participation, and when describing some events and phenomena, he relies on the stories of his friends and acquaintances who were their participants or eyewitnesses. Such are, for example, the stories about Ahmad Donish, with whom Ayni was not closely acquainted, but wrote them down from the words of Sadri Ziyo and other people who knew him well. All this gives grounds to assert that the degree of reliability of the information given in Ayni's memoirs is quite high.

At the same time, it should be recalled that "Old Bukhara" was written in the post-war years, when the communist ideology prevailing in society demanded that the past (especially the near-term) be covered mainly in black colors. Let us also recall that Sadriddin Ayni, as an enlightener and participant in the Jadid movement, was disgraceful to the official circles of the emirate, and after the February Revolution, he was executed and thrown into prison (zindan). All this involuntarily pushes the researcher to the thought: could the author, under such circumstances, exaggerate when describing the order in the Bukhara Emirate? But upon careful study of the text of the memoirs, we feel the sincerity of the author, a well-known master who cannot write lies. However, the comparison of the plots of the memoirs with other numerous written sources, including the Russian pre-revolutionary memoirs, also confirm that the events of the late 19th – early 20th centuries are adequately reflected in the memoirs of Ayni in the Bukhara Emirate.

A special group of memoir sources is the socalled "oral history", in particular, memoirs recorded from the words of participants in certain events. It should be noted that this methodological direction has developed in Uzbekistan only in recent decades. However, even in Soviet times, individual researchers tested this method in the study of some aspects of the history of the early twentieth century. So, the famous historian Hamid Ziyoyev in 1956, in connection with the 40th anniversary of the 1916 uprising in Turkestan, wrote down the memoirs of its participants, and 20 years later published them as a separate book [11], which significantly expanded the source base of the study of the problem. The informants were mainly elderly men – residents of Margilan and Andijan, eyewitnesses and participants in the uprising.

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It should be noted that the recording of oral history is associated with a number of points that should be taken into account when clarifying the reliability of the information provided by the respondents. First, the recollections of respondents tend to be recorded over the years, as a result of which they may forget or confuse the details of the events in which they had to take part. Second, the content of memories will inevitably be influenced by the political environment in which they were recorded or published. And, thirdly, during the recording of oral history, a third person stands between the respondent and the information provided him, on whose professionalism and by conscientiousness the adequate fixation of the plot of the events being recalled depends.

If these approaches are applied to the memories of participants in the 1916 uprising, the reader has some doubts about their reliability. However, this was recognized by Kh.Ziyaev himself. So, in the notes to their second edition, he wrote: "Since these memories were recorded in the Soviet period, the words of the participants in the uprising that they fought to secede from [the composition of] Russia and restore independence were omitted. Allowed the conditions of that time. Instead, it became customary to cover movements against local officials and bays. But this will not be able to negate the main goal of the uprising – the restoration of the independence of the Motherland "(13, *390*).

The above quote confirms that when recording the memoirs of the participants in the 1916 uprising, a distortion was made, i.e. partially omitted what the participants said ("fought to secede from Russia and restore independence"), and vice versa, recorded what they did not say ("movement against local officials and bays").

Indeed, reading the memoirs of the participants in the uprising, the reader involuntarily draws attention to an interesting detail: almost all of them unanimously claim that they suffered from unbearable taxes, the oppression of colonial officials and local beys. In principle, we do not deny that the bais and officials made their "contribution" to the worsening of the situation of the masses, shifting all the hardships of the First World War (inflation, high prices, etc.) onto the shoulders of ordinary workers. However, the almost unanimous opinion of the participants in the uprising about the "incredible oppression of beys and bureaucrats" involuntarily leads the reader to the idea that while writing down the memoirs, someone tried to fit them into the Procrustean bed of the Marxist-Leninist concept of class struggle.



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The statement of the informants, allegedly omitted from the memoirs, that they fought for the "restoration of independence" does not inspire confidence either. The fact that the uprising of 1916 had a national liberation character is unambiguous. However, it is generally known that the uprising was elemental, spontaneous and did not have a clear political program. In the memoirs of the participants, there are exclamations and cries made by the rebels during the performances ("We will not go to mardikery", "Let the bai go to mardikery", "Down with the mingbashi", "Let the houses of the tsarist government and mingbashs burn", "We will eliminate the oppressors", "Death is better than such a life", etc.), but among them we do not find clear calls for "restoration of independence". If we bear in mind that the participants in the uprising were mainly representatives of the lower classes, illiterate or semiliterate people with a low level of political consciousness, it will become clear that they simply could not put forward demands for the "restoration of independence" at that time. And the "omitted fragments" about the rebels' struggle for the "restoration of independence" were, apparently, connected with the fact that the second edition of the memoirs of the participants in the uprising was carried out when Uzbekistan turned into an independent state. From this it follows that a critical approach is required to the materials of oral history, as to all historical sources.

## 4. CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, we can conclude that for the colonial period of the history of Central Asia, along with other sources, there is a variety of memoir literature, to one degree or another reflecting the political and socio-economic processes in the region. The value of this group of sources lies in the fact that they often contain completely original information that helps researchers to understand many aspects of the life of the population during the period under review. At the same time, one should not forget that any memoir literature is not devoid of a certain amount of subjectivity, some tendentious assessments, which must be taken into account in the process of using them as historical sources. Comparative analysis of materials of memoirs with other sources, verification of their reliability is a necessary condition for their use for scientific purposes.

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