

AZERBAIJANI

SAGE

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FROM SAMARKAND



ON A HOT AUGUST DAY IN 1981, PROFESSOR ZAHID GARALOV, THE THEN DIRECTOR OF OUR INSTITUTE, INVITED ME TO HIS OFFICE AND SAID THAT I WAS GOING TO TASHKENT AND SAMARKAND ON AN ERRAND OF A SENIOR ORGANIZATION.

It transpired during our conversation that the then secretary of the Central Committee of Azerbaijan's Communist Party, Hasan Hasanov (currently Azerbaijani Ambassador to Poland), had read an article in newspaper Uchitelskaya Gazeta's issue from 4 August 1981 which said, **"the author of first Uzbek and Tajik language ABC books pub-**

lished in Samarkand in 1917 has been identified. The books were developed by Azerbaijani teacher Sayid Rza Alizade."

Quite interested in the report, Hasan Hasanov phoned the minister of education (Elmira Gafarova at the time) and started enquiring from well-known teachers about Sayid Rza, but it turned out that no one knows him. Then he ordered



New-method school established by S. Alizade in Samarkand in 1907

that this issue be examined and the institute administration decided to entrust the task to me as I had repeatedly been to Tashkent on business before.

So off I went to Tashkent and found Professor of Samarkand University Aleskerov who was also mentioned in the article. When I revealed the essence of my visit, he said he would introduce me to the grandson of Sayid Rza Alizade who would provide me with all the information necessary. Several hours later, someone was already knocking on the door of my hotel room. A typical Azerbaijani stepped in and

It has been established that Sayid Rza Alizade is the author of the first Uzbek and Tajik ABC books (in Arab script) published in Samarkand in 1917. He was one of Central Asia's most prominent scientists and enlighteners, had encyclopedic knowledge and was fluent in 14 languages, including Azerbaijani, Russian, Uzbek, Farsi, Arabic, Armenian, Tajik, Urdu, English, German, French, Italian, Kurdish and Hebrew.

Sayid Rza Alizade was born in Azerbaijan on 15 February 1887 to the family of carpet weaver named

ov, was a native of Baku. His mother died when he was only two. Later on, his family moved to Bukhara and then to Samarkand. After studying at a medrese for six years, Sayid Rza started working at his father's small shop selling carpets. As luck would have it, he met an officer from a Russian military unit based in Samarkand and, with his aid, found the job of an assistant typist at a local publishing house in 1900, when he was only 13. The young Sayid Rza was working hard on self-education, and as early as in 1904 he started teaching at a new-type Dzhadid (translates from Arabic as "new") school. Unlike Kadem (translates as "old") schools, new-type schools, along with religious knowledge, taught secular subjects, including the native and Arabic languages, history, geography, arithmetic, and in some cases even natural history. In this sense, they were quite in line with the requirements of the time,

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introduced himself as Farhad, the grandson of Sayid Rza Alizade. He promised his help in studying his grandfather's heritage.

Mirmohsum. His father was from Southern Azerbaijan, while his mother Hadija, a relative of outstanding composer Uzeyir Hajibay-

i.e. the elimination of ignorance among the Muslim population of Turkestan.

In 1906, Sayid Rza Alizade

S.ALIZADE WAS INVITED TO TAKE SENIOR PUBLIC POSTS IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES, INCLUDING IRAN, TURKEY AND AFGHANISTAN, IN THE 1920S.

opened a new-method school Khayet (Life) in the city and taught history, geography, Arabic and Russian, and space science there. The

In one of his articles, Sayid Rza Alizade stressed the contribution of new-method schools to overall development of society. "All these mis-

fortunes and woes, poverty and destruction surrounding Turkestan are the result of wrong management of schools and the policies of our administration. It is common knowledge that modernization of society, science, culture and economy depends largely on the development of education. Many Muslim states have long had schools and universi-

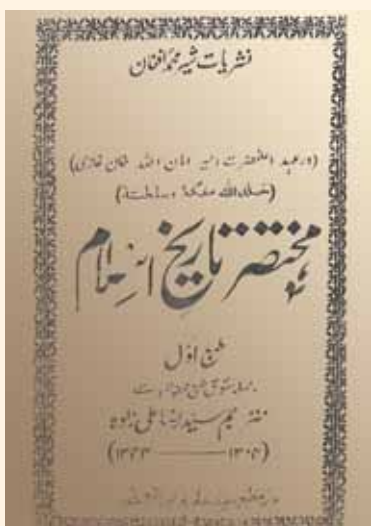
tan, are not trying to develop new-method schools. Instead, we are calling them useless. What is wrong with us? We can feel ignorance and its consequences every minute, yet we can't wake up," he wrote.

In his brochure called "Address to local intellectuals" published in Samarkand in 1905, he defended new-method schools. In another article of his he raised the problem of education of the Muslim population, showing that backwardness and ignorance, poverty and powerlessness so characteristic of many Muslim countries of the time, especially Turkestan, are the consequence of poor organization of education that does not meet the requirements of the time.

