AYNI, SADRIDDIN (1878-1954). Writer and educator, the founder of Soviet Tajik literature.

Ayni (also Aini) was born in the village of Soktare in the amirate of Bukhara, a Russian protectorate. His father, Saidmurod Khoja, a farmer and part-time carpenter, taught his son to read and write and introduced him to classical Persian poetry. At the age of eleven Ayni lost both his parents to a cholera epidemic. The following year his precocious poetical talent was recognized by a liberal young Bukharan intellectual, Sharifjon Makhdum, also known as Sadri Ziyow, who helped Sadreddin enroll at a secondary religious institution (madrasa) in Bukhara city. Disillusioned with the traditional style of schooling, he augmented his poetical skill and literary education by attending Sadri Ziyow's salon, and learned about the modern world by reading secular books and imported newspapers, a forbidden activity, with a group of like-minded fellow students.

Until the turn of the century Ayni's verses were in the traditional lyrical vein of classical Persian poetry. His surname, which means "genuine, original," derived from one of his poetical pseudonyms. Soon he broached themes of social protest in more colloquial diction. "Ten Per Cent" (Dahyak, 1903) excoriated the loan shark, a theme to which Ayni returned in his 1939 novel Death of a Usurer (Mangi Suddkur). A school run by the modernizing, secularist jadid movement opened in Bukhara, and in 1907 Ayni began working there as a Tajik interpreter. A few years later he founded a jadid school for Tajik boys and compiled the first Tajik primer. In 1922 he authored Kholida, a reader in Uzbek for girls' primary schools. He wrote for the new jadid-inspired Tajik newspapers such as Noble Bukhara (Bukhoroi Sharif), and remained active in the movement until the First World War when the amir, abetted by the Russians, closed their schools. Ayni was arrested and flogged, and on his release fled to Samarkand in Russian Turkestan.

By 1919 with the Communist Party in control of Samarkand, he left teaching to devote himself to writing articles, notably in the daily Flame of the Revolution (Shuli'li Inqilob), denouncing the amir's regime, urging support of the Red Army, and calling for a general anti-imperialist rising in the East. His poetry now included revolutionary marches using novel meters and rhyme schemes. With the fall of Bukhara to the Bolsheviks in 1920, Ayni married and settled in Samarkand. He turned definitively to prose, and primarily to fiction, although his output was based always on his own experiences and continued to embrace virtually every genre—lyric and ballad, short and long novels, history, polemic, literary criticism and anthology, and overt autobiography. In 1922 the story "The Butchers of Bukhara" (Jallodomi Bukhoro) appeared, drawing indirectly on his own arrest. His first novel, The Story of a Poor Tajik (Sarguzashti yak Tociji Kambaghal, 1924), usually called by the name of its hero Odina, pursued the theme of victimization. A study of the revolution in the amirate, Materials for the History of Bukhara, appeared first in Uzbek in 1926.

Three major novels followed in the 1930s, each attesting the influence of socialist realism. Ayni declared Maksim Gorky (1868-1936), whom he met in 1932, as the greatest influence on his later writing. Dokhunda tells of a Tajik from a mountain village who, unlike Odina, fights injustice and develops into a class-conscious revolutionary. His hero denounces the jadids' cautionary realism, prudently repudiating his own now dubious past. Slaves (Gholom, 1934 in Uzbek; Qullar, 1935 in Tajik) chronicles the emancipation of the Tajik peasantry from the serfdom of the late nineteenth century to the triumph of collectivization in the 1930s. In Death of a Usurer, the repugnant money lender Qori Ishkambin is simultaneously a fully-rounded personality and a symbol of the amirate's corrupt society.

During the Second World War Ayni turned again to journalistic polemic, drawing upon Tajik folklore to good effect. In "Devi haftas" he likens Nazism to a seven-headed ogre. His main productions were the historical novels Hero of the Tajik People, Timur Malik (Qahramoni Khalqi Tocij Temurmalki) and The Rebellion of Muqanna (Is'yoni Muqanna), both appearing in 1944. These recounted the heroic resistance offered by the ancestors of the Tajiks to Mongol and Arab invaders, with obvious contemporary allusions.

From the outset Ayni wrote both in eastern Persian (Tajik) and eastern Turkish (Uzbek), catering to a common Turkestanii culture and society in which Uzbeks and Tajiks were neighbors and frequently bilingual. Tajikistan’s separation from Uzbekistan, as an autonomous republic in 1924 and a Union republic in 1929, ironically left the Tajiks’ principal cultural centers, Bukhara and Samar- kand, in Uzbekistan. Tajik intellectuals were forced to define and defend their niche in Central Asia in terms of Soviet nationalities policy. Against Pan-Turkists who dismissed the Tajiks as merely Iranized Uzbeks, Ayni emphasized the continuity of Perso-Tajik literature and culture since its beginnings in Central Asia in the ninth century with his Sample of Tajik Literature (Namongi Adabiyotii Tocij, 1926), a critical anthology spanning a millennium of Persian verse. He followed this with studies of individual Persian poets. Ayni was never a Tajik chauvinist; his 1948 monograph assisted in the rehabilitation of Navoi, the fifteenth-century bilingual poet and statesman now hailed as a precursor of Uzbek literature.

