

## HISTORY OF UZBEK LANGUAGE IN AFGHANISTAN (FROM THE TIMURIANS OF HERAT TO THE BEGINNING OF THE 21ST CENTURY)

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### ABSTRACT

Afghanistan, which was known as Khorasan and Ariana in previous centuries, has been inhabited by different ethnic groups and tribes since ancient times. In Afghanistan, there is a vast land called Turkestan, as its name shows that the Turkish peoples i.e. (Uzbeks and Turkmens) live in it, but so far there has been less talk about the Uzbeks of Afghanistan and their language. The Uzbek language belongs to the eastern branch of Turkish languages, Turkish languages are part of the great family of Altaic languages, Turkish language was born in Iran, Afghanistan and Tajikistan with the emergence of Qarakhanians and Ghaznavians, and with the passage of time and the continuation of the rule of Turkish dynasties and The Turkish speakers flourished (Sabaghi, 2020, p. 4). The history of calligraphy and ancient literary and written works of the Uzbek language goes back to the inscriptions of "Orkhon Yenisi". These petroglyphs were obtained from the shores of the Orkhon seas in Mongolia, Yenisei (Ana-sai, meaning the mother valley) in southern Siberia, Talas in Kyrgyzstan and other areas such as Eastern Turkestan, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga coast and parts of Europe (Vafai, 2008, p. 13).

**Keywords:** history, language, Turkish-Uzbek, Timurians and Afghanistan.

### Introduction

Language is an important and essential part of culture, and as a cultural tool, it causes the transfer of cultural heritage from one generation to another. Political boundaries are also mainly aligned with linguistic boundaries.

The country of Afghanistan has been the birthplace of culture and civilization for many years, and the various ethnic groups of this land have played a key role in the development and growth of this culture and civilization. Along with other ethnic groups living in Afghanistan, Turkish-speaking poets, writers and politicians, namely Uzbeks and Turkmens have played a special role in enriching the culture and especially literature of Afghanistan, which can be mentioned by Mawlana Jalaluddin Muhammad Balkhi, Amir Ali Sher Nawai, Zahiruddin Muhammad Babar, Shahrukh Mirza and Gowharshad Begum.

In order to explain the ability of the Turkish-Uzbek language, Amir Ali Shir Nawai wrote the book (The Trial of Alghatin) in order to prove the superiority of the Uzbek language over the Persian language, and Mahmoud



Kashghari also wrote the Al-Turk Dictionary of Turkish Words so that the Turkish words would not be lost, it is worth mentioning that the authors of Turkey has prepared and published a list of the words of the Al-Turk Glossary book separately (Kashghari, 1996, p. 15). The Uzbek language became especially popular in Afghanistan with the support and tact of Amir Ali Shirnawai, the most prominent, or in other words, the most influential Uzbek-Turkish poet and writer (Tuxtan et al., 2004, p. 40).

In the same way, by creating works in the Turkish-Uzbek language, Zahieruddin Babur not only takes a worthy participation in its progress and development, but also performs unforgettable services for the culture of Turkish speakers. Babur's scientific, literary and cultural heritage has not lost its scientific and historical importance and beauty even today, indeed, his masterpiece, the Baburnama, stands as one of the invaluable cultural treasures of the world (N.M. Meleh Yaif, 2000, p. 807). The Uzbek language is one of the important and living languages of the region and the world, which has an ancient history. This language includes the large family of Turkish languages, which has its roots in the languages of the Altai group, the word Uzbek is a newly emerging term, and today it is used instead of the term (Eastern Turkish) in Uzbekistan and Afghanistan. The Uzbek language is the official language of Uzbekistan and has several million speakers in Afghanistan and Tajikistan, and Uzbeks also live in all Central Asian countries and some countries in the world.

After Uzbekistan, Afghanistan is the second country in whose constitution Uzbek is registered as the official language in the regions where Uzbeks are the majority, and the Uzbek language of Afghanistan is also called the South Uzbek language.