In 1906, Alizade opened another school, wrote 12 text-books and prepared a number of curricula. Over time, however, Sayid Rza fully dedicated himself to public and enlightenment activities.

Besides the Uzbek, Persian and

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Brief history of Islam, published in Lahore, Pakistan

school was shut down several times but each time it reopened under a new name. The opening of new-method schools in Turkestan did not go down well with the Russian authorities even though the local men of wealth and representatives of the Russian administration in Turkestan did acknowledge the advantages of the new schools. Alizade himself was persecuted but that did not stop him and he carried on his teaching and enlightening activities.

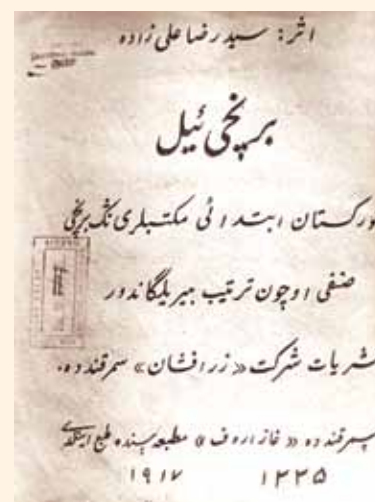
DOCUMENTS



Complete Russian-Tajik dictionary

ties where people can study medicine, engineering, teaching, translation, writing, and then earn their living with the help of these noble professions. This is exactly why many Muslim states have proper understanding of the place and role of new-method schools. For some reason, we, the Muslims of Turkes-

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ABC Book "Brinji Yil" ("First year") published in Uzbek for Uzbek schools in 1917, Samarkand

Tajik ABC books, Sayid Rza Azizade wrote books on arithmetic, history, geography, astronomy, natural history and Arab grammar for Turkestan schools. In 1924, he wrote a book on the grammar of the Tajik language and a reading book. From 1924 to 1934, he translated from Russian into Tajik books on geography by P. Ivanov, on geometry by A. Ankov, on algebra by S. Kiselev, etc.

DOCUMENTS



First Tajik ABC Book, 1920

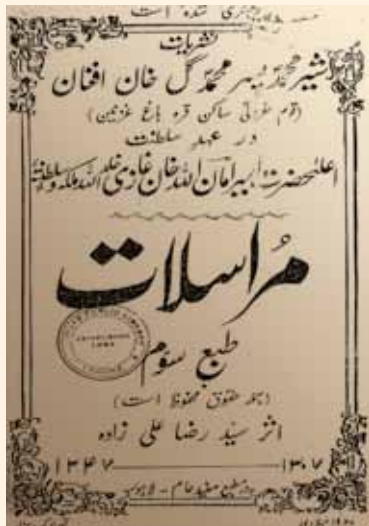
At the same time, S. Alizade was actively engaged in journalism. He can be easily described as one of the founders of publishing business in Central Asia. His articles were published in such

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renowned newspapers as "Samar-kand", "Free Samarkand", "Ovoziy To-chik". In 1910, Sayid Rza became the executive editor of the "Ayna" ("Mir-

ror") magazine of which Mahmud Behbudiy was the chief editor. In 1915, he established his own newspaper "Shark", in 1916 "Telegraph kheberleri" and in 1919 "Shuloy in-

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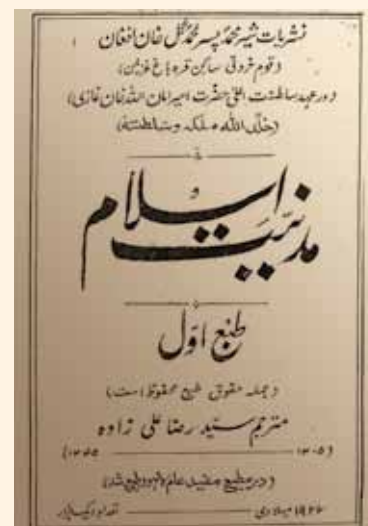
"Moroslot" ("Correspondence") published in Lahore, Pakistan. S. Alizade, 1934

gilab" ("Flames of the revolution") weekly magazine which was distributed not only in Turkestan but also in Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, India and Arab countries. The magazine described the difficult plight of Muslim peoples, but it was shut down in 1922.

S. Alizade also published satirical poems exposing violence, arbitrariness, lawlessness and avarice.

He had 15 pen-names, of which "zambur" (bumblebee) and "bah-lul" (wisecracker) were particularly popular.

DOCUMENTS



Culture of Islam, translation from Arabic into Farsi, Lahore, Pakistan, 1928

Like many of his contemporaries interested in the idea of social equality, Sayid Rza Alizade enthusiastically accepted the 1917 revolution and joined the ruling party. However, this euphoria did not last long. Five years later he published articles in the "Taek" ("Stick") magazine exposing the futility of Bolshevik intentions and promises, and withdrew from the party.