In 1928-1929 Ayni supported the change from the Arabic to the Latin alphabet for Tajik, and joined the lively debate on the linguistic basis and future of the Tajik literary language. Here he took a middle route between the extreme views that written Tajik should be founded on classical models and tend in the direction of Iranian Persian, or be purged of Arabisms and based on a spoken Tajik dialect. He recommended a measured development modeled on established contemporary writing. His own style, serving as the principal model, leaned toward the speech of Bukhara and included many idioms derived from Uzbek. In his valuable Semi-Comprehensive Dictionary of Literary Tajik (Lughatni Nimafshili Tociji Baroi Zaboni Adabi Tocij), compiled by 1938 but not published until 1976 as volume twelve of his collected works, he preserved many traditional craft and technical terms and avoided Russian loan words. As with Namunahoi, publication of this work was championed by eminent Russian orientalists.
The delay in publication of his dictionary resulted mainly from the purges of 1937-1938, which barely spared Ayni’s career and ended those of many of his colleagues. Ayni was accused of bourgeois nationalism and some of his books were banned. As late as 1952 he was accused of a serious ideological error for his publication of an annotated edition of an Indo-Persian work with the title Four Dervishes (Chahor Darvesh), which the Party considered full of religious fanaticism and debauchery. But, in general, honors and official responsibilities kept pace with Ayni’s productivity. In 1933 he was elected the first president of Tajikistan’s Writers’ Union, and toward the end of his life became the first president of the republic’s Academy of Sciences and a member of the Supreme Soviet of the Tajik SSR. He was awarded an honorary doctorate from Leningrad University and the Order of Lenin, and in 1950 received a Stalin Prize for the first two volumes of his memoirs (Yoddoshto). This work, in four volumes, brings Ayni’s life story down only as far as 1900. His postrevolutionary activities are recounted briefly in A Concise Autobiography (Mukhtasari Tarjumai Holi Khudam), published posthumously in 1958.

Ayni moved from Samarkand to Dushanbe, the capital of the Tajik Republic, a few months before his death in 1954. He never learned to read Russian or use Cyrillic script for Tajik. As the major figure in the genesis of Soviet Tajik literary culture his works were translated extensively into Russian and his reputation secured. With the reorientation of Tajik culture that followed restructuring (perestroika) and independence, some revisionist writers criticized his staunch adherence to the party line. Thanks to Ayni more than any other figure except the scholar and politician Bobojon Gafurov, the Tajiks were enabled to retain and build on a modicum of their Persian and Iranian heritage during the most restrictive period of Soviet rule.

See also MERSH: Gafurov, Bobodzhon Gafurovich, Vol. 48.


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AYNALI KAVAK, FIRST CONVENTION OF (1779). Signed between Russia and the Ottoman empire, the convention increased Russian influence over the khanate of Crimea while undermining Ottoman ties and authority.

For several years before the convention the Russians organized a colonial presence in Crimea and threw their support behind Şahin Giray (r. January-December 1777 and 1779-1783), one of the numerous claimants to the khanate’s throne. Şahin’s local position was weakened by Russian patronage, Catherine II’s (r. 1762-1796) order for large-scale resettlement in Crimea of Greek and Slavic emigrants from the Ottoman empire, and Ottoman support for exiled Tatars, including the former Khan, Devlet Giray III (r. March 1768-February 1770 and April 1775-January 1777). By late 1777, his popularity desperately low, Şahin faced a rebellion that expanded rapidly in size and led to the desertion of former allies, including the Nogays settled in the Kuban region. To support its own interests the Ottoman empire dispatched a fleet to Crimea and created in Istanbul a Crimean government-in-exile under the leadership of Selim Giray III (r. October 1764-March 1767, November 1770-August 1771, and December 1777-1778).

In February 1778 the Russians launched their third invasion of the Crimean peninsula, sweeping rebels from such towns as Akmechet, Eski Kaim, and Kefe and crushing the uprising before the Ottoman fleet could assist. Early the next year the Convention of Aynali Kavak was signed.

While the Russians agreed to return land around Özi (Ochakov) to the Ottomans and remove their troops from Crimea, the convention contained more significant concessions from the Ottomans. These included recognition of Russia’s right to interfere in Crimean political affairs, to have a Khan on the throne acceptable to its interests, to allow Şahin to reign until his death, and to end Ottoman intervention in Crimea. With respect to Crimea, the convention completely altered the Russo-Ottoman Treaty of Küçük Kaynarca signed in 1774.

Several years of peace followed the convention’s signing, during which time Şahin rekindled efforts to reform local society and bolster his political position. Many Tatars continued to bristle under Russian influence, spurring more trouble in 1781 that finally forced the Russians, following a fourth invasion, to annex Crimea to the Russian empire in 1783.

See also MERSH: Kuchuk-Kainardjia, Treaty of, Vol. 18.


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