### **Stages of Uzbek Language Development:**

The development and evolution of the Uzbek language has passed through at least three important historical periods, which we will briefly mention.

#### **1- Ancient Turkish Period**

The history of ancient Turkey goes back to centuries BC (Before Crist) and covers up to the 10th century AD. The oral works of the ancient Turks and the inscriptions of "Orkhon Yinisi" and other written works in wood, pottery and other objects that have been discovered from different regions of Asia and Europe belong to the language of the ancient Turkish period. The most important of them are the inscriptions of the tombs of the Turkish khaqans and princes, which were obtained from the shores of the Orkhon Sea in northern Mongolia and the shores of the Yenisei Sea in southern Siberia at the end of the 19th century (Poppe, 1960, c 45).

These writings, which are all in Turkish-runic script (cryptic), were first read by the Denmark scientist and expert V. Thoms and then by the Russian expert R. Radlov and others.

#### **2- Old Turkish Period**

This period of the Turkish language includes the 11th and 14th centuries, in which there are lasting scientific-literary works such as "Divan Loghat al-Turk" by Mahmoud Kashghari, "Qutdgho Bilik" (Blessed Knowledge) by Yusuf Khas Hajeb, "Hebat al-Haqayq" by Ahmed Yogenki, "Divan Hikmat" by Khwaja Ahmad Yesavi, "Qasses al-Anbiya" by Rabghuzi, "Golestan Balturki" by Saif Saraei and "Mohabatnama" by Khwarazmi and the works of Sufi Allahyar have appeared.

#### **3- The New Period of the Uzbek Language**

This development period of the Uzbek language began in the 20th century. Countless scientific and literary texts were written in this period. In the first half of the 20th century, the first Uzbek novel "Ottgan Konler" i.e.



Turkish (Uzbek) is influenced by Southern Turkish, especially Azari dialect, and the reason for that was the contact and communication between cultural centers such as Tabriz, Shirwan and Herat at that time, in such a way that Azari poets, writers and artisans gathered in Herat and Herat School has been the Academy of Fine Arts and Sciences.

Sultan Hossain Baiqra, who was Nawai's childhood friend, was born in 1438 in Herat (one of the current cities of Afghanistan) and sat on the throne in 1469 in Herat, and Herat became the cultural center of the East. Baiqra worked hard for the development of the Eastern Turkish language and issued an order to write in Turkish. His services in the development and evolution of Persian and Turkish-Uzbek language and literature are valuable. Hossain Baiqra also writes poetry in Turkish-Uzbek language, his time is called (golden era of Turkish-Uzbek literature) (Hiatt, 2001, p. 91).

After the Herat Timurians, Zahieruddin Mohammad Babur, one of the descendants of Timur, founded the Baburyan government in Afghanistan and carried out activities for the development and flourishing of the Turkish-Uzbek language, and he personally wrote works in the Turkish-Uzbek language, as pointed to his Baburnama. In the 16th century, Babur is considered the representative of Turkish-Uzbek literature. Besides writing Turkish-Uzbek best poems, he also created the best examples of Turkish prose and played a prominent role in the promotion and development of Turkish literature. Baburnama which was description of his memories from Turkish-Uzbek language view is a masterpiece and one of the world classics in terms of content. Babur's poems were published in Petrograd in 1917. In short, the Chaghtai Turkish language gave its existence to modern Uzbek in the 18th century (Paiman, 2022, pp. 3-1).

Many works in Turkish-Uzbek language were created during the era of Herat's Timurian in Afghanistan. The lasting works of Lotfi Heravi, Amir Alishir Nawai, Sultan Hossain Baiqra, Atai Balkhi, Hamedi Balkhi and others were created in Balkh and also in Herat, which was the capital of the Timurian Empire. Mr. Hamedi created his poem story "Yusuf and Zulaikha" in Turkish language in Balkh, Zahieruddin Mohammad Babar wrote some of his poems and literary works in Kabul and invented Baburi script in this land.