Sayid Rza Alizade has translated into Uzbek and Tajik languages the classical works of Russian and European authors, including Pushkin's "Captain's daughter", "Dubrovskiy", "Belkin's stories", "The Queen of Spades" and "Boris Godunov", Gogol's "Inspector", Tolstoy's "Resurrection", Ostrovsky's "How the steel quenched", Epton's "One hundred per cent" and many others, including Krylov's fables. His translations into Russian included those of Ferdousi, Nizami and Navoi. The outstanding enlightener also translated into Farsi Karamzin's "History of the Russian state", Bartold's



Sayid Rza Alizade with his family, 1923

"Turkestan", "General history of Europe" and "The history of Japan". The last three, just like the enlightener's own works on religious studies "Asri Saodat" ("The age of happiness"), "Madaniyati Islom" ("The culture of Islam"), "Zazureti Islom" ("Imperative laws of Islam"), "Moroselot" ("Correspondence"), "Space science", "Soli Nahustin" ("ABC Book"), were published in Farsi in Lahore. A total of 10 works of the scientist were published in this city between 1923

and 1934.

Sayid Alizade's enlightenment activities were not confined to translations only. He also authored scientific researches called "The history of Turkestan", "The history of Islam", "The law of religion", etc. S. Alizade also wrote the first Russian-Tajik dictionary in two volumes, which contained a total of 61,000 words. In 1926, he wrote a manual called "The Tajik grammar".

Sayid Rza did a lot to popu-

larize Azerbaijani culture and literature in Central Asia. In 1913, S. Alizade sent a letter to Uzeyir Hajibayov asking for assistance in promoting Azerbaijani music in Uzbekistan, in particular in the city of Samarkand, which was home to a large Azerbaijani community. Prior to that, Sayid Rza had repeatedly met with Hajibayov when visiting Mirza Alekper Sabir in Baku. Hajibayov granted his request by sending a group of musicians to Samarkand. Thanks to this assistance Sayid Rza Alizade organized Uzbek-language performances of Uzeyir Hajibayov's "O olmasin, bu olsun", "Arshin Mal Alan" and other comedies in Samarkand. A short while later, he staged J. B. Mollie's play "Healer against his will" in Tajik language.

It is worth indicating that S. Alizade was invited to take senior public posts in neighboring countries, including Iran, Turkey and Afghanistan, in the 1920s. Afghanistan's first president Amanulla Khan has twice sent his adviser Mohammed Davud to Samarkand to secure Alizade's consent to work in the country's education and publishing sectors. But each time Alizade gratefully declined these invitations.

Starting from 1933, Sayid Rza Alizade taught Arabic and Persian languages at Samarkand State University named after Navoi. His students included future poets Utkur Rashid and Hamid Alimjan.

During that visit to Samarkand I managed to lay my hands on various documents reflecting the multifaceted aspects of this remarkable man's life. It goes without saying that it is impossible to provide a complete picture of this outstanding personality by making only one

trip to Uzbekistan. Unfortunately, the political cataclysms of the 1930s left a gloomy mark on the fate of this wonderful enlightener and historian. On 3 February 1938, while working at Samarkand University as a teacher, Sayid Rza Alizade was arrested on standard charges of espionage. Investigation into the accusations lasted for two years but failed to come up with any evidence. Nonetheless, he was sentenced to five years' imprisonment, spent a lot of time in solitary confinement first in Tobolsk and then in Vladimir.

According to official documents, Sayid Rza Alizade died of tuberculosis in a Vladimir prison in 1945. It is indicative that manuscripts in the form of small pieces of fabric glued together with moistened breadcrumbs were discovered in his prison cell after his death. This shows that the tireless scientist kept working even in custody. Only in 1977 was he rehabilitated posthumously, enabling the study of his extensive scientific and teaching heritage and enlightenment activities.

In 1987, thanks to the efforts of Sayid Alizade's grandson Farhad and representatives of Uzbek and Tajik intelligentsia, the remains of the great enlightener were delivered from Vladimir to Samarkand and buried at an old cemetery Penjab.

This is recognition of the fact that the political regime of those years was responsible for the death of the scientist. The name of Sayid Rza Alizade is extensively revered in the Middle and Near East by whoever knew him personally or is familiar with his scientific, teaching and enlightening heritage. There is a street, a school and a district in Samarkand named after him. There is

also a bronze bust outside a school named after him and a house museum in the flat he lived in. His grandson Farhad Alizade is the director of the museum which conducts researches of Alizade's heritage. Letters from many countries are sent to the museum as people from France, USA, Germany, England, Japan, etc. are enquiring about the fate of the great Azerbaijani scientist. It would therefore be appropriate if information about Sayid Rza Alizade, an

enlightener whose educational and scientific work covered an immense region of the Middle and Near East, was made part of the future Azerbaijani encyclopedia. Sayid Rza Alizade's 125th birthday anniversary is to be celebrated in Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Russia next year. It remains to be hoped that this article will arouse greater interest in this scientist who has been unfairly forgotten. ✨



Monument to S. Alizadeh in Samarkand