Alishir Nawai and the unique scientific and literary creations of this great personality shine like a bright star in the sky of regional and world literature. The greatest and richest classic works of Uzbek literature were created in the Timurian era of Herat (Taxtan, 2006, p. 13).

### **The Situation of the Uzbek Language in Afghanistan between the 20th and 21st Centuries**

After the fall of Timurian rule in Herat, the long period of stagnation of Uzbek language and literature begins in this land. Following the fall of the rule of Sultan Hossain Baiqra, this irreplaceable supporter of civilization and culture, the brilliant literary environment of that era also disappears. Uzbek language and literature can no longer flourish in this land. After Zahieruddin Mohammad Babur, Uzbek language has gone through a bitter time in our country. Uzbek language was disrespected by the rulers of the time after the Timurians and Baburs, and no effective work was done for its development. The printing of Uzbek works and publications in Uzbek language faced many problems during the Seduzai rule.

Until the last half century, Uzbek children were deprived of the blessing of education in their mother tongue in Afghan schools, the works of Uzbek poets: such as Amir Alishir Nawai, Ahmad Yesavi, Sufi Allah Yar, Mashreb, Howaida and the stories of Uzbek poems of Yusuf Zalaikha, from Baba Roshan and Amir





Hamza Sahib-e-Qeran was read only in mosques and monasteries by the children of Turkish tribes, in the same way, the conditions were not ready for the publication of Uzbek books and works. Literary writings of Uzbek writers were not published in governmental newspapers and magazines. Uzbek poets and writers wrote their works in Uzbek language to be published in magazines, but not much attention was paid to the publication of the works of Uzbek and Turkmen writers and poets. For the first time in 1967 the complete collection of Sultan Hossain Baiqra's poems was published by the Afghan History Association due to the efforts of academician candidate Dr. Mohammad Yaqub wahedi Jozjani (Barzegar, 2019, p. 4).

### **The First Steps for Publishing the Uzbek Language in the Media**

In the 13th session of the National Council, the representatives of Uzbeks and Turkmen of Afghanistan tried to open a way for Uzbek and Turkmen language broadcasts on Afghanistan Radio. In 1971, broadcasts in Uzbek and Turkmen languages began for the first time on Radio Afghanistan. And these publications continued until the middle of 1973. After the military coup of 1975, when Mohammad Davoud took over the government affairs, for unknown reasons, the broadcasts of Radio Afghanistan in these two languages were stopped and it was not revived until the fall of Mohammad Davoud's government. Following the coup of 1978, when the pro-Soviet People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan came to power, Radio Afghanistan broadcasts in Uzbek and Turkmen languages started again, and these broadcasts were 30 minutes a day for each language. In the middle of 1987, the first government publication named "Yoldoz" (star) in Uzbek and Turkmen languages was published in Kabul. After a few months, another magazine called "Gunesh" (sun) started publishing in Turkmen language, and "Yoldoz" was published in Uzbek language in Kabul for about ten years. In the recent years of Dr. Najibullah's rule, this magazine was moved to Mazar-e-Sharif and became the publication organ of the Ministry of Tribal Peoples. After the fall of Dr. Najibullah's rule, Yolduz publications were published under the support of "National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan" in Mazar-e-Sharif in the form of a magazine with a small section using the limited facilities of the local printing press.

During the years of rule of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan, the ground was provided for publishing books and works of Uzbek writers. The collection of poems of Uzbek poets was published by the Union of Writers. "Khamsa" by Amir Alishir Nawai, the book of Zahiruddin Muhammad Babur's poems, the poems of Mrs. Nadera and other books were published in Kabul. After the fall of Dr. Najibullah's rule, the forces of the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan were got the control of the northern provinces for several years. In these years, Andisha, Yaghdo, Toghri Yul, Bidar, and "Voice of Islam" magazines were published in Mazar-e-Sharif, and "Jozjanan" in Sheberghan, and "Faryab" and "Qoyash" were published in Maimana, and some parts of these magazines were in Uzbek language.

In recent years, after the establishment of the republic period, the Ministry of Information and Culture published publications in the Uzbek language within the framework of the "Watandar" publications, and for whatever reason, the Uzbek section of the "Watandar" publication did not reach to the literate and educated Uzbek community (Kohken, 2018, p. 5).

During the rule of President Hamid Karzai and Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, some private media also dedicated a part of their broadcasts to Uzbek language. Local radios and televisions in the northern provinces broadcast in Uzbek. This is a positive development and a valuable step for the development of the Uzbek language. But the

content of the Uzbek publications of all these media is debatable and it is beyond the scope of this article.

### **Uzbek Language in Schools**

For the first time, education in Uzbek language started in Afghanistan schools after the revolution of 1987. The Ministry of Education created the Department of Uzbek Authoring and Translation and appointed a number of Uzbek professors to write textbooks in Uzbek language. Up to the fourth grade, all lesson topics were written and printed under the supervision and advice of Dr. Aref Osman Ouf, the Uzbek consultant of the Ministry of Education, and teaching in Uzbek language began in the schools of Uzbek-populated areas.

This program did not have a good result. The Ministry of Education did not publish Uzbek language and literature textbooks for middle and high school classes. Students who were taught in Uzbek until the fourth grade, had to study in Persian in the fifth grade. This problem caused the Uzbeks to no longer show much desire to learn in their mother tongue. This program was a good start, but it had a disappointing ending. Teaching in the mother tongue for Afghanistan Uzbek children was no longer continued.

During the administration of Hamid Karzai, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan introduced the Uzbek language education system in the schools of the Uzbek-populated areas. The Ministry of Education published Uzbek language books up to the sixth grade. Unfortunately, the lack of formation for Uzbek language teachers in schools, the non-inclusion of graduates of the Uzbek language and literature departments of universities and teacher training institutions in teacher recruitment exams, and the non-inclusion of Uzbek language lessons in the education curriculum were among other problems that Ministry of Education did not solve them (Ebrahim, 2013, p. 2).

### **Uzbek Language in Universities and Academic Institutions:**

The Department of Uzbek language was opened for the first time in 1983 at the Faculty of Language and Literature of Kabul University. This department continued its activity until the end of Dr. Najibullah's rule in (1992). With the beginning of the civil wars, the door of the Uzbek department in Kabul University was closed and it was not active for nearly three decades. In the Department of Uzbek Language and Literature of Kabul University, in addition to the local professors, several professors specializing in Uzbek language and literature from the Soviet Republic of Uzbekistan were teaching at the time.

Dozens of students, most of whom were Uzbeks, graduated from this department, some of them started teaching Uzbek language in universities and teacher training institutes in the northern provinces of the country, and still there are some Uzbek teachers who are busy in teaching Uzbek language in the universities of northern Afghanistan.

During the Republic period, about 7 departments of Uzbek language and literature began to operate in the universities of the northern provinces of the country and are still operating, and with the Department of Uzbek language and literature of Kabul University, the number of active departments of Uzbek language and literature in the country are eight departments. In the same way, during the Republic period and before that, Uzbek language and literature departments were established in the teacher training institutions of nine northern provinces of the country, but unfortunately, there were problems in the process due to the lack of sufficient and up-to-date teaching materials and the lack of harmony in the curriculum between the departments, there was problems in the procedure of education, and the lack of expert professors with master's and doctorate degrees also kept the level of



educational efficiency in these departments at its lowest level, and with the return of the Islamic Emirate, the offices of teacher training institutions were removed by the Ministry of Education.

As mentioned, Uzbek language has the most speakers in Afghanistan after Persian (Dari) and Pashto languages. Currently, Uzbeks of Afghanistan live in almost half of the country's provinces. The Uzbek language, as an important element of Afghanistan's connection with Turkish-speaking countries, especially Uzbekistan, has provided good opportunities for regional convergence for our country, and this language has a high capacity for development in Afghanistan. In recent years, new opportunities have emerged for the cultivation and development of the Uzbek language (Kohken, 2018, p. 3).

#### **Status of the Uzbek Language during the Reign of Mohammad Ashraf Ghani:**

Mohammad Ashraf Ghani, the President of the Republic of Afghanistan, during his presidency, has repeatedly mentioned the richness and importance of the history of Uzbek language in the region. During his presidency, he took steps to improve the position of the Uzbek language in Afghanistan. The beginning of publications of the presidential palace and some government offices in Uzbek language and the approval of the "National Day of the Uzbek Language" in Afghanistan can be considered as symbolic steps to improve the position of the Uzbek language.

In the autumn of 2019, October 20 was recognized as the national day of the Uzbek language in Afghanistan. In a meeting with President Ghani and the leadership of the government, representatives of a number of Afghanistan Uzbeks cultural organizations proposed to name this day as the National Uzbek Language Day in Afghanistan, which was accepted by President Ashraf Ghani and the cabinet was approved it in a meeting and thus this day was included in the official calendar of this country.

In 2019, the Presidential Palace of Afghanistan held a commemoration ceremony for the first time to celebrate this day.

But with the victory of the Islamic Emarat again in 2021, the Uzbek language has once again been neglected. Now it is necessary for the elders of the Uzbek people to take other decisive steps to remove the factors that have hindered the development of the Uzbek language and pay attention in order to institutionalize the position of the Uzbek language in the country as the language of a significant and influential part of the population of Afghanistan.

**Result:** Examining the situation of the Turkish-Uzbek language in recent centuries in Afghanistan shows that it has not been given as much attention as it should have been, and no important measures have been taken for the development of this language.

The period of growth and prosperity of the Turkish-Uzbek language in Afghanistan goes back to the era of the Timurian of Herat, headed by Amir Ali Shir Nawaii, Zahieruddin Mohammad Babur and Gowharshad Begum, who did important work in this field for the development and prosperity of this language and the works Especially Amir Ali Shir Nawaii and Zahieruddin Mohammad Babur wrote a valid book in Turkish-Uzbek language and made it available to the Turkish speakers of the region.

Uzbek language writers and poets until the time of Amir Ali Shir Nawaii had not benefited from the richness of the Turkish-Uzbek language and its wide possibilities in a fundamental way, the treasures of this language were kept hidden, but. Amir Ali Shir Nawaii began his journey as an author, creating valuable works in Turkish-Uzbek language that ultimately propelled him to great renown as an esteemed poet and author. His literary

contributions have earned him a high standing in the hearts of the Turkish community, cementing his place as a revered figure in their cultural heritage.

After the fall of Timurians' rule of Herat, the long period of stagnation of Uzbek language and literature begins in Afghanistan, after the fall of the rule of Sultan Hossain Baiqra, this irreplaceable supporter of civilization and culture, the brilliant literary environment of that era also disappears. Uzbek language and literature can no longer flourish in this land.

Undoubtedly, in the last centuries, the Turkish-Uzbek language in Afghanistan has been disrespected by the government from every point of view, and the statesmen have not done anything important for the growth and prosperity of this language. According to the constitution of Afghanistan during the Republic period, after Pashto and Persian (Dari) languages, Uzbek language is recognized as the official language in the Uzbek nation regions of Afghanistan, and according to this, Uzbek language should be taught in public schools and universities in the Uzbek-populated areas. According to this law, the Islamic Emarat of Afghanistan must provide education for children in their mother tongue, but unfortunately, linguists and cultural experts consider all these factors to be the neglect of the Islamic Emarat towards the Uzbek-Turkish language.

In 2012, the Ministry of Education of Afghanistan printed books in Uzbek language and sent them to some Uzbek provinces, including some areas of Balkh province. But unfortunately, the way of writing and compiling these books was objected by a number of Afghanistan Uzbek cultural experts and linguists. One of the professors of Uzbek-Turkish language at Kabul University said: "Some special words of Uzbek language are not included in the book, the grammar is not observed and the sentences are incomplete in terms of grammar and syntax, and in some places words are misplaced."